

INDIA ILLEGALLY DETAINS
WIDOW OF HUMAN-RIGHTS AC-
TIVIST

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I was disturbed to read that the Indian government has once again put its utter contempt for basic human rights on public display. At a time when India is posturing as an ally in the fight against terrorism, it is committing more terrorism against the minority peoples living within its own borders.

The Indian government is currently holding Mrs. Paramjit Kaur Khalra and six other Sikh human-rights activists in detention supposedly "to prevent disruption," or in other words to prevent them from carrying out peaceful political activities. Mrs. Khalra is the widow of Jaswant Singh Khalra, the late General Secretary of the Human Rights Wing, who exposed India's brutal policy of picking up young Sikhs, torturing them, killing them, then declaring their bodies "unidentified" and secretly cremating them. Mr. Khalra published a report showing that there had been at least 25,000 Sikhs victimized by this brutal policy. The Khalra Mission Committee, which Mrs. Khalra heads, in conjunction with other human-rights groups, has subsequently shown that the number is in excess of 50,000.

After Mr. Khalra published this report, he received a phone call from a police official saying, "We made 25,000 disappear. We can make one more disappear." On September 6, 1995, while he was washing his car, he was abducted by the police. One eyewitness who saw him while he was in custody said that he was severely tortured, to the point that he could barely eat. In late October 1995, Khalra was murdered in a police station. None of the police officials responsible for this heinous crime has ever been punished. All the Indian government has done is transfer them to other police stations, where they can find new victims to torture.

According to "The Politics of Genocide" by Inderjit Singh Jaijee, the Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, over 200,000 Christians in Nagaland since 1947, over 75,000 Kashmiri Muslims since 1988, and thousands and thousands of Dalit "Untouchables," Tamils, Manipuris, Assamese, tribal people all in pursuit of "Hindutva"—a Hindu state, society, and culture. Last year, a government official was quoted as saying that everyone who lives in India must either be a Hindu or be subservient to Hindus. That is not democracy, Mr. Speaker. It is theocracy. It takes more than elections to make a democracy; it takes genuine respect for basic human freedoms.

I have serious misgivings about current U.S. plans to resume arms sales to India. We should very cautious in considering such an aid resumption, especially given India's terrible human-rights record. We should also support a free and fair plebiscite on independence in Khalistan, Kashmir, Christian Nagaland, and all the countries seeking their freedom from India. This is the best thing we can do for freedom, peace, prosperity, and stability in South Asia.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to place an article from Burning Punjab on the detention of Mrs. Khalra into the RECORD at this time.

[From the Burning Punjab News, Nov. 2, 2001]

MRS. KHALRA HELD
(Our Correspondent)

Amritsar, November 2—The police today early morning arrested Mrs Paramjit Kaur Khalra of the Khalra Mission Committee to prevent disturbance of the peace in the state.

She reportedly was arrested at 4:30 a.m. hours before the arrival of the Prime Minister at 10 a.m. today reportedly from her residence here. The police also rounded-up six others, including Kirpal Singh Randhwa PHRO vice-president.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PORTER J. GOSS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, on the afternoon of November 14, I had to depart early for a previously scheduled meeting at the White House. As a result, I was not able to be present for rollcall votes Nos. 439 and 440. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on both measures. I request that this statement appear at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT CORNEL
NELSON OF ILLINOIS

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness that I learned last night of the death of one of the giants of the labor movement in Illinois—Robert Cornel Nelson. Bob died in his sleep on November 7, 2001, just two days shy of his 52nd birthday. He was laid to rest today in Glenwood, Illinois.

At the time of his death, Bob Nelson was national vice president of the American Federation of Government Employees' (AFGE) seventh district, which encompasses Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin, and was recently elected to the position of vice president of the Illinois State AFL-CIO.

Bob began his union career as a member of AFGE's local 375 at the Railroad Retirement Board, and throughout the years, he held a number of union offices, including second vice president, first vice president, and ultimately, president.

From 1974 to 1980, Bob also served as president of the Chicago Area Council of AFGE locals and in 1974 was elected president of the AFGE Railroad Retirement Board Council—a position which he held until he was elected to the seventh district national vice president's position in October 1986, and was reelected to that position five times.

As national vice president of the seventh district, Bob sat on AFGE's national executive board and chaired both the legislative and legal rights committees. Every two years, Bob held a legislative breakfast here in Wash-

ington, where the AFGE members from his region would come to Congress to press their legislative agenda. But, Bob was active and engaged in the legislative process 365 days of every year.

This past summer, I reconstituted the First Congressional District's Labor Task Force and convened a meeting on a very warm day in Chicago. Bob was one of the first union representatives to confirm his attendance and he was there, struggling to walk with a leg brace and a walker that was the result of earlier surgery on his leg. He was looking forward, he said, to getting out of the brace and walker, to be able to get on with his union's business and the business of the larger labor family at his previous speed. Bob's previous speed often rivaled the speed of light, and even with the leg brace, we struggled to keep up with his pace.

Mr. Speaker, I will greatly miss Bob's dedication, unflinching humor and support. My prayers and heartfelt condolences go out to his wife, Judy, and his brother, Ron, and his children: Robert, Jr.; Aaron; Daron; Eric; Cornel; Erica; and Shannon.

Chicago, and the Nation, have lost a labor giant.

BEST PHARMACEUTICALS FOR
CHILDREN ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 13, 2001

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member wishes to comment on H.R. 2887, the Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act, and would like to commend the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. GREENWOOD, the sponsor of this bill, and the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. TAUZIN, the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for bringing this legislation to the House Floor today.

Mr. Speaker, this Member is unaware of any Member of Congress who opposes the appropriate testing, evaluation and proper labeling of prescription drugs for use in children. We need to ensure that medicines are safe and effective for both children and adults. The only question for debate is how to accomplish this critical public health objective.

As you are aware, the Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act would continue a program that grants prescription drug companies an additional six-month patent exclusivity, as an incentive for them to test their drugs on children. While pediatric exclusivity has resulted in an increase in the number of pediatric drug studies and has provided valuable information to pediatricians about how to use drugs in children, this Member is concerned about the current law for several reasons.

Most importantly, the law has imposed higher prices on consumers because it delays the introduction of lower-priced generic drugs for an additional six months. This Member is also concerned that the pediatric exclusivity provision provides substantial incentives to drug companies to test drugs that have high sales, particularly among adults, rather than those drugs which pediatricians need more information. It appears that brand name drug companies are receiving six months of exclusivity for

testing a drug on children, even when that testing is of minimal value because it is for an indication that rarely occurs in children, such as ulcers, hypertension, or Type II (adult-onset) diabetes. However, there seems to be adequate provisions which would cause companies to initiate such testing to gain an additional six-month patent exclusivity only upon FDA request.

Furthermore, pediatric exclusivity provides little incentive to test drugs that are still under patent, but do not result in high profits. It appears that pediatric exclusivity leaves many drugs unstudied in children, because the drug companies believe they will not make enough from six months of additional patent protection.

—————

TURBAN IS RELIGIOUS SYMBOL; IT
MUST NOT BE REMOVED

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I was distressed to find out that another Sikh was forced to remove his turban at LaGuardia Airport in New York. I am from New York, as you know, and it particularly distresses me to learn that this occurred in my home city.

According to the website Rediff.com, Surjit Babra, president of a \$100 million company called SkyLink, "was forced to remove his turban" at LaGuardia airport in New York, allegedly as part of a security inspection. Mr. Babra is a Canadian Sikh who was trying to board a flight back to Toronto. Previously, a sitting judge who is Sikh was forced to remove his turban at the same airport. We must clean up the security procedures at this airport.

Security guards asked Mr. Babra to remove his turban. Mr. Babra suggested that the guard use a hand-held scanner to scan his turban. The security guard wouldn't accept that and made him remove his turban immediately.

Mr. Speaker, the turban is a religious symbol. It is required by the Sikh religion. It is one of the five symbols every Sikh is required to carry on his person. Removing a Sikh's turban is an insult to him and to the Sikh faith.

Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, who visits my office often, sports a bright saffron turban. It looks very impressive. He is a committed, practicing Sikh and he will not remove his turban in public under any circumstances. I am sure other Sikhs feel the same way. They should not be harassed by asking them to remove their turbans at routine security checks at the airport.

I agree with Gurbax Singh Malhi, a Sikh member of the Canadian Parliament, who said that "while understanding and sharing the terrible circumstances that have led to this point", the United States should "train and educate security personnel so that they will respect the right of people of the Sikh religion to wear turbans and not subject them to this undignified and unnecessary procedure".

I urge Transportation Secretary Mineta to order the FAA to stop the harassment of Sikhs and order that their turbans not be removed unless other security means show an absolute necessity to do so.

America is a land of freedom. Sikhs come here to escape from the repression they suffer in India. They have contributed to every aspect of American life. We even had one Sikh, Dalip Singh Saund, who served in this House in the early 60s. America must respect the religious freedom of Sikhs just as it respects the religious freedom of other faiths.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to place the Rediff.com article on the Babra case in the RECORD for the information of my colleagues.

[From Rediff.com, Nov. 10, 2001]

CANADIAN SIKH FORCED TO REMOVE TURBAN
AT LA GUARDIA

(By Ajit Jain)

Surjit Babra, president of the \$100 million portfolio SkyLink, "was forced to remove his turban" at LaGuardia airport in New York, allegedly as part of a security inspection.

In a press release, Indo-Canadian Member of Parliament Gurbax Malhi, himself a turbaned Sikh, said that "while understanding and sharing the terrible circumstances that have led to this point", the United States should "train and educate security personnel so that they will respect the right of people of the Sikh religion to wear turbans and not subject them to this undignified and unnecessary procedure".

Rediff.com tried to reach Babra several times, but he wouldn't respond to telephone calls.

Businessman Garry Singh, a close friend of Babra, recounted that it was on Wednesday evening, when he was going through security before boarding his flight to Toronto at LaGuardia, that the incident took place.

Babra was asked to remove his turban by the security guard. The Sikh businessman suggested that the guard use a hand-held scanner to scan his turban. If he were still not satisfied, he would then remove his turban.

The security guard wouldn't accept that and made him remove his turban immediately.

Malhi said, "In Canada we have learned to respect religious symbols." The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has changed its rules to allow Sikhs to wear turbans on duty.

Barbra's SkyLink moves U.N. peace-keeping personnel and equipment to various countries in the world.