Questions

1. Please provide a background to the Sikh conflicts in the Punjab.
2. Please advise what states of India have a substantial percentage of Sikhs, and whether Punjabi is spoken in those states.
3. What is the pro-Khalistan movement?
4. Who is Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawala?
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9. Where is Aujla Jogi?
10. Is there any references to schoolboys being beaten at school by Hindus around 2001/2002?
11. Did the police have special rights of arrest during the conflict?

RESPONSE

1. Please provide a background to the Sikh conflicts in the Punjab.

The UK Home Office’s 2006 country assessment on India provides a comprehensive explanation of the Sikh conflicts in Punjab, using varied credible sources. The pertinent extracts follow in detail.

6.136 As noted in a background paper published in 1990 by the Immigration and Refugee Board Documentation Centre, Ottawa, Canada, new religious ideologies early in the twentieth century caused tensions in the Sikh religion. “The Akali Dal (Army of the Immortals), a political-religious movement founded in 1920, preached a return to the roots of the Sikh religion.” The Akali Dal became the political party that would articulate Sikh claims and lead the independence movement. [4a] (p9)
6.137 According to an Asia Watch report (undated), following the partition of India in 1947, the Sikhs were concentrated in India in east Punjab. Sikh leaders demanded a Punjabi language majority State that would have included most Sikhs. Fearing that a Punjabi State might lead to a separatist Sikh movement, the Government opposed the demand. [22] (p12-13) As noted in a background paper published in 1990 by the Immigration and Refugee Board Documentation Centre, Ottawa, Canada, “In 1966 a compromise was reached, when two new States of Punjab and Haryana were created. Punjabi became the official language of Punjab, and Chandigarh became the shared capital of the two States. However the agreement did not resolve the Sikh question.” [4a] (p10)

6.138 The IRB background paper 1990 reported that tensions between Sikhs and New Delhi heightened during the 1980s, as the Government did not respond to Sikh grievances. Over the years that followed, Punjab was faced with escalating confrontations and increased terrorist incidents. Akali Dal only achieved limited concessions from the Government and Sikh separatists prepared for battle. Renewed confrontations in October 1983 resulted in Punjab being placed under central Government authority. [4a] (p12-13)

6.139 According to a 2003 Amnesty International report: “India: Break the cycle of impunity and torture in Punjab”:

“The militancy period began in the early 1980s when a movement within the Sikh community, in Punjab, turned to violence to achieve an independent state of the Sikhs, which they would call Khalistan. Some sections of the ruling Congress party, whose support base included urban Hindu traders, fomented this radicalization in order to weaken their main parliamentary opposition in the state, the Akali Dal party, which represented the Sikh peasantry with a more moderate agenda. In 1982 the Akali Dal launched a civil disobedience campaign against a decision to divert a river vital to Sikh farmers in the state. A number of Sikh organizations were banned and several leaders of militant groups took shelter in the Golden Temple in Amritsar.” [51] (p4)

6.140 As noted in the Amnesty International report on the Punjab 2003: “The radicalisation of the movement for Khalistan was met with arrests under a series of national security laws that were introduced during the 1980s to meet the terrorist threat in Punjab but were enforced also in other parts of India and maintained for several years after the end of the militancy period in Punjab.” [51] (p4)

6.141 As reported by an Asia Watch report entitled “Punjab in Crisis” (published May 1994) the violence continued and hundreds of Sikhs were detained in the first part of 1984. Followers of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale established a terrorist stronghold inside the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, then initiated Operation Blue Star which took place on 4-6 June 1984. The Golden Temple was shelled and besieged by the army to dislodge the terrorists. The fighting continued for five days. Bhindranwale was killed and there was serious damage to sacred buildings. [22] (p18)

6.142 The Asia Watch report stated that official figures put the casualties at 493 “civilians/terrorists” killed and 86 wounded; and 83 troops killed and 249 wounded. Later in the year, official sources put the total number killed at about 1,000. Unofficial sources estimated that the civilian casualties alone were much higher. There were apparently more than 3,000 people in the temple when Operation Blue Star began, among them 950 pilgrims, 380 priests and other temple employees and their families, 1,700 Akali Dal supporters, 500 followers of Bhindranwale and 150 members of other armed groups. [22] (p18)

6.143 According to a Canadian IRB issue paper dated 1989, the intervention had disastrous consequences for the Sikh community and the whole country. Sikh-Hindu communalism was aggravated, Sikh extremism was reinforced, and political assassinations increased. [4a] (p15)
6.144 As noted in an Asia Watch report on 31 October 1984 Indira Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi by two Sikh bodyguards. In the days that followed, anti-Sikh rioting paralysed New Delhi, ultimately claiming at least 2,000 lives; unofficial estimates were higher. Sikhs were also attacked in other cities in northern India. [22] (p19)

6.145 Asia Watch, in the “Punjab in Crisis” report, noted that a peace agreement was concluded between the Indian Government and moderate Akali Dal Sikhs led by Harchand Singh Longowal in July 1985, which granted many of the Sikh community’s longstanding demands. However the extremists regarded Longowal as a traitor to the Sikh cause and he was assassinated in August 1985. Moreover the promised reforms did not take place. [22] (p22)

6.146 As recorded in the Europa World Year Book, 1998, in 1987 the State Government was dismissed and Punjab was placed under President’s Rule. Despite the resumption of discussions between the Government and the moderate Sikh leaders, the violence continued. [1a]

6.147 It was reported in the Europa World Year Book 1998, that President’s Rule was finally brought to an end following elections in February 1992, which were won by Congress (I). However the elections were boycotted by the leading factions of Akali Dal and attracted an extremely low turnout (only about 22% of the electorate). Beant Singh of the Congress (I) was sworn in as Chief Minister, but his Government lacked any real credibility. Despite the continuing violence between the separatists and the security forces, the large turnout in the municipal elections in September 1992, the first in 13 years, afforded some hope that normality was returning to Punjab. The local council elections in January 1993, the first for 10 years, also attracted a large turnout. [1a]

6.148 BBC News reported on 16 March 2005 in an article entitled: “The fading of Sikh militancy”, over two decades after the militancy period began in Punjab, the divide between Sikhs and Hindus has been bridged and the antagonism with the Congress party largely disappeared. “The elevation last year of Manmohan Singh as India’s first Sikh prime minister was the culmination in the changing relations. ‘The alienation between the Sikhs and Congress is a distant memory now. The ground realities are very different now,’ according to analyst Mahesh Rangarajan. In the 1999 general elections the Congress led in Punjab over its rivals the Akali Dal. Two years ago, the Congress convincingly won the state elections in Punjab, dislodging the Akali Dal from power. The state continues to have a Congress-led government.” [32hg] (UK Home Office 2006, India Assessment, April, Sections 6.136-6.148 – Attachment 1).

2. Please advise what states of India have a substantial percentage of Sikhs, and whether Punjabi is spoken in those states.

Data from the 2001 Census in India indicates that the population of Punjab state and Chandigarh union territory have the highest percentages of Sikhs living there with 59.9% (14,592,387) and 16.1% (145,175) respectively. To a lesser degree, Haryana and Dehli each have 5.5% (1,170,662) and 4% (555,602) respectively. Attachment 2 illustrates the total Sikh population in each state and union territory, as well as the proportion of Sikhs vis-à-vis the total population (‘Religion – Sikhs’ 2001, Census India website http://www.censusindia.net/religiondata/Summary%20Sikhs.pdf – Accessed 16 August 2006 – Attachment 2).
In 1997, Census India released a document – sourced from the 1991 census – displaying the three main languages used in each state and territory. Aside from the obvious Punjab, Punjabi is one of the three main languages spoken in Himachal Pradesh (6.3%), Haryana (7.1%), Chandigarh (34.7%), Uttar Pradesh (0.5%) and Dehli (7.9%) (‘Table 26: Three Main Languages in every State, 1991’ 1997, Census India website http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable26.html – Accessed 16 August 2006 – Attachment 3).

3. What is the pro-Khalistan movement?

The Khalistan movement generally refers to the demand for a separate Sikh state (called Khalistan) in Punjab. The independence movement was propagated by members of the political-religious group Akali Dal and its various splinter groups, and internationally among the Sikh diaspora. The movement’s origin dates back to the late nineteenth century when communal boundaries became more antagonistic between Hindus and Sikhs. The movement was primarily led by Akali Dal, who adopted a stronger stance for a separate state around the early 1980s, together with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The movement began to fade around the early 1990s reportedly due to the impact of almost a decade of violence and economic repercussions (Weiss, M. 2002, ‘The Khalistan Movement in Punjab’, Yale Center for International & Area Studies website, 25 June http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/globalization/punjab.pdf – Accessed 7 November 2003 – Attachment 4).

Please refer to RRT Research Response IND16298 of November 2003 which also provides information regarding the Khalistan movement, its decline and links to Jalandhar (RRT Country Research 2003, Research Response IND16298, 25 November – Attachment 5).

4 Who is Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawala?

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was a Sikh religious leader who first appeared around 1978 from relative obscurity and went on to lead what is generally referred to as the Khalistan movement. The UK Home Office states the following about Bhindranwale:

A charismatic Sikh religious leader who first appeared in 1977. He preached strict fundamentalism and an armed struggle for national liberation. He was arrested following the killing of Lal Jagat Narain, editor of a pro-Hindu newspaper, in 1981. He was released immediately, but his prestige increased among young Sikhs. Sikh unrest escalated and 10,000 Sikhs barricaded themselves in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Operation Blue Star was initiated by then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, and the temple was besieged and shelled by the army. Thousands were killed, among them Bhindranwale (UK Home Office 2003, ‘Annex C: Prominent People’ in India Assessment, April http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?PageId=177 – Accessed 3 September 2003 – Attachment 6).

Bhindranwale was profiled in a millennium edition of India Today that profiled one hundred individuals who have influenced Indian society. He appeared under the title ‘Builders & Breakers’. Author Tavleen Singh had the following to say regarding Bhindranwale’s life:
Sometime in the late ‘70s he began making a name for himself in the villages of Punjab for his aggressive approach to enforce what he considered pure Sikhism. He would wander about telling youths not to trim their beards, ordering them to give up intoxicants for studying the scriptures. Abstinence was the essence of his own philosophy and, unusually for a Jat Sikh, he was even a vegetarian. His followers took pride in telling people that their Santji did not even drink tea because in his view it fell into the intoxicants’ category.

It was in his pursuit of pure Sikhism that he first caught national attention. On April 13, 1978 there was a violent clash between his followers and a group of Nirankaris whom he considered untrue Sikhs. Several people were killed and Bhindranwale approached a group of amateur politicians who claimed proximity to Sanjay Gandhi. Through connections in the All India Sikh Students’ Federation, they managed to persuade him to set up his own candidates against the Akali Dal in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee elections of 1979. He was badly defeated but by then other important politicians made the mistake of thinking they could also use him.

In 1981 Lala Jagat Narain, owner of the Punjab Kesri group of newspapers, was shot dead in the first of a series of assassinations in Punjab. Bhindranwale was wanted for questioning but was allowed, for unexplained reasons, to choose the moment of his arrest. So, he drove through Delhi with a busload of armed followers till he arrived at Chowk Mehta in Punjab, and only allowed himself to be arrested after a gun battle with the police.

…By 1982 Bhindranwale had moved himself, and a large group of his followers, into a guest house called the Guru Nanak Niwas, in the precincts of the Golden Temple. It was from here that he began to build himself into a media star. International television crews began to descend on him as the violence in Punjab grew and took a communal turn with innocent Hindu travellers being targeted.

…The irony is that it was through his death that Bhindranwale succeeded in achieving his objective. Not by dying but because in order to win their battle against him the Indian Army had to destroy the Akal Takht. After Operation Bluestar soldiers targeted Sikh youths in Punjab villages in a mopping-up exercise codenamed Operation Woodrose. It was after this that a large number of Sikh youths fled to Pakistan. Bhindranwale remained their hero and leader just as to Hindus he remained a prophet of hate (Singh, T. 2000, ‘Builders & Breakers – Prophet of Hate J S Bhindranwale’, India Today http://www.india-today.com/itoday/millennium/100people/jarnail.html – Accessed 10 August 2006 – Attachment 7).

The UK Home Office’s 2006 country assessment for India states the following:

…most of the militant groups in Punjab traced their origins to Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. After the storming of the Golden Temple the number of militant groups operating in Punjab grew. The militants were organised into at least seven major groups and all theoretically operated under the authority of one of the Panthic Committees which functioned as decision making bodies and issued instructions. The main militant organisations were: the Khalistan Commando Force (Paramjit Singh Panjwar faction); Khalistan Commando Force (Zaffarwal); Khalistan Commando Force (Rajasthani group); Babbar Khalsa; Khalistan Liberation Force (Budhisingwala); Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (Sangha); Bhindranwale Tiger Force (Manochahal); All India Sikh Student Federation (Manjit); All India Sikh Student Federation (Mehta Chawla); and the Sikh Student Federation (Bittu)… (UK Home Office 2006, India Assessment, April, Sections 6.136-6.148 – Attachment 1).
5. When was the conflict at its height, and when did peace come to the Punjab? Is it enduring?


Several reports state that impunity continues in Punjab for past abuses carried out by security forces. Amnesty International issued a public statement in October 2004 stating that “thousands of families are still waiting to see justice or know the fate of their relatives who “disappeared” that [sic] period … The organization found that regular incidents of torture and custodial violence in the Punjab occur even today” (Amnesty International 2004, *India: Punjab – Twenty years on impunity continues*, 29 October – Attachment 8).

In a 2002 essay titled *The Khalistan Movement in Punjab*, author Meredith Weiss of Yale University states the following in relation to Bhindranwale:

> Bhindranwale developed a mass base among the emerging underclass of educated Jat Sikh youths, mostly from Amritsar and Gurdaspur, produced by the green revolution. He allied with the All-India Sikh Students’ Federation (AISSF), a group which drew most of its support from poorer to middle-income Sikhs (not all of them students). The Akali Dal, in contrast, was comprised mostly of more middle class and urban or prosperous farmers, primarily from the Malwa region.


6. What was Operation Bluestar?

Operation Bluestar refers to the military operation carried out at the Golden Temple in Amritsar on 4 June 1984, under the direction of then Prime Minister Indira Ghandi. In her 2002 essay, Meredith Weiss provides the following account of Operation Bluestar:

> On 4 June 1984, in an operation codenamed Bluestar, 2,000 army troops moved in to arrest Akali leaders inside the temple. This action incited thousands of Sikh peasants to converge upon Amritsar. The military dispersed the crowds and launched a full-scale attack on the Temple, taking control of it. In the process, an estimated 5,000 civilians, including Bhindranwale, and 700 officers were killed. The army also attacked forty other gurudwaras where Sikh activists were allegedly hiding. The temple sustained substantial damage in the
attack, including to manuscripts and other artifacts. In the wake of the attack, “The entire Sikh community was outraged, not so much by the death of Bhindranwale but by the all-out assault on their premier shrine by the Indian army” (Deol 2000:108). A number of Sikh troops deserted the military and tried to march toward Amritsar, several Sikhs resigned from Parliament or other government posts, and Sikh intellectuals returned government-given honors in protest. The government rebuilt the shrine, but their doing so was popularly seen as the government’s again taking control and attempting to humiliate the Sikhs.

In the following months, the government conducted Operation Woodrose, arresting and sometimes torturing or killing thousands of Sikhs, including all prominent Akali leaders, and instituting ordinances for detention without trial, extraordinary rules for evidence, and so on. Most of the AISSF’s rank and file went underground, though a number of leaders were arrested or killed. Also, a large number rural Sikh youths crossed the border into Pakistan. The state was sealed off with additional troops, martial law was declared, complete press censorship was established, and the Golden Temple was occupied militarily. Leaf suggests that this disproportionate, inappropriate response just “served as evidence of what [Bhindranwale] was trying to prove:” Indira Gandhi’s government’s hostility to Sikhs and shift away from basic democratic procedures and toward autocracy (Leaf 1985:494) (Weiss, M. 2002, ‘The Khalistan Movement in Punjab’, Yale Center for International & Area Studies website, 25 June http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/globalization/punjab.pdf – Accessed 7 November 2003 – Attachment 4).

The US Department of State’s 2005 report on religious freedom provides a similar description of ‘Operation Bluestar’ as Weiss above. The pertinent extracts follow in detail.

The anti-Sikh riots, which followed the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, lasted for approximately 4 days and resulted in more than 3,000 deaths. The assassination was in retaliation for Indira Gandhi’s authorization of Operation Blue Star, during which the army assaulted terrorists holed up in Sikhism’s holiest shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, killing a prominent Sikh political leader and many of his supporters and damaging the complex [Researcher emphasis]. In October 2004, Amnesty International (AI) called for the perpetrators of the 1984 anti-Sikh violence to be brought to justice to heal the wounds of this period. AI stated that only a small minority of police officers responsible for the 1984 human rights violations has ever been prosecuted (US Department of State 2005, International Religious Freedom Report – India, 8 November, Section II – Attachment 9).

7 Where is Jalandar?


8. Who is Wassan Singh Jaffarwal? Did he give himself up? Did he leave India, and if so, when?

Wassan Singh Zaffarwal is best known as the one-time leader of the Khalistan Commando Force (KCF). Most sources agree that he moved to Switzerland around 1994 from Pakistan.
On 11 April 2001, Zaffarwal allegedly “walked into police custody as part of a surrender deal”. However a *BBC News* article states that he was arrested in Amritsar. The following extracts expound the details of his return and subsequent arrest:

Wassan Singh Zaffarwal was picked up by police at a hotel near Amritsar’s main bus terminal on Wednesday.

He was the chief of the outlawed Khalistan Commando Force and a senior member of the Panthic Committee, which orchestrated the armed separatist movement in Punjab in the 1980s and the early 1990s.

…Police say that after living for years in Pakistan, he moved to Switzerland some years ago.

…It has been reported that Mr Zaffarwal was planning to formally surrender to the authorities, possibly to avoid attempts on his life.

This was inadvertently foiled after he was spotted in Chandigarh at the wedding reception of a local Akali Dal party leader’s son (Jolly, A. 2001, ‘Top Sikh separatist held’, *BBC News*, 12 April [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1273497.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1273497.stm) – Accessed 9 August 2006 – Attachment 12).

Question 9 of *RRT Research Response IND16298* of November 2003 provides information on Wassan Singh Zaffarwal. The relevant extracts follow in detail:


Zaffarwal was acquitted of sedition charges in March 2003. In 2002 he was also acquitted of a killing in 1995 and in a case involving fake travel documents (‘Zaffarwal’ 2003, *The Press Trust of India Limited*, 7 March – Attachment 33). He reportedly had nine criminal cases registered against him and has been acquitted in seven (‘Zaffarwal talks of ‘azadi’, reforms’ 2003, *The Times of India*, 8 May – Attachment 34).


9. Where is Aujla Jogi?


10. Is there any references to schoolboys being beaten at school by Hindus around 2001/2002?

No reference to schoolboys being beaten at school by Hindus around 2001/2002 was found in the sources consulted.

11. Did the police have special rights of arrest during the conflict?

Information from the sources consulted indicates that security forces did have “extraordinary discretionary powers” in Punjab from the late 1980’s, granted by the central government. In her 2002 essay, Meredith Weiss discusses those powers as follows:

From 1987 on, the central government set its security forces loose in Punjab, granting them extraordinary discretionary powers in combating Sikh militants. The government was more concerned with suppressing militancy via brute force and counter-insurgency than with remedying the underlying causes of the conflict. Extrajudicial killings, torture, anonymous arrests, and more were prevalent, along with another assault on the Golden Temple (Operation Blackthunder, in May 1988). Indian paramilitary forces eventually eliminated most of the Sikh activists involved. In the meantime, civilians were squeezed between warring security forces and militants. By 1991, civilian casualties accounted for nearly three-fourths of all killings. Amid the situation of general lawlessness, any who could abandoned [sic] their land and migrated to the cities (Major 1987:55-6; Deol 2000: 112-14) (Weiss, M. 2002, ‘The Khalistan Movement in Punjab’, Yale Center for International & Area Studies website, 25 June http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/globalization/punjab.pdf – Accessed 7 November 2003 – Attachment 4).

The UK Home Office’s 2006 country assessment for India states the following in relation to misuse of power by Punjab police and the central government:

**Human rights concerns in Punjab**

6.159 Various human rights organisations have strongly criticised the Punjab police for their misuse of power during the 1980s and early 1990s. Amnesty International reported in a 1991 report entitled “Human Rights Violations in Punjab”: Use and Abuse of the law that
those who were arrested were...detained for months or years without trial under provisions of special legislation suspending normal legal safeguards…”, and reports of torture during interrogation were said to be common: “The arrest and detention of some detainees remained unacknowledged for weeks or months. Amnesty had received reports that many people simply ‘disappeared’, with the security forces refusing to admit that they had ever been arrested. It was feared that many of them had been killed in custody.” [3a] (p2)

6.160 According to Amnesty International’s 2003 report: “India, Break the cycle of impunity in Punjab”, “Torture and custodial violence continue to be regularly reported in Punjab, despite the end of the militancy period.” AI states that torture continued in police custody and that the majority of the armed opposition groups were inactive in Punjab today. AI had received no reports of acts of torture perpetrated by their members after the end of the militancy period. “The report notes that most of the members of these groups in the state were arrested or killed by security forces in counter insurgency operations in the early 1990s.” [51] (p2)

6.161 Amnesty International’s January 2003 report on the Punjab stated that:

“The 1980 National Security Act (NSA) amended in 1984 because of ‘the extremist and terrorist elements in the disturbed areas of Punjab and Chandigarh’, provided powers to preventively detain people suspected of activities ‘prejudicial to the defence of India, the relations of India with foreign powers or the security of India’ for up to two years in Punjab and up to one year in the rest of India. The Terrorist Affected Areas (special Courts) Act followed the NSA in 1984. The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, in force from 1985 to 1995, subsequently provided the police in Punjab with sweeping powers of arrest and detention. These laws left the heaviest legacies of the militancy period on policing methods in the state and the rest of the country. They explicitly freed the police from accountability to the criminal justice system for actions undertaken in ‘good faith’, allowing officers to believe themselves beyond the reach of law.” [51] (p4-5)

6.162 Amnesty International reported in 2003 in the Punjab report that:

“Human rights violations by the police during the decade of militancy were widespread. Indiscriminate and arbitrary arrests continued in this period, setting a pattern that continued until the mid-1990s. Civilians were often arrested solely for being related to or living in the same village as members of armed opposition groups. Unofficial blacklists were circulated to all police stations and persons on this list were liable to be rearrested during militant activity in the area. Arrests often occurred when a quick solution for a case was needed or simply to fulfil an arrest quota. Arrest procedures were frequently not followed and the arrest was often not recorded in the daily log of the police station, thus remaining completely unofficial and leaving detainees vulnerable to further abuses. Detainees were frequently moved from one police station to another, or to unofficial interrogation centers, making it difficult for their families and lawyers to trace them. Torture was widespread and used both as a substitute for investigation and as punishment. The police routinely disregarded court orders to bring detainees before a court, and judges were threatened to deter them from taking action against the police. When detainees died in police custody, the police organized the post-mortems and the cremations before any independent investigation could be carried out into the cause of death. Undercover agents were also unofficially recruited: these were often former members of armed opposition groups offered not to be killed or tortured in exchange for their collaboration with the police. They were reportedly used to infiltrate militant groups, to kill militants or to discredit them with violent actions in their names. Disappearances and the killing of members of armed opposition groups and their supporters by the police in real or staged ‘encounters’ were frequent. They were tolerated by the police authorities and government as part of a policy to eliminate armed opposition groups.” [51] (p5)
Amnesty International stated in their 1991 Punjab report:

“Most detainees in Punjab were arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) [which lapsed in 1995], which allowed detention for up to one year without charge for investigation into broadly defined offences. Prisoners held under the Act could be tried in camera [i.e. in private] and the burden of proof was shifted onto the accused to prove his or her innocence.” [3a] (Introduction-p2)

As cited in a statement dated May 1998 by Dr. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood of the University of Maine, “Conditions in Punjab have greatly improved since the worst days of the early 1990s”, and “it is no longer accurate to say that any Sikh is at risk of persecution simply because of his or her religion”. [19b] (p2)

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services, in a response to a query, (last updated on 22 September 2003), noted that:

“Several observers suggest, though, that while Punjab police may be serious about pursuing Sikhs anywhere in India whom they view as hard-core militants, in practice only a handful of militants are likely to be targeted for such long-arm law enforcement. While noting that Sikhs who are on police lists for past involvement with armed groups could be at risk even if not presently active, the Indian human rights attorney said in his May 2003 e-mail to the RIC that, ‘[t]he number of persons who figure in such lists is really very small and I do not think the police and intelligence agencies have in the last years been adding many names’ (Indian human rights lawyer 4 May 2003). A South Asia expert at the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research said that it is unlikely that Punjab police are currently pursuing many Sikhs for alleged militant activities given that the insurgency there was crushed in the early 1990s (U.S. DOS INR 25 Apr 2003).” [86] (p2) (UK Home Office 2006, India Assessment, April, Sections 6.136-6.148 – Attachment 1).

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Human Rights Watch (HRW) http://www.hrw.org/
South Asian Human Rights Documentation Centre http://www.hri.ca/
International News & Politics
BBC News http://news.bbc.co.uk/
Region Specific Links
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2. ‘Religion – Sikhs’ 2001, Census India website 

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10. ‘Jalandhar (Punjab) map’ (undated), Punjab Police website


13. ‘Kapurthala (Punjab) map’ (undated), Punjab Police website

14. ‘Name of the villages’ (undated), India ruralstat.com web site