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Serial Nos.

Subject.

Situation in the Punjab — Miss Inridula

Sarabhai's report to the Hon. Prime Minister

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Care D.C.'s Bungalow,
Amritsar.

My dear Jawaharlalji,

Since yesterday I have been trying to contact you on the phone but without success. Today telegraphic communications have also broken down. Herewith a copy of the telegram that I am trying to send you. Further facts are—it is difficult to find out the real situation regarding peace in this district or in East Punjab because the higher officials do not get the facts. It is reported that Thana police refuse to register complaints and incidents. Officially improvement is reported while congress and Muslim circles report otherwise: cases of arson and attacks yet go on, but less intensity. Rural areas where Muslims are trapped situation is disquieting. I propose to go on tours to find out facts. Government officials except the D.C. are Sikhs; so Muslim refugees' problem is completely neglected. Brigadier Stuard seems to be the only person who is doing anything for them. I have not yet been able to study the Muslim refugees' problem, but hope to do so in a day or two—through Malik. If we want impartial treatment to the refugees on the other side, we must do the same here. This cannot be hoped through local authorities. Even Chandra has deputed me to find facts for him! So I would urge that rehabilitation department personnel should be supplied by the centre who will not be influenced by local considerations but will do their duty. This is not a civil job. The problem is vast and needs efficient handling. Military personnel should be selected by the centre and be appointed by the Provincial Government.

Amritsar will not quieten down until we have mixed staff in key posts. At present the Sikhs—and those who belong to Akali Dal only—are appointed here. Feelings between Muslim and Sikhs are running so high that a Sikh officer is afraid to go to a Muslim locality even on duty.

Muslim interests are very well looked into by the Deputy High Commissioner, Pakistan, and Pakistan radio also gives stories of what Government is doing for the refugees while we on our side lack organisation, propaganda. Reports of forcible conversion, taking away of women, destruction and looting of property, forcible evacuation, continue to pour in and are supported by military reports of Brar also.

Transport has completely broken down. I met the railway authorities. They have started work today but are short of staff. Lahore was the nerve centre of Punjab communications. That being broken, new arrangements are to be made. If it is to be done through "proper channels" we do not know when it will be over. So a Central Transport Officer and a Railway officer is needed. Early transport of refugees can be solved if the attached scheme is immediately sanctioned and facilities given. This will have to be negotiated between both Governments. If this is done we can save lives.

Brigadier Brar explained to me the reasons of his ineffectiveness. He said that he is posted without a staff. In consultation with him I have prepared the chart of administration required for Pakistan. All officers may not be wanted after some time, but just now they must be posted. This will check the tendency of the refugees to instigate people here.

Regarding houses of minorities, it is reported that in Lahore the Government is encouraging of the breaking open of the deserted houses and giving them to the Muslim refugees. Pressure is being brought here to do the same. If no immediate steps are taken, people may take law in their hands and occupy them. In some places they have already done so at the contrivance of the officers. I suggest that requisitioning of houses and transport should be negotiated and agreed upon by both the Governments. For protection of property managers in each division be appointed.

Duties of Deputy High Commissioners should be decided. They are liaison between Governments for their nationals. They should not be allowed to do administrative work in that area. Relief and rescue work of all should be the responsibility of the Government concerned. At present Malik is doing all this through the military, maybe because Government here have not been able to attend to it.

Brigadier Brar showed me his military report of the situation. Conditions in East Punjab and Amritsar rural areas are bad; until deterrent measures are taken we will be risking the whole of India. Brigadier Thimayya and Bhide have arrived on their way to Pakistan. They tell me that Baldev Singh is in the province and will visit this place tomorrow.

My impression is that the problems here are so great that they cannot be dealt with by the new Ministry. They need strong impartial staff and under the emergency defence clause if we can take over a district we should take over Amritsar.

Leaders have expressed their strong determination to put an end to strife--but I do not feel confident about their promises nor about the officers. They talk in an irresponsible manner, which flares up disturbances.

The question of nationalist Muslims is disturbing. There are a few here. Sheikh Hisammuddin met me. He is in hiding (?) and his host is daily threatened. By the Sevak Sangh. If I stay in a separate house with such workers and leaders of other communities will it not help restoring confidence?

There was a small incident last night near Malik Sahib's house. Something burst up, noise was like a small grenade, so it is reported. There is no sign of damage near about the area so the D.C tells me but this will be a political first call news and have its repercussions. They have arrested some one.

Herewith are attached--

- (1) Notes on efficient rail transport of refugees--
Copy given to Bhide.
- (2) Note on administrative machinery Pakistan--Copy
given to Bhide.
- (3) Note on administrative machinery--Rehabilitation
in East Punjab--Copy will be given to
Prime Minister.
- (4) Copy of letter received from Brigadier Stuart
(for information)
- (5) Copy of the proposed telegram to be sent by me

Greetings,

Yours affly,

Mridula.

I am O.K. Reached Lahore by plane and here in a
convoy! Missed Bijjubhai as she was at Amritsar.

P.S.

(1) Deserted cattle is perishing on both sides. We are losing our cattle wealth. I suggest that we post military on the road from Lahore to Amritsar and leaders patrol the area till their respective boundaries and we get through refugees and cattle. Men can walk down. Muggage and children can be brought in patrol and non-patrol transport. We should not allow the repetition of mistakes made in Bihar. Government should run all camps with efficient staff of their own and no non-official agencies should be helped by Govt. finances. If this takes place then camps will become centres of party politics. All ready (Already) wire pulling is going on. Which will be harmful. What we are now doing in Bihar should be taken up here.

Youth can only be controlled if home guard scheme is launched under a non-communal officer from outside the province. Tackle the youth and ex-service men in this way and we may be able to get peace. When you come please get us copies of home guard schemes of UP and Bombay.

Trivedi should address the police and military rank and file, talk to them hold meetings and bring them around to impartial approach.

Excuse me for mistakes in spellings.

Mridula.

4 4
CONFIDENTIAL

TELEPHONE MESSAGE FROM DUTY OFFICER, HQ PUNJAB BOUNDARY
FORCE RECEIVED BY DUTY OFFICER, OPS ROOM, SUPREME
COMMANDER'S HQ, NEW DELHI AT 1530 HOURS 23rd Aug. 1947.

To: Hon'ble Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

From: Iftakhar Hussain, Premier, West Punjab.

Regret that despite your efforts massacres, arson and loot in East Punjab reaching unimaginable heights of intensity. Lakhs of impoverished helpless refugees pouring into West Punjab and many lakhs huddled in as yet spared East Punjab villages and towns without food or protection. I went to Jullundur yesterday and was assured that situation will improve. But on way back I ran into column of 5,000 refugees fleeing from villages attacked few hours earlier in Amritsar Dist. Punjab Boundary Force military escort accompanying me visited one of the attacked villages and saw terrible scenes of devastation. Some looters captured who disclosed thoroughly organized scheme of attack directed by topmost Sikh leadership. Persons captured at present in Jandiala Thana (Amritsar Dist) and you may confirm facts. Appears that ruthless offensive against helpless Muslims unchecked and encouraged. Unless drastic steps taken, situation in my Province will be beyond control. Request you to come at once and stay in East Punjab and make one final effort before catastrophe.

IMMEDIATE.

Sd/- A.K. Singh.

Major,

OPS Room

1630 hours 23 Aug 47.

(Phone 2544).

Sharma to Jullundur

1. The Government of the West Punjab has arranged for the establishment of Refugee Camps in towns of Eastern Punjab. The Eastern Punjab Government and the Indian Government should open out such camps immediately.
2. The Punjab Boundary Force is apparently working for and in the interests of the Western Punjab:-
 - (a). In the press notes issued by the P.B. Force mention about the disturbances in Eastern Punjab is always made and news about the burning of towns, slaughter of minorities and indignities to Hindu women in Western Punjab is religiously avoided. News about the happenings in Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Hafizabad, Gujrat, Sialkot, Montgomery, Okara, Pattoki etc. are all screened off.
 - (b). Criminals rounded up by the P.B. Force in Eastern Punjab are taken to Western Punjab. Why?
3. If any Standstill Agreement regarding the movement of Assets and Properties were made, why not publish the same for the information of the public in general - and also insist on its due fulfilment.
4. For the evacuation of minorities and their moveable properties from Western Punjab, the Indian Government should immediately send special Passenger and Goods trains under strong Military Guards and not depend on N.W.R or E.P.R.
5. Propaganda. Whereas the Pakistan and Western Punjab Governments are indulging in vigorous propaganda about the happenings in Eastern Punjab, there is absolutely no propaganda from this side about the brutalities being committed in Western Punjab.
6. The first act of the Western Punjab Government has been to order liberal issue of arms, no such action has been taken by the Eastern Punjab. It should not be forgotten that Eastern Punjab is now the BOUNDARY of India.
7. Now that Eastern Punjab is the boundary of India, the money which would have been spent in N.W. Frontier had N.W.F.P. joined India, should be spent in East Punjab. The Government of India should forthwith make an announcement in this respect and that will have a great effect

8. Those of the refugees from Western Punjab, who have lost all - should be given every facility to re-establish e.g. grant of lands for house and factory buildings at reasonable rates, supply of electricity etc.
9. The dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs slaughtered in West Punjab are rotting. Immediate action for their proper disposal should be taken.
10. Arrangements should be made for imparting news to the friends and relatives of those who have been affected in Western Punjab.
11. Special intelligence staff should be posted in Western Punjab.