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Sikh Federation International participates in First World Congress on Enforced Disappearances

(Geneva, Switzerland: 4 Maagh, 556 Nanakshahi | January 17, 2025 CE) – Representatives of Sikh Federation International (SFI) participated in the 1st World Congress on Enforced Disappearances in Geneva where they engaged with global leaders, international experts, as well as key UN officials and representatives who lead human rights mechanisms that respond to enforced disappearances.

The conference took place between January 15-16 in Geneva, Switzerland and was co-organized by the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Convention Against Enforced Disappearances Initiative. The representatives raised the issue of enforced disappearances in Punjab that were perpetrated by Indian forces to suppress political mobilization and widespread support for an independent Khalistan.

Immediately following the military invasion of Sri Darbar Sahib in June 1984, Indian security forces launched Operation Woodrose and disappeared thousands of young Sikh men across Punjab. This tactic of ethnic cleansing was intensified and maintained for nearly ten years, incorporating arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Sikh activist, Bhai Jaswant Singh Khalra, documented thousands of extrajudicial killings and mass cremations, and was ultimately killed by security forces for his role in exposing Indian atrocities.

Since the annexation of the Sirkar-i-Khalsa and colonization of Punjab by the British in 1849, the Guru Khalsa Panth has continuously mobilized to reestablish our sovereignty and establish an independent state, Khalistan. In response, Indian security forces have rejected any political settlement on self-determination and continue to use force to violently crush Sikh dissent in order to maintain political hegemony over the region.

SFI representative, Bhai Moninder Singh, stated, “while recognizing the important contributions of international movements and communities, particularly those from the Global South, who helped shape the international human rights architecture, we emphasized the importance of justice to ensure that human rights instruments are not limited to simple reactionary defence mechanisms. Instead, international forums must demonstrate the will to address the underlying issues that create the conditions for violations because human rights cannot replace political struggle and liberation.”

The Sikh representatives expressed their solidarity with activists from all over the world, particularly across South Asia, and discussed the need for increased coordination going forward. Rather than relying on the unequal global institutions of today’s world to solve our problems, the representatives emphasized the importance of utilizing global forums to challenge power imbalances, engage in direct dialogue with peoples around the world, and boldly articulate the unique Sikh vision for *sarbat da bhala* and just governance that is envisioned in Khalistan.

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