



WORLD SINDHI CONGRESS

22 Newfields, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL8 6YT, UK

Phone: 44 (01707) 330437 ~ Fax: 44 (870) 1226007

Email world_sindhi_congress@yahoo.com ~ URL: <http://www.worldsindhicongrss.org>

423 V ST # A, Sacramento CA 95818, USA Tel. 1-818-917-6910 ~ Fax 1-775-599-9226

214 McGibbon Dr., Ottawa, ON K2L-3Y4 Canada. Tel. 613-591-0451 ~ Fax 815-550-5694

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CONTACT: MALIK DINO SHAIKH

EMAIL: worldsindhicongress@gmail.com

Sindhi-Americans Gathered in Houston to Pay Tribute to Their National Leader

Forced Disappearance of Sindhi Activists and other Human Rights Violations of Sindhis in Pakistan Condemned

HOUSTON, TX, USA. Hundreds of Sindhi-Americans gathered in Houston on Saturday, January 21, 2007 to commemorate the 103rd birthday of Mr. G. M. Syed, a national leader of the Sindhi people who waged a nonviolent struggle against Islamic fundamentalism and for Sindhi freedom. Sindh is home to the ancient Indus Valley civilization and is now a province in Pakistan. A vibrant Sindhi-American community numbering in the tens of thousands lives in various U.S. cities.

More than 30 million Sindhis live in Sindh today. Sindhis are supportive of democracy and secularism and have been marginalized by Pakistan's military dictatorship and its Islamist ideology.

Professor Gul Agha, an eminent Sindhi scholar at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, gave a multi-media presentation highlighting the Sufi, secular, and pacifist elements of Sindhi society, history, and identity. Sindh society and culture and its people are unprecedented victims of Pakistan's oppression, which denies their right to education, language, and Sufi practices. Pakistan's dictatorial governments are destroying Sindh's ecology and economy. "We must move forward and make sure that we manifest the true values of our identity, i.e, pacifism, secularism, and tolerance, and promote Sindhi literature, language, and heritage to all those who are interested. We must also try to excel in science, education, and raise awareness regarding the plights of Sindhis," Dr. Agha said.

Researcher and activist Dr. Yvette Rosser also spoke about her book project on the topic of Sindh's history, culture, and politics.

Dr. Hidayat Bhutto, the UK organizer of the World Sindhi Congress, read a detailed paper on the life and legacy of Mr. Syed.

This meeting was also addressed by Ms. Paras Sarki, an American Sindhi whose husband Dr. Sarki, a prominent community leader and a U.S. citizen, was kidnapped last year by Pakistani authorities while he was visiting his family in Karachi. Hon. Sheila Jackson of Texas has tried to pursue the whereabouts of Dr. Sarki, and international media such as the BBC and the Wall Street Journal have highlighted his case. Ms. Sarki requested that the community help bring this issue before their representatives and senators.

Dr. Zia Shah of the G. M. Syed Memorial Committee, and Dr. Haleem Bhatti, Mr. Umed Laghari, Abdul Rehman Kakepoto, Farhan Kaghzi, Malik Dino Shaikh, Zubair Bhambro, Saghir Shaikh, and Ijaz Syed spoke at the event.

“Mr. Syed's message of non-violence, tolerance, and peace has a universal appeal, and the core principles of non-violence and conflict resolution are applicable to all the struggles for self-determination at individual, communal, or national levels,” said Dr. Zia Shah, president of the G. M. Syed Memorial Committee.

This annual event is organized to create a global awareness about the plight of Sindh and Sindhis around the world. “We must follow Syed’s legacy of non-violent struggle and support the legitimate struggle of the peoples of Sindh and Balochistan,” said Dr. Bhatti, chairman of the World Sindhi Congress and the chief guest of the event, in his concluding remarks.

The meeting concluded that the Pakistani government has been systematically violating the human rights of the secular-minded people of Sindh and Baluchistan. Pakistan has propped up Islamic fundamentalists, encouraged migration to reduce the indigenous people to a minority, and exploited the natural resources of the two provinces. More recently, it has been bombing and strafing Baloch villages with military equipment provided by the USA to fight Al-Qaeda and remnants of the Taliban. Pakistan is also threatening to build mega-dams that would enable it to divert the flow of rivers that are the lifeline of otherwise arid Sindh. Several hundreds of Baloch and Sindhis have been kidnapped by the Pakistani military over the last few years. The meeting expressed special concern about the Sindhi-American Dr. Safdar Sarki, whose whereabouts are still unknown.

A dinner and Sufi music session concluded the meeting.

The World Sindhi Congress also organized similar events in various towns of the UK, including London, Edinburgh, and Sheffield, on Jan 21, 2007.

The G. M. Syed Memorial Committee is a Houston, TX-based educational group organized to promote G. M. Syed's message of non-violence, democracy, secularism, and the right to self-determination for Sindhis and other oppressed nations within the international community. For more information, visit <http://www.gmsyed.org>.

The World Sindhi Congress (WSC) is one of the most prominent human rights advocacy organizations for Sindh and Sindhis. The main objective of WSC is to create a better understanding among the international community about the persecuted status of Sindhis in Pakistan and about the Sindhi people's struggles for their human rights, including the right to self-determination. WSC is a registered company in England and Wales, and California, USA, organized to carry out non-profit activities only. For more information, visit