



# The shadow of 1984

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## **The shadow of 1984-Sajjan Kumar's conviction reignites hope of substantial justice for riot victims**

- Five years ago, there wasn't even a sliver of hope that any influential Congress leader would be brought to justice for the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984.
- A trial court had acquitted former MP Sajjan Kumar, rejecting the testimony of witnesses who said he was seen instigating riots in the Raj Nagar area of Delhi Cantonment on November 1, 1984, in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination.
- In reversing the acquittal and sentencing Kumar to imprisonment for the remainder of his life, the Delhi High Court has reignited hope for substantial justice.
- From the deliberate failure to record any untoward incident in the station's daily register to avoiding the examination of key witnesses, there is a long trail of evidence that points a damning finger at the police and the state machinery.
- This case is an example not only of the slowness of judicial processes but also of derailed investigations.
- It was only after the Central Bureau of Investigation entered the scene and revived this particular case related to the murder of five members of a Sikh family in 2005 — based on a recommendation by the Nanavati Commission — that the investigation made meaningful progress.
- The court has also flagged the need for a separate law for punishment for crimes against humanity and genocide, both seen so far as part of international law but rarely invoked in domestic crimes.
- Given the major communal flashpoints in recent history that have been cited by the court, the issue is worth positive consideration.

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