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A report titled "Protecting the Killers: A Policy of Impunity in Punjab" has documented the Centre's counterinsurgency operations in Punjab from 1984 to 1995, stating that during the operations, the Indian [security](#) forces committed serious human rights abuses against tens of thousands of Sikhs.

NGOs, [Human Rights](#) Watch and Ensaaf have demanded that the Centre institute a commission of inquiry to hold accountable members of its security forces who killed, "disappeared," and tortured thousands of Sikhs. The 125-page report released on Thursday describes the impunity enjoyed by officials allegedly responsible for violations and the near total failure of India's judicial and state institutions, from the National Human Rights Commission to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), to provide justice for victims' families. The report also examines the challenges faced by victims and their relatives, in the aftermath of government's counterinsurgency campaign, in pursuing legal avenues for accountability for the human rights abuses.

The report discusses the case of Jaswant Singh Khalra, a leading human rights defender in Punjab who was abducted and then murdered in October 1995 allegedly by government officials after being held in illegal detention for almost two months. The report says that despite credible eyewitness testimony that [police](#) chief K.P.S. Gill was directly involved in interrogating Khalra in illegal detention just days prior to Khalra's murder, the CBI has thus far refused to investigate or prosecute Mr Gill.

"Delivering justice in Punjab could set precedents throughout India for the redress of mass state crimes and superior responsibility," said Jaskaran Kaur, co-director of Ensaaf.

Another key case discussed in detail in the report is the decadeold Punjab "mass cremations case," in which the security services are implicated in thousands of killings and secret cremations throughout Punjab to hide the evidence of wrongdoing. The case is currently before the NHRC. "The NHRC has inexplicably failed in its duties to investigate and establish exactly what happened in Punjab," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "We still hold out hope that it will change course and bring justice to victims and their families." Mohinder Singh, whose son Jugraj Singh was killed in an alleged faked armed encounter between security forces and separatists in January 1995, describes his interactions with the CBI in the report - "On one occasion when [the officer] from the CBI came to my house, he told me that I wasn't going to get anything out of this.

Not justice and not even compensation. He further said that: 'I see you running around pursuing your case. But you shouldn't get into a confrontation with the police. You have to live here and they can pick you up at any time.' He was indirectly threatening me."

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