

# News Release

Department of  
External  
Affairs



# Communiqué

Ministère des  
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extérieures

No. 216

September 30, 1988.

## LETTER TO THE HONOURABLE ROBERT KAPLAN

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, has sent the following letter, with its attachment, to the Honourable Robert Kaplan, Member of Parliament for York-Centre concerning Mr. Balkar Singh:

"Dear Bob:

I was surprised to learn, through the press, of your September 19 letter to me, concerning Mr. Balkar Singh. Publicity stunts like that might gain you notoriety - they do not help Mr. Balkar Singh. I would have expected a former Solicitor-General to have been more sensitive to the plight of a Canadian in jail abroad.

Since the first days following Mr. Singh's arrest I have been personally involved in resolving this case. Enclosed you will find a list of interventions on behalf of Mr. Singh by me and my officials. As you noted in your letter my statement in the House of Commons in November, 1987 made public the fact that Mr. Singh had been mistreated and conveyed the outrage of the Canadian government to the government of India. Canadian officials have since visited Mr. Singh in jail, he has had regular visits from members of his family and he has been in direct touch with his lawyer. As well, Mr. Singh informed Canadian officials that he has seen prison doctors on an ongoing basis.

Your penchant for headlines could make it more difficult to help Mr. Singh, at this sensitive stage. If you are prepared, as a Privy Councillor, to respect a confidential briefing, I would be willing to have my officials brief you confidentially on the present status of this case.

Yours sincerely,"

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Secretary of State  
for  
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État  
aux  
Affaires extérieures

Canada

INTERVENTIONS BY CANADIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

ON BEHALF OF

BALKAR SINGH

The Canadian High Commission in New Delhi has maintained regular contact with senior Indian officials concerning Balkar Singh. In addition, they have maintained regular and ongoing contacts with Mr. Singh's relatives in India and had frequent discussions with his lawyer. As well officials in Ottawa frequently raised the case with the Indian High Commissioner and were in frequent contact with Mr. Singh's family here in Canada.

The following is a listing of the formal occasions when Mr. Singh's case was discussed with senior Indian officials both in Canada and in India but does not include numerous phone contacts with Indian authorities on behalf of Mr. Singh.

- Nov 08-87 Canadian High Commission (CHC) requested details of Mr. Singh's arrest from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- Nov 10-87 High Commission spoke with senior officials in the MEA on the case.
- Nov 13-87 Case discussed with MEA.
- Nov 19-87 Formal request for consular access sent to MEA.
- Nov 20-87 Follow up on formal request with MEA.
- Nov 24-87 MEA confirms consular access will be granted.
- Nov 26-87 Canadian officials including doctor visit Balkar Singh.
- Nov 27-87 Formal protest of mistreatment of Balkar Singh lodged with MEA. Promise of investigation provided.
- Dec 01-87 Case discussed with Director General, Punjab Police and Punjab Governor Ray.
- Dec 03-87 Indian High Commissioner to Canada called in on instructions of SSEA and protest on mistreatment made.
- Dec 04-87 MEA repeated promise that investigation would be conducted.
- Dec 11-87 Case raised again in meeting with MEA.
- Jan 07-88 High Commission received request from Balkar Singh for another consular visit.

- Jan 08-88 High Commissioner officially requested second consular access.
- Jan 18-88 MEA requested additional information and High Commission responded.
- Jan 27-88 High Commission sends second request for consular access.
- Jan 28-88 Case is again discussed with MEA.
- Feb 08-88 MEA informs Canadian officials that question of consular access currently under discussion by different ministries involved.
- Feb 18-88 Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs raises issue with Indian Foreign Secretary during meeting in New Delhi.
- Mar 01-88 MEA states during meeting that investigation has been conducted but as matter is before courts no information could be provided.
- Canadian officials present MEA with Diplomatic Note again requesting consular access.
- Mar 14-88 High Commissioner speaks to MEA and is promised consular access.
- Mar 30-88 MEA confirms access will be granted.
- Apr 11-88 Arrangements made for consular access visit.
- Apr 19-88 Canadian official visits Balkar Singh.
- May 15-88 SSEA raises Balkar Singh with Indian Minister of State for External Affairs during meetings in Calgary.
- May 31-88 Canadian officials raise case with MEA.
- Jun 20-88 High Commissioner raised issue with the Indian Minister for Home Affairs.
- Jun 29-88 High Commissioner discussed matter with MEA Permanent Secretary.
- Jul 12-88 High Commissioner meets with the Permanent Secretary again to express Canadian disappointment and personal disappointment of SSEA at lack of action on case.

- Jul 19-88 CHC officials attended Supreme Court hearing.  
During meeting with MEA issue was raised again. Requested that MEA ensure that new Foreign Minister be apprised of case prior to attending the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Meeting on South Africa in early August.
- Jul 21-88 High Commissioner meets with Secretary Ministry of Home Affairs and raised case.
- Jul 26-88 High Commissioner called on the Indian Foreign Minister and raised matter.
- Aug 03-88 SSEA expressed his disappointment at lack of movement on this case to the Indian Foreign Minister.
- Sep 13-88 Case discussed with MEA.
- Sep 27-88 High Commissioner raised case with Indian Foreign Secretary.

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