

WAGES

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 20, 1996

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, March 20, 1996, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

WAGES

The issue of stagnant wages for American workers has moved to the top of the political agenda. It has become a leading issue in the 1996 presidential campaign, the focus of speeches by congressional leaders, and a prime topic for magazine covers and news features. Some believe that it will be the dominant national political issue in the U.S. for years to come.

The concern is understandable. Adjusted for inflation, the wages of middle-class Americans have basically not increased for years. People are working hard, being responsible, and trying to make things better for their families, yet they face rising prices and mounting bills and few increases in pay. They are holding second or third jobs, and both parents often must work, and that means less time for community involvement, reading to their kids, or Little League games.

On top of this, workers have been shaken by AT&T's layoff of 40,000 employees, and most Americans have a family member or friend who has lost a job to corporate downsizing. People expect to see layoffs and frozen wages during tough economic times, but they can't understand why all this is happening when the U.S. economy is growing, unemployment is low, companies are seeing record profits, the stock market is soaring to record levels, and compensation for CEOs is skyrocketing.

All of this has led to acute job insecurity and concern about the future. Far too many Americans believe that hard work and company loyalty are no longer being rewarded, and that the American promise of opportunity and a better future is slipping away. They are not proponents of big government, but they wonder if they will get any help out of Washington.

EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of stagnant wages is getting a lot of attention now, but it is not new. The wages of American workers basically doubled between 1947 and 1973, with some of the strongest gains among moderate-income workers. But since 1973, hourly wages for the average American have lagged some 10-15% behind inflation. The situation is slightly better now than a few years ago, but wage growth is still weak. Moreover, since 1979, 98% of the growth in income in the U.S. has gone to the top 20% of U.S. households. Some people have been doing very well in today's economy, but not the average American worker. This is not just a personal problem for those families affected; it will ripple across the economy if our workers cannot afford to buy the products we make.

While some economists are fairly optimistic about future wage increases—citing rising productivity, falling prices, tighter labor markets—others are worried. The greatest concern is over the impact of global competition and technology on less skilled, less educated workers.

NO EASY ANSWERS

The national attention to stagnant wages is healthy and long overdue, but we must address the problem carefully rather than jump at the first solution offered. The problem has

been with us for twenty years and the causes are complex; it will not be solved overnight. Indeed, some of the proposals could make things worse. For example, given the importance of exports to states like Indiana, the proposal for a stiff tariff on imported goods could boomerang and devastate many of our industries, particularly agriculture.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

Several steps can be taken to help workers. Among the most important is to create opportunity for them by providing them the tools to succeed in the new economy. Education and job skills are essential. We simply have to put into place effective low-cost college loans, school-to-work apprenticeships, training vouchers for laidoff workers, and effective vocational and adult education.

We also need to make work pay for people at the bottom of the income scale. Work is better than welfare or unemployment. We need to raise the minimum wage and keep the earned income tax credit for working families. We also need to ease the transition from job to job. Health insurers should not be able to cut someone off who loses a job, pensions should be portable, unemployment insurance, job search assistance, and job training should be available at one-stop career centers.

But of course most of the effort has to be by individuals and private companies. Each person must make the most of the opportunities offered, and private companies must do everything they can to help workers make a transition. We certainly need more business investments that make even low-skilled workers productive, and investments in people like the GI Bill that upgrade the workforce. We should end the myriad of subsidies and tax breaks for particular companies and industries that provide no public benefit. Corporate welfare in the United States totals billions of dollars each year.

I am skeptical of sweeping measures to prevent job loss or protect laid-off workers. If we go too far we will deter firms from hiring and discourage the unemployed from finding new work.

Nothing is more important than raising the economic growth rate. The solution to economic anxiety in the country is to expand jobs and opportunities. There is no substitute for sound macroeconomic policies. In the present context that means cutting the deficit, expanding markets, cutting government spending, reducing regulation, increasing productivity by investing in people, plant and equipment, infrastructure, and technology, and running a monetary policy to allow for faster economic growth.

CONCLUSION

One of the toughest challenges today is how to make sense of what's happening in the American economy, with the new and often alarming economic reality. This economy has produced record profits for some corporations, but it has produced pink slips and falling wages for many workers. On many broad measures, it's one of the healthiest economies we've had for several decades with many Americans living better, but there are too many Americans working harder just to keep up and they have many concerns about the financial security of their families. Our nation is struggling today to find the right way to deal with the discontent of the American worker. Few challenges have higher priority.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOHN EDWARD PORTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 20, 1996

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, March 19 and Wednesday, March 20, I was at home in Illinois for the Illinois primary election and I was not present for votes on rollcall Nos. 68 through 76.

Had I been able to be present and voting, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote 68, "yea" on rollcall vote 69, "yea" on rollcall vote 70, "no" on rollcall vote 71, "no" on rollcall vote 72, "yea" on rollcall vote 73, "no" on rollcall vote 74, "yea" on rollcall vote 75, and "no" on rollcall vote 76.

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
TUNISIAN INDEPENDENCE

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 20, 1996

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, today is the 40th anniversary of independence of the Republic of Tunisia. With increasingly strong ties between our two governments, the American people congratulate today the people of Tunisia on this historic anniversary. For the last 40 years, Tunisia has been a model of economic growth and the advancement of women in society.

It may be difficult for many Americans to appreciate Tunisia's situation. Its only two neighbors are Algeria, which has been racked by civil war for several years, and Libya, whose dictator has supported the most nefarious and subversive kinds of terrorism. Mr. Speaker, this is not a good neighborhood.

Nevertheless, Tunisia has maintained internal stability—not without its own controversies—in the face of external chaos. At the same time, years of hard work have produced one of the highest standards of living in the region. Tunisia is one of the few countries to graduate successfully from development assistance and join the developed world. For these accomplishments, Tunisia should be applauded and supported.

In addition, Tunisia has taken positive, cautious steps in the diplomatic realm, particularly in the Arab-Israeli peace process. In January of this year, Tunisia and Israel announced the planned opening of interest sections in each country, to be completed by April 15. This development will be a welcome realization of forward progress in Israel-Tunisia relations. We were also extremely pleased to learn from the Tunisian Foreign Minister that Tunisia plans to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel by the end of 1996.

The United States and Tunisia have also moved closer over the years. Yesterday, officials from our Department of Defense concluded a meeting of the Joint Military Commission with Tunisian officials, evidence of our ongoing visible support of strong United States-Tunisian relations.

Mr. Speaker, on this special day for Tunisia, I urge my colleagues reflect on our strong commitment to our friend in North Africa.

VIDEO EXPOSES INDIA'S TORTURE,
RAPE, AND MURDER OF SIKH
NATION

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 20, 1996

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recommend to my colleagues the outstanding new video "Disappearances in Punjab." This video was produced by Ram Narayan Kumar, a Hindu human rights activist, and Lorenz Skerjanz, an ethnologist from Austria. It paints a graphic picture of India's state terrorism against the Sikh Nation in Punjab, Khalistan. I thank Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, president of the Council of Khalistan, for sending it to me.

This video highlights the abduction of Jaswant Singh Khalra, the general secretary of the Human Rights Wing (Shiromani Akali Dal), by the Indian regime. Mr. Khalra reported that more than 25,000 young Sikh men had been abducted, tortured, and killed by the regime. Then the regime tried to hide this fact by listing the bodies as unidentified and cremating them. For this he was silenced. According to several other human rights activists, including Inderjit Singh Jaijee, Colonel Partap Singh, Justice Ajit Singh Bains, and General Narinder Singh, over 100,000 Sikhs have disappeared at the hands of the Indian regime.

But the Khalra case is only part of a pattern of repression of the Sikh nation by an Indian regime the New York Times described on February 25 as "a rotten, corrupt, repressive, and anti-people system." This documentary video also exposes other cases of Indian repression. It shows witnesses to the repression talking about what they have seen. This is important new evidence of India's brutal record. After watching the video, the viewer will conclude that India is the kind of police state that America spent many years and billions of dollars fighting.

It is time for the U.S. Government to speak out against this tyrannical regime. Only our pressure will cause India to begin acting like the democracy it proclaims itself to be. The time has come for the United States to cut off its aid to India until human rights are respected, as the Human Rights in India Act provides.

This video shows the bloody, violent repression which fuels the drive of Sikhs, Kashmiris, and other minority groups to be independent. I recommend it to all my colleagues and anyone else who is interested in promoting and expanding freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce the transcript of this video into the RECORD.

DISAPPEARANCES IN PUNJAB

On 31 August 1995, Punjab's Chief Minister Beant Singh was assassinated in a suicide mission of bombing carried out by a Sikh militant organization at the State government's Secretariat in Chandigarh. Beant Singh of the Congress party has taken office in early 1992 after winning the elections to the State Legislative Assembly, which the main Sikh political groups had boycotted to pursue their decade long agitation for a radical measure of autonomy for Punjab. As the Sikh electorate, constituting the majority of Punjab's population stayed away from the polling, the Congress party won the elections, without a real contest. But the gov-

ernment formed by the Congress party under Beant Singh's leadership projected the election results as the democratic mandate to stamp out the Sikh agitation, promising to implement the mandate by all possible means. Reports of human rights violations became widespread.

The leaders of Hindu public opinion in Punjab argued that the due process of law was a luxury, which Indian could not afford while fighting the secessionist terrorism:

[Interview with Vijay Chopra, publisher and editor of Hind Samachar group of newspapers, who brings out the three most popular language dailies in northern India.]

Only the human rights groups and the individuals, with little influence on the working of the government, expressed indignation against the reports of police atrocities.

[Interview with Satish Jain, Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.]

Many inside observers of Indian politics, including the former President of India Zail Singh, admitted that the highhanded methods of the security forces, instigated the separatist terrorism.

[Interview with Zail Singh.]

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SIKH
SEPARATIST UNREST

Approximately twenty million Sikhs of India form less than 2 per cent of the country's population, but constitute majority in the agriculturally prosperous Northwestern province of Punjab, which had been divided between India and Pakistan in 1947. Prosperous Jat Sikh farmers dominate the Akali Dal, the main political party of the orthodox Sikhs, that launched the agitation of the radical measure of autonomy for the State in early 1982. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a charismatic religious preacher, who had already emerged on the scene as the messiah of "true Sikhs", rallied the discontented sections of the Sikhs, particularly the unemployed youth, to the Akali agitation. The Union government projected the agitation as a secessionist movement, and refused to negotiate decentralization of political power. The next two years of virulent violence, which also witnessed the rise of Sikh terrorism in the real sense, came to a head in June of 1984 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the military to flush out Bhindranwale and his armed followers from the Golden Temple of Amritsar in which they had taken shelter. When the operation was over, hundreds of Sikh militants, including Bhindranwale, and a larger number of Sikh pilgrims, were dead. The Akal Takht, an important shrine inside the temple complex regarded as the seat of political authority within the Sikh historical tradition, was rubble. For devout Sikhs, Bhindranwale and his followers, who had died fighting the Indian military, became the martyrs of the faith. A section of Bhindranwale's followers now began to talk of an independent Sikh state.

The Parliamentary elections held at the end of 1989, returned many extremist candidates under the leadership of Simranjit Singh Mann, former police officer turned separatist politician. The results showed that the separatist cause now possessed a measure of popular support. Alienation of the Sikhs of Punjab from India's political system again became manifest when the overwhelming majority of them stayed away from the polling in early 1992, keeping with the call given by the main Akali groups to boycott the elections. The boycott helped the Congress party, under Beant Singh, to form its government in the State, and to embark on a highhanded policy to suppress the Sikh agitation without caring for the limits of the law. Many officials involved in the se-

curity operations privately admit that excesses, including custodial killings, do take place. But they argue that they have no other way to demoralize a secessionist movement, which enjoys a measure of sympathy in Punjab's countryside.

EVIDENCE OF STATE ATROCITIES

Interviews with Inderjit Singh Jaijee, Chairman, Movement Against State Repression, and Jaspal Singh Dhillon, Chairman, Shiromani Akali Dal's Human Rights Wing. [Photographic evidence of custodial torture and killings.]

[Interview with Ranjan Lakhnarpal, a lawyer who fights generally losing legal battles to enforce the rule of law, against the working of the Punjab police. Lakhnarpal introduces two women victims of custodial rape.]

Our own investigations in the Amritsar region reveal that the dealings of the security forces with the relatives of separatist militants, themselves unconnected with crime, are not only routinely illegal but also brutal. Apparently, the idea is to set an example of harshness that would discourage the rural folk from sympathizing with the extremist cause.

[Interview with Arjun Singh, grandfather of a known militant Paramjit Singh Panjwad, tortured in the police custody. Panjwad's mother was killed in custody.]

Many Sikh officers of the Punjab police privately corroborate these reports of police atrocities.

[Interview with one woman police officer, on the condition of anonymity: She told us about her experience of custodial torture, rape and murders at an interrogation center she was attached to. Photographic evidence of custodial torture and murders.]

Champions of human rights in Punjab are themselves vulnerable to persecution. Many have suffered long periods of illegal detention, torture in custody and even elimination. Sometimes their relatives become victims of police wrath. On 29 March 1995, lawyer Ranjan Lakhnarpal's ten year old son Ashish was run over by a police vehicle. The vehicle belonged to an officer whom Ranjan has accused of murdering a detainee in custody.

THE CASE OF JASWANT SINGH KHALRA

The more recent example comes from the case of Jaswant Singh Khalra, General Secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal's Human Rights Wing, who got picked up by uniformed commandos of Punjab police from the porch of his house in Amritsar on 6 September 1995, six days after Beant Singh's assassination. Human Rights Wing has been focussing attention on unravelling the mystery of what happens to the large number of people the security forces illegally pick-up for interrogation. Jaswant Singh Khalra was associated with the investigations that led to the discovery that Punjab police have been cremating thousands of dead Sikhs illegally, by mentioning them in the registers at the cremation grounds as "unclaimed" and "unidentified." The investigations also established that these "cremated" Sikhs were largely those who had earlier been picked up for interrogation.

[Interview with the attendant of the cremation ground at Patti, a subdivisional town in Amritsar district.]

Equally incriminating evidence against the police comes from the hospitals where the police sent some bodies so cremated for postmortem.

[Interview with the Chief Medical Officer of the hospital at Patti: This doctor told us that Sarabjit Singh was still alive when the police first brought him for the postmortem. On being discovered alive, Sarabjit Singh was taken away by the police and brought back to the hospital the second time when he

was actually dead. The hospital gave the postmortem report the police wanted. The Chief Medical Officer of the hospital at Patti also offered us some astonishing information on how he helped the police to get the post-mortem reports they legally needed in all circumstances before cremating the dead bodies.]

Investigation carried out by the Human Rights Wing forms the basis of a petition that the Committee for information and Initiative on Punjab has filed before the Supreme Court of India. The issue of illegal cremations by the Punjab police is not being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation, on the orders from the Supreme Court. However, the order of the probe did not come before Jaswant Singh Khalra himself "disappeared."

[Interview with Jaspal Singh Dhillon: "Khalra was quite clearly told that he can also become an unidentified body. And today Khalra is not there."]

The guilty officials of Punjab police knew that, without Khalra's investigative resourcefulness in the Amritsar district, the Human Rights Wing could not have so conclusively exposed their ways of handling the Sikh unrest in Punjab. Khalra had also been providing legal counselling to victims of police atrocities, particularly the relatives of the "disappeared", which encouraged them to approach the courts to redress their grievances.

Khalra's whereabouts remain unknown. The chief of the Punjab police has categorically denied Khalra's abduction by the officers of his force. The Supreme Court of India has ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation to probe the "disappearance" along with the issue of illegal cremations by the Punjab police. In ordering the probe, the court has neither extended protection to witness who might lead evidence to establish the truth, nor has asked the CBI to associate the human rights groups, directly involved in exposing the police atrocities, with the inquiry. It is evident that the Central Bureau of Investigation, as an investigating agency under the Union Home Ministry, lacks the necessary power and independence to determine the truth of allegations of serious human rights crimes, made against India's security forces.

Human right groups worldwide are seriously concerned about the disappearance of Jaswant Singh Khalra, which is seen as a warning to all those who are engaged in exposing police atrocities in the State. The Sikh groups in Punjab are agitating for Khalra's release. Many leaders of the Western countries, including the President of the United States of America have conveyed their concern about the case to the government of India. However, the information percolating from the police sources suggests that Khalra might already have been eliminated. Despair dominants the mood of the Sikh leaders in Punjab.

INDIA THREATENS WITNESS TO KHALRA ABDUCTION

HON. GARY A. CONDIT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 20, 1996

Mr. CONDIT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn a blatant abuse of power by the Indian Government. I join many other Members of the House who have spoken previously about the kidnapping of human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, who languishes in illegal detention more than 6 months after being

taken from his home in Amritsar on September 6. Last year, 65 Members of the House wrote to Indian Prime Minister Rao demanding Mr. Khalra's release. So far, we have been ignored. Mr. Khalra must be released immediately.

The March 6-12, 1996, issue of World Sikh News reports that a key witness to the Khalra kidnapping, Kirpal Singh Randhawa, secretary of the Punjab Human Rights Organization, filed a complaint in India's Supreme Court stating that "police had threatened to eliminate him and his family." It seems that the authorities will go to any length to keep Mr. Randhawa from testifying about Mr. Khalra's abduction. Mr. Randhawa also said that he feared that the Indian Government will file a false legal case against him to prevent him from testifying. I will be placing this article in the RECORD.

Such actions by the Indian Government are not unprecedented. In the State Department's 1996 country report on human rights in India, it is reported that "the brother of Surinder Singh Fauji was held for a week in incommunicado detention, apparently to persuade Fauji not to testify on extrajudicial executions he witnessed in 1993." How can India call itself a democracy when the police are so out of control?

Recently I received a chilling video documentary called "Disappearances in Punjab." It details murder, torture, and rapes of Sikhs in Punjab, Khalistan. I am introducing into the RECORD, a press release from the Council of Khalistan regarding this video.

In "Disappearance in Punjab," a female officer from the Punjab police is interviewed. Her testimony is frightening to anyone who cares about basic human freedom. This police officer says that she saw "atrocities—including those against women—that I cannot bear. Women suffer much. Male officers torture them. They also rape detainees. Some who had been picked up were in the interrogation center. Then I read that they had been killed in an encounter. But I had seen them in detention." The policewoman is asked, "What was their condition in custody?" "Their legs had been broken," she replies. "Could they have run away?," asks the interviewer. "They could not even have walked" is her chilling reply.

This video, and the threat against Mr. Randhawa, prove that India's claim to be a democracy is a complete fraud. Democracies respect human rights. Democracies do not threaten to kill witnesses or falsely detain their relatives. Democracies neither kidnap people nor arrest them for publishing reports that embarrass the government, as in Mr. Khalra's case. In short, democracies respect and practice freedom. India does not. It is against this background that the Sikh Nation declared itself independent on October 7, 1987. With that declaration, the independent country of Khalistan was formed. The Council of Khalistan, which brought these gruesome cases to my attention, was formed at that time to serve as Khalistan's government in exile. India's response to the Sikh Nation's exercise of its sovereignty has been to step up the repression, as these cases show. This repressive campaign of terror and genocide by the Indian regime has caused the deaths of over 150,000 Sikhs since 1984. Thousands of other non-Hindus have also been killed in Kashmir, Nagaland, and other areas struggling for human rights and self-determination.

The United States Government does not have to sit idly by and let India continue this brutal repression. There are two bills pending which address this situation. They are H.R. 1425, the Human Rights in India Act, which will seek to cut off United States development aid to India until India observes basic human rights; and House Concurrent Resolution 32, which seeks a plebiscite on independence in Khalistan under international supervision so that the Sikh Nation can freely choose its own future in free and fair vote, the way democracies make decisions. I urge my colleagues to support both of these bills. It is imperative that we assist the oppressed urge my colleagues to support both of these bills. It is imperative that we assist the oppressed Sikhs of Khalistan so that they too, can enjoy the glow of freedom, as we do here in America.

[From the World Sikh News, Mar. 6,-12, 1996]

KHALRA CASE THREATENED

AMRITSAR.—The secretary of Punjab Human Rights Organization, Mr. Kirpal Singh Randhawa, who is a key witness in the case pertaining to the alleged kidnapping of the human rights activist Mr. Jaswant Singh Khalra, last week alleged that police had threatened to eliminate him and his family.

In a complaint sent to Mr. Justice Kuldeep Singh of the Supreme Court who is hearing the case, Mr. Randhawa alleged that he had gone to Lopoke (Majitha) police station in connection with another case of police high-handedness where he was threatened of dire consequences by Mr. Jagdip Singh, SHO, and ASI Mr. Gural Singh Bajwa. The police also threatened Mr. Randhawa to withdraw security cover given to him by orders of the Supreme Court.

Mr. Randhawa told the Supreme Court that he apprehended danger to his life and his family or implication in a false case.

[Press Release From the Council of
Khalistan, Mar. 14, 1996]

"DISAPPEARANCES IN PUNJAB"

VIDEO DOCUMENTARY EXPOSES MURDER,
TORTURE AND RAPE OF SIKHS BY INDIAN POLICE

WASHINGTON, DC, MARCH 13.—A new video documentary entitled "Disappearances in Punjab" uncovers the truth about India's decade of brutal oppression against the Sikhs of Punjab, Khalistan. Produced by Ram Narayan Kumar, a Hindu human rights activist and Lorenz Skerjanz of the University of Vienna, the documentary shows "disappearances" and death in police custody as common occurrences in the Sikh homeland. Indian state terrorism against the Sikhs, the video shows, is part of its policy to violently crush the demand for Sikh independence—a policy widely supported by the government and Indian society at large. According to Dr. Satish Jain, Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, "There is a large section of [India] which approves of State atrocities. And, I think, the weakness of the Indian nation, the weakness of Indian society, really lies in this attitude."

According to "Disappearances in Punjab," the deceased Chief Minister Beant Singh spearheaded a government-backed campaign to crush all voices of dissent in Punjab regarding the demand for an independent Khalistan. Under Beant Singh and police chief K.P.S. Gill, tens of thousands of Sikhs were murdered. Reports of human rights violations became widespread. According to the Amnesty International report, *Determining the Fate of the Disappeared in Punjab*, "... the Punjab police have been allowed to commit human rights violations with impunity in the state." Indian journalist Iqbal Masud, called India's claims of having restored normalcy to Punjab a "bogus peace." "The