

## **Affidavit of Poonam Muttreja**

### **Misra Commission**

I, Poonam Muttreja D/o Shri Amar Nath, aged 30 yrs., Munirka Enclave, New Delhi, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under:

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1. I have been residing at the above-mentioned address along with my mother, father and brother since October 82. My father works as an administrator in a Delhi based company called DANTOSS. My mother works part time as a volunteer with Lajpat Bhawan (social work) and my brother runs a small unit producing rollers in Delhi.
2. I was in my office (C-17, Usha Niketan, Safdarjung Development Area, New Delhi-110016), on the 31st October, '84, when my office helper informed me at 10:30 A.M. about the attempted shoot out at Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India. I rang up my friend Mr. Alok Mukhopadhyaya, Field Director, OXFAM who along with Shri Ravi Chopra, Director, Centre for Science and Environment came to my office at 11:45 A.M. and we went to the All-India Institute of Medical Science. There were thousands of people standing outside the A.I.I.M.S., which included people from all communities.
3. We proceeded to Connaught Place to go to the STATESMAN office and to find out about the condition of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the atmosphere in Delhi amongst the common man on the street.

4. As we arrived at the Statesman office at 2 P.M. we read the spotlight which had declared Mrs. Indira Gandhi dead. We spent about half-an-hour observing the crowd. There were Hindu's and Sikhs looking subdued and leaving for bus stands and rushing for auto-rickshaws. Also, there was an enormous rush for the morning editions of newspapers. We then returned to our respective houses.
  
5. I was getting ready to visit a friend in the evening when a friend phoned me to inform me that there stone-throwing at shops owned by the Sikh community in South Extension and that I should therefore, not pass through that area. I got another phone call from a friend Manab Chakravarty, who was residing in South Extension that there were Sikhs being beaten up in this neighbourhood. The whole evening, I received phone calls from friends informing me about incidents of stone-throwing at Gurdwaras and houses of the Sikh community.
  
6. I have a Sikh neighbour living opposite my house who I requested, through my mother, to stay indoors the next morning, which was to be the 1st November, '84, and offered to buy their milk and other necessary provisions.
  
7. On the 1st November, '84, by 1:00 A.M. morning, phone calls started informing me about the water poisoning in Delhi's Water Supply. I also called a friend in Munirka at 2:00 A.M. informing of this news. My friend Mr. Sekhar Singh explained to me that it was technically not possible to do so. At 2:30 A.M. I heard the following on a public address system, "Aap ke pani mein jahar mila dian gaya hain, kripya pani nahin pee jeaey." I ran into my

balcony and caught sight of a jeep that was moving away from the colony towards the road leading to J.N.U. The jeep was dark blue in color and looked like a Police Jeep.

8. I got confused and then suspicious of the police making such announcements. I would not sleep through the night. I also received a call from a friend that she had confirmed with a senior police officer about the water supply being poisoned.
  
9. On the morning of 1st November at around 7:00 A.M. I heard footsteps of people running in our colony. My whole family and I ran into the colony in the direction of the people running in the colony. There were about 10 boys between the age group 18-30 running. We chased them and they ran away. Large number of people from the colony had come out.
  
10. There were two information I gathered upon talking to the crowd gathered in the colony:
  - a) There were looking for and had asked where Mr.Oberoi lives in our colony. Mr. Oberoi happened to be the Sikh neighbour who lives opposite our house who my mother had warned the night of 31st October, 1984.
  
  - b) I also heard that the 10 lumpens who had run away were talking about burning the Guru Harkrishan Public School in Vasant Vihar. I called the Vasant Vihar Police Station requesting them to come urgently as a mob was about to burn the school. As I finished with the phone call, I heard footsteps of large crowds. I once again ran down to the area on the left side of the house which

has a road leading to Munirka Village. There were about one hundred young men (age group 18-30) walking from the village towards the road leading to the school. Some of them were carrying sticks with them. There was a young man wearing brown shirt and trousers in front leading the crowd. I stopped him and argued with them not to get excited. They all did stop. But several young people seemed to agree with me and informed me that there was a meeting held late at night in their village (village Munirka) where it was decided that the Guru Harkrishan Public School should be burnt. Upon being asked I was told that the meetings were organized by the leaders of the community. One name taken was TOKAS (don't know the full name). At one point some of the young men I had spoken to said that they were being led by the young man wearing a brown shirt and that they agreed with me that they should return. The young man with the brown clothes at this point started to shout at me and threaten me and told the crowd to move towards the school and that he would take care of me.

11. We then heard a Motor vehicle, which was parked on the road. A S.H.O. along with a policeman arrived. I asked them if they had come from the Vasant Vihar, Police Station which they confirmed they had.

12. In the meantime the mob did not move away and stood their ground carrying sticks. The S.H.O. asked me to move out of there as the leader was still abusing me. The S.H.O. told me that it was not my job to maintain law and order and therefore what business did I have fighting with these people. I should move out of there. I tried to explain to the S.H.O. that these people were going to burn the school and that they had come to our colony in the morning looking for Sikh households. The S.H.O. was extremely rude and told me that he would deal with the mob only after I leave. I retreated back but went back to the S.H.O. after precisely two minutes, at which point the mob was

returning back and had taken about 25 steps back and the S.H.O. told me to stop interfering and went off on his motorcycle. The crowd by now turned right back and began to run towards the school. I felt that the S.H.O. from Vasant Vihar was not particularly bothered.

13. I, therefore, tried to call the HAUZ KHAS, Police Station. I called telephone no. 100 and I was given the Hauz Khas, Police Station number. There was no response. This was around 9:00 A.M. In the meantime, two friends came over to my house and we got into the car to go to the school.

14. The school had been set on fire along with the Petrol Pump right next to the school. There were hundreds of young men on all sides watching these two buildings burning. There was a D.T.C. bus parked with a few people in the bus. A crowd was running towards the bus saying that both the petrol pumps and school have been set on fire. Let us move on. They then got into the bus and told us in passing that the petrol pump may burst so we should remove our vehicle. There was no police present at that point.

15. We then rushed to the Hauz Khas, Police Station after requesting my brother to get hold of some people to see if there were any teachers in the school premises and then to rescue them.

16. When we reached the police station (between 10-11 A.M.) we were told by the police person at the reception that there was no police force neither was the fire brigade available as there were many houses and buildings that were burning and that they were not in any position to help us. We were also asked why we were worried "were we not Hindus?"

17. That this point we were terribly confused at the response from the police. We therefore began to start collecting our friends and drove to several places in Delhi requesting all political party leaders to request for the army.

18. The main reasons why I felt scared that the violence would spread was due to two reasons:

Firstly, the police was behaving in a manner that I did not expect. Also, the slogans on the T.V. “Khoon Ka Badla Khoon” on the 1st November morning T.V. Program were frightening. Our domestic help who came in the morning at 9:30 A.M. told me that I should not get amazed at the police. Their village had a visit from the police late at night who had told them that there were three days when people would loot the Sikh community – No one would be touched.

19. As we moved in different parts of the city we were amazed at the absence of police, everywhere, while the skyline of the city was becoming blacker and blacker with smoke.

20. On the 1st November, '84, afternoon we met with 40 people at Lajpat Bhawan to do a peace march in the Lajpat Nagar where a Sikh's shop was being looted. There were approximately 50 young men (age group 18-30) who were indulging in arson and looting. We were 7 in number. The lumpens at one point surrounded me. I was the only woman amongst 7 of us. I questioned them as to why they were doing this act. Their answer was that their leaders had asked them to do so. They were from Kotla Mubarak and they also said that they had no fear of the police. Police will not come to stop them. At this point the young man leading then asked them to surround me. The slogans they shouted was only which was “Congress (I) Zindabad.” They dispersed after about 20 minutes of our presence. They had two tempos and about 4 three-wheelers scooters in which they left.

21. On the 2nd November, I, with 4 of my friends, went to Ashram area. There was a big crowd looking down onto the railway track from the bridge that connects Lajpat Nagar to the Ashram crossing. We also stooped to look down and spotted 3 dead bodies of Sikhs on the railway track.

22. We then went to the bridge connecting Ashram crossing to Nizamuddin on Mathura Road. The time was 11:00 A.M. There were crowds of about 500 young men at the foot of the bridge and on the other side of the bridge we saw police with guns. Approximately 20 in number. We got up the bridge and looked at the houses on the right side of the bridge several houses were burning.

23. On the terrace we noticed people with turbans were hiding but raising their heads above the wall and signalling to us on to the right hand side. I went to the direction to which they had pointed and found 4 policemen with guns. We came back to this same area for a peace march in the afternoon (4:30 P.M.) and found that very house, we had seen, where the Sikhs were hiding had been burnt.

24. When we arrived at 4:30 P.M. the police was still there. When I asked the large crowds of slogan-shouting people if the police had been there for the entire day. I was shouted at and called a traitor to the Hindus. The slogans being shouted were 'Indira Gandhi Zindabad' and 'Congress (I) Zindabad.'

25. On 3rd November I went to Trilokpuri with a group of people at 2:00 P.M. with food, medicine and doctors. There were a hundred women outside the police station under a tent with children and few injured men. All the children and women who had mostly become widows were from Block 30 and 32, Trilokpuri. All the people had the same stories to tell which were as follows:-

- a. The police alleged to have told the people who were to loot them that they had 3 days to loot the Sikhs.
- b. Their men had first been beaten, then burnt with kerosene oil.
- c. The local Congress (I) leaders were instigating the lumpens who came to loot and kill.

d. The names of policemen and local Congress (I) leaders were on the tongue of every person in this camp and the same names came up all the time.

26. As we were going out lumpens who had been arrested were being put in D.T.C. buses by the police. These people sat in the bus shouting slogans, which were "Congress (I) Zindabad" and "Indira Gandhi Zindabad." The police refused to co-operate on giving me a razor, which the doctor had asked me for, as the hair from a Sikh's head had to be shaved for doing surgery as he had received head injuries. The living quarters of the policemen were on the premises of the police station but they refused to give me a razor.

27. In the evening I returned to Delhi in a car via Farsh Bazar and Shadara area. I saw large crowds of people with sticks and cans but no police near them.

28. On the 4th November morning I went to Farsh Bazar by 9:00 A.M. Farsh Bazar, police station had approximately three thousand riot victims. We had gone for relief work.

29. There were 4 badly injured Sikhs who I took in a jeep to the government hospital in Shahdara at the advice of Darioa Singh, S.H.O. Farsh Bazar, police station. Darioa Singh gave me a police guard to go in the jeep with us as I was unsure of taking Sikhs in the jeep to the hospital, where I had seen large crowds of people near the hospital earlier in the morning.

30. At the hospital there was a South Indian Registrar who helped with first aid only and requested me to take back my patients to the camp as they could not admit my patients who were Sikhs. I was told by the registrar of the hospital that if they admitted Sikh patients, they would not be in a position to stop the lumpens from attacking the Sikhs. I asked for policemen who I understood should be there in government hospital. I was told that no police is available and I was given two nurses to accompany me to Farsh Bazar.

31. It is amazing that though the community that had taken refuge in the camp was under trauma and from different parts of Trilokpuri and Kalyanpuri, the accounts of arson, looting and killing were similar.

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