

# India police vow to stop 'suicide march' on Sikh temple

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AMRITSAR (Reuter) — Authorities in India have imposed an eight-hour curfew here to prevent a march today by Sikh women "suicide squads" to the Golden Temple.

Sikh officials said the army had arrested at least 2,000 Sikhs in the past two days in an attempt to stop the march to the Sikhs' holiest shrine, scene of a bloody battle last month.

They said all roads leading to the city had been sealed and bus service from neighboring cities had been suspended.

But former MP Rajinder Kaur vowed

last night to defy the curfew and lead an all-female march today and more the following days until the government gives in.

"We may face bullets but we will go forward," she said. "I will sing hymns even if soldiers fire bullets at me."

"The first squad will be followed by others every day until the troops pull out from the Golden Temple."

Punjab officials talked with six leaders of the Akali Dal, the main Sikh party, and tried to persuade them to drop plans to

lead a march on the temple from Faridkot district about 110 kilometres (70 miles) to the south, the United News of India reported.

But the Sikhs refused to co-operate, the news agency said, and the officials ordered their arrest.

Witnesses said soldiers with automatic weapons have taken up positions on rooftops near the Sahidan Temple and there were many soldiers on roads leading to the Golden Temple.

About 1,000 Sikhs and 100 soldiers were

killed when troops stormed the Golden Temple June 6 to capture Sikh extremists waging a guerrilla war for political and religious concessions from the central Indian government.

Meanwhile, in the Pakistan border state of Jammu and Kashmir, witnesses said 300 protesters staged a march in the capital, Srinagar, shouting "Allah-o-Akbar" (God is great) and waving black flags.

The march was led by ousted chief minister Farouq Abdullah and began at

his National Conference party headquarters.

Abdullah, kicked out of office 12 days ago, came out of hiding Saturday night after a curfew was lifted in the city and told supporters he would lead the march.

Troops fired into the air and police used nightsticks to break up the march. Witnesses said protesters fled in panic, but the police claim there were no injuries.

Abdullah was dismissed from office two weeks ago when at least 12 of his supporters defected, leaving him in a minority in the state assembly.