“We truly do need class solidarity”: Sikh attorney speaks on stabbing of truck driver Gurvinder Singh

Jacob Crosse
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On September 13, 28-year-old Sikh truck driver Gurvinder Singh was brutally assaulted and stabbed 17 times inside a restroom at the remote Bitter Creek rest stop along Interstate 80 in Wyoming. Singh, a Sacramento resident, was traveling to Pennsylvania when he stopped shortly before 3:30 a.m. to wash his face and take a break.

According to court documents and Singh’s account, another truck driver followed him into the restroom, struck him from behind and repeatedly stabbed him in the neck and chest. A family at the rest stop rendered first aid, photographed the assailant’s tractor-trailer and provided information that helped Wyoming State Patrol troopers locate the suspect. Andrew Kris Bzdak, 44, was arrested in Carbon County and charged with attempted first-degree murder. He is being held on a $1 million bond. Authorities have not announced a motive.

The attack occurred four days after the Department of Homeland Security published a racist social media post depicting a South Asian truck driver facing the Transformer character Optimus Prime. The image declared, “Self-deport or find out,” “America for Americans” and “Get off our roads, you don’t know how to drive Mr. Singh.”

Gurvinder Singh has since been discharged from the hospital. He remains covered in stitches and faces a lengthy recovery requiring continued treatment and follow-up care. He does not have medical insurance. His family has established a GoFundMe campaign to help pay for his medical care, rehabilitation, lost income and other essential expenses.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with Jasjit Singh, a California attorney and director of legal programs at the Jakara Movement, on September 23. Jakara is a California-based organization that works with Punjabi Sikh youth, families and communities. Jasjit traveled to the Wyoming Medical Center in Casper following the attack to meet with Gurvinder and offer to help navigate the legal system and offer community support.

The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Jacob Crosse: You visited Gurvinder Singh at the Wyoming Medical Center. What can you tell our readers about his physical condition when you saw him and what his recovery may involve?

Jasjit Singh: Being stabbed 17 times and being able to just hold a conversation with me and just let me know how he’s doing. I’ve asked him multiple times, “How is he?” And, of course, his response is, “You know, I’m hanging in there. I’m doing all right.” And I think that means something, right? I think he’s obviously trying to be strong, but I think, you know, none of us can probably relate to what it feels like to endure that type of pain, right?

JC: Beyond the attack, what should our readers know about Gurvinder as a person, a worker and a member of the Sikh community?

JS: He has been driving for the last three and a half, almost four years. And he’s actually quite familiar with the route. I think he’s been on this route, on Highway 80, from California into the Pennsylvania, Chicago, Northeastern area for the last almost two years, I believe. So this has been a regular route for him.

I mean, in his own words, he has no traffic infractions, no speeding tickets, no parking tickets. He’s the kind of driver you hope to encounter on the road. Someone who takes his safety very seriously. He takes the safety of others very seriously. And that’s kind of what’s left him in disbelief. I hate to say it, but you know what people say: As long as you follow the rules and you do the right thing, you’re going to be fine, right? Well, here’s someone who follows the rules, does everything right, stops at a rest area to take a break and you get stabbed 17 times.

JC: Four days before the attack, the Department of Homeland Security published an image telling “Mr. Singh” to get off the road. You previously warned that someone might interpret such rhetoric as a green light to take matters into their own hands. Can you speak about the anti-immigrant and anti-Sikh atmosphere the Trump administration has cultivated?

JS: Absolutely. So, you know, the last name, or the surname or the middle name, Singh, is carried by every Sikh male in the world, right? So I think the Trump administration, Department of Homeland Security, whoever had the bright idea of putting out that poster, did it intentionally.

I’m not here to make any correlations between why this individual may have done what they did. I know that we don’t have a motive for this incident just yet. But I think we cannot ignore the fact that it’s not happening in some sort of vacuum. Our folks are on the road. They feel like their head is on a swivel because there’s rhetoric out there blaming them for every single terrible driving incident that occurs. It is somehow fully targeted on one specific community, a community that, by the way, has been driving trucks here for half a century or more and plays a significant role in the trucking industry itself.

I know there’s reports saying that roughly 20 percent of all Sikhs in the United States are involved in the trucking industry. So to vilify a specific group, knowingly saying “Mr. Singh,” I know that DHS tried to say that they were speaking about one specific incident in Florida, right? But I challenge that, because if you want to talk about one specific incident, you would use a person’s first name. You know exactly what you’re doing.

We can’t prove it, per se, but they have literal blood on their hands. In my opinion, they are causing people to be put in harm’s way, whether knowingly or unknowingly.

JC: In 2012, neo-Nazi and US Army veteran Wade Michael Page attacked the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek, killing six worshippers and mortally wounding a seventh. Do Sikh Americans see a connection between the atmosphere that produced that massacre and the present climate, in which the federal government portrays people who

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wear turbans or carry the name Singh as foreign threats?

JS: The correlation the community is seeing is this all occurred just around the 9/11 anniversary, 25 years since 9/11. So the poster came out on the ninth, 9/11 obviously on the 11th, the 13th we have this attack on Mr. Singh and then September 15, 2001, is the 25th anniversary of Balbir Singh Sodhi, who was the first fatal victim of post-9/11 hate crimes in the United States.

So that's what the community is thinking about. Like, 25 years later, rhetoric, imagery, words. We know, and we know firsthand, that words do matter. Words matter. Statements matter. Imagery matters. And we've felt the brunt of that already, and we've been feeling the brunt.

Someone else asked me, "How have things changed?" I was like, in so many ways, things have not changed. In some of the ways, we have just been more careful. But at what point and how careful can we be? And at what point does the community just say: Are we ever going to be able to do enough to, and I don't know if we're trying to, fit in? I wouldn't say I'm trying to fit in. Are we ever going to be able to do enough to at least maintain our own safety and say that we also belong here, right?

The question is less about, "Are we American enough?" Or, "Can we be respected enough and understood enough?" Because the PSAs (public service announcements) around education don't seem to be working all the time. Folks may be aware of who we are, but do they truly understand?

I mean, if you look at the comment sections on Facebook or Instagram, of course, there may be bots. I understand that. But if you really look at the comment section, those are real people commenting, saying that, "Too bad the guy didn't finish his job," or "It must have been because he was doing this or that. The Punjabi truck driver must have been parked the wrong way, or maybe he wasn't following the road rules."

I mean, just the fact that people are ... First of all, none of that is true. This is a truly unprovoked attack. I can say that based off what I know. To even be finding justifications for that is the very fear I have around how society or at least a fringe of society here in the United States, seems to think that violence in so many ways is justified. Is that truly ingrained into our psyche at this point, as Americans, that we find ways to justify violence?

JC: This violence is definitely ingrained in the ruling class, and it's up to workers to combat this and understand that the attacks on Sikh Americans, the attacks on Latinos, the attacks on immigrants, they are an attack on everybody, on the democratic rights of everyone. If the government can demonize and use this racist imagery against Mr. Singh, it won't be long until the government turns that against Mr. Johnson. The administration's talked about deporting 100 million people. There aren't 100 million illegal immigrants. This attack is part of the expanding attacks on the entire working class.

As the administration intensifies its campaign against immigrant truckers, have Sikh and Punjabi drivers reported increased harassment at rest stops, loading docks or weigh stations, whether from members of the public, police or immigration agents?

JS: I would say that the data is there. I believe an article came out not too long ago that, in 2025, the number of ICE arrests shot up 1,000 percent for Asian Americans. And that was just for California, I believe.

I think the other thing is, you know, oftentimes communities may think, "Well, it's not our community. It's another community that's being targeted." Well, this is a reminder. Everyone is being targeted. We're all being targeted. For whatever reason, you know, I have to say it—We just don't fit the mold, right, that's wanted in this country by a certain subsection. So, yes, our folks are feeling it. Our folks are very wary**.**

JC: Earlier this month, hundreds of Mexican cross-border truckers blockaded commercial crossings between Mexico and California after the United States revoked their B-1 visas. Did that action receive attention among Sikh or Punjabi drivers? More broadly, how can workers connect these attacks on different immigrant communities?

JS: Nothing that I've heard of. But I think what Mexican Americans are feeling here, Latinos generally, our black immigrants, like the Haitian community and others, all of this is interconnected. I think that is the job that we have to do.

I mean, thinking about your interview with me, it's kind of like: How do we get the word out there that you're facing a collective working-class attack? Like, from a working-class perspective. These are workers.

Workers' rights expand well beyond just that one piece and one space. And it has to expand into this notion, too, that if 400 truckers are suffering somewhere, that could be us. I think we always have to go back to that. This could be us. That needs to be really ingrained into any community member.

JC: Many readers may not be familiar with Sikhism. What are its central principles, and what misconceptions about Sikh identity do you most often encounter in the United States?

JS: The Sikh faith was founded in the Punjab region of South Asia. *Panj* means five and *Aab* means bodies of water. The land of five rivers, sits at the top of the Indian subcontinent, and in modern day, post British occupation, is split between the Indian state of Punjab and the Pakistani province of Punjab. The Sikh empire's capital, once Lahore, is now in Pakistan. The majority of the world's Sikh population now lives in the Indian State of Punjab.

Founded by Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, the Sikh faith at it's core has three universal core concepts: Naam Japna (Remembering the One Universal God), Kirat Karo (Earn an honest living), and Vand Chako (Share what you can with others.)

A Sikh place of worship is called a Gurdwara (Guru-Dwara or Door to the Guru.) Major Gurdwaras around the world offer free food nearly 24 hours a day to anyone regardless of caste, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

The tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa. The Khalsa is an order of initiated/baptized Sikhs who follow a specific code of conduct. All Sikhs are encouraged to become Khalsa. Khalsa Sikhs carry 5 kakkars, or articles of faith—which are the most recognizable when you encounter a Sikh. Kes (uncut hair), Kara (iron bracelet), Kanga (small comb), Kacherra (long undergarments), and Kirpan (sword/dagger.) These recognizable features make it easy for Sikhs to stand out and be approached in times of need, it has also made them targets of hate, bigotry, and racism.

To reflect on something higher, to give to others, to earn an honest living, these are universal concepts. Lets not to take from others, which I really think is needed in this world right now, when we have trillionaires, you know, kajillionaires or whatever-aires we have now.

JC: What would you like truck drivers and other workers outside the Sikh community to understand or do in response to this attack?

JS: Look, I think this is the moment. Historically, truckers as a group have always looked out for other truckers, right? I think we're moving away from the world where truckers just talk to each other on the CB radio and say, "Hey, here's what's coming up ahead. There's a cop." That used to be a common thing. Truckers looked out for each other. You could feel safer around truckers. There's a camaraderie in the job that you do.

We need to get back to that. The fact that this is another trucker that attacked him, again, unprovoked, really calls into question what type of solidarity needs to be created.

I am seeing a lot of negative comments, and not just from folks who are leaning into American (nationalism). They think, "I want to be accepted by the likes of Trump" or folks of this powerful class of individuals. I don't know how many times I have to yell it at the top of my lungs: You'll never be accepted. You'll just never be accepted.

And I think our folks need to, everyone needs to understand that we

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truly do need class solidarity. Folks need to understand that we need to stand up for one another. Otherwise, we will all suffer the consequences. The wild thing is, we are suffering the consequences.

Diesel is $9 a gallon. It costs $1,800-$2,000 to fill up a big rig. That's insane! And people are still only getting paid $2 or $3 a mile. And I know this because my dad's a trucker. He drove for 44 years in the United States. The rates have not really gotten better.

So imagine, if you're driving all the way to Pennsylvania, which is 2,500 miles, and you're getting paid roughly $3 a mile, you're making $7,500. And I don't know, it probably costs nearly just that much in diesel to get there. People are not making money.

So instead, what we're doing is blaming other minorities and other groups, saying, "You're taking my jobs." Are we really taking people's jobs if these jobs have already been here and there's a truck driver shortage? We can leave. Twenty percent of the industry can walk away tomorrow, and the only thing that's going to happen is things are going to get more expensive because no one's going to move the goods.

So that's where folks need to collaborate and figure out how to get these diesel prices down and stop this unjust war in Iran. And things will be better. You'll naturally not want to be mad at anyone because you'll be happy with the fact that you're able to put more money into your pocket and feed your family.

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