

Wait / Watch –Let Them Worry

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SHARJAH April 28th: The Appeal hearing at the Sharjah Court for the 17 Indians on death commenced after a gap of two months. SP Singh, Anshul Sharma, Baljeet Singh, the Gurdawara Committee, brothers of the accused, local media, and a few new members of the Pakistani consulate were in full attendance. Reconvening after this long-ish adjournment given to the defense lawyers of the 17 to reach a ‘compromise’ seems to have failed –yet again. The lawyers, Embassy and social organizations have not yet approached the representatives of the victim with any offer towards the ‘blood money compromise’. In what seems to be yet another instead delay tactic, the lawyer of the legal team and the Indian Consul approached Ramzan on the eve of the hearing to sign some papers, but without offering anything tangible in return. The Indian Embassy has become infamous for wasting precious court hearings; first in ‘not’ being able to find a legal translator and now by playing games with the ‘Compromise’ Process.

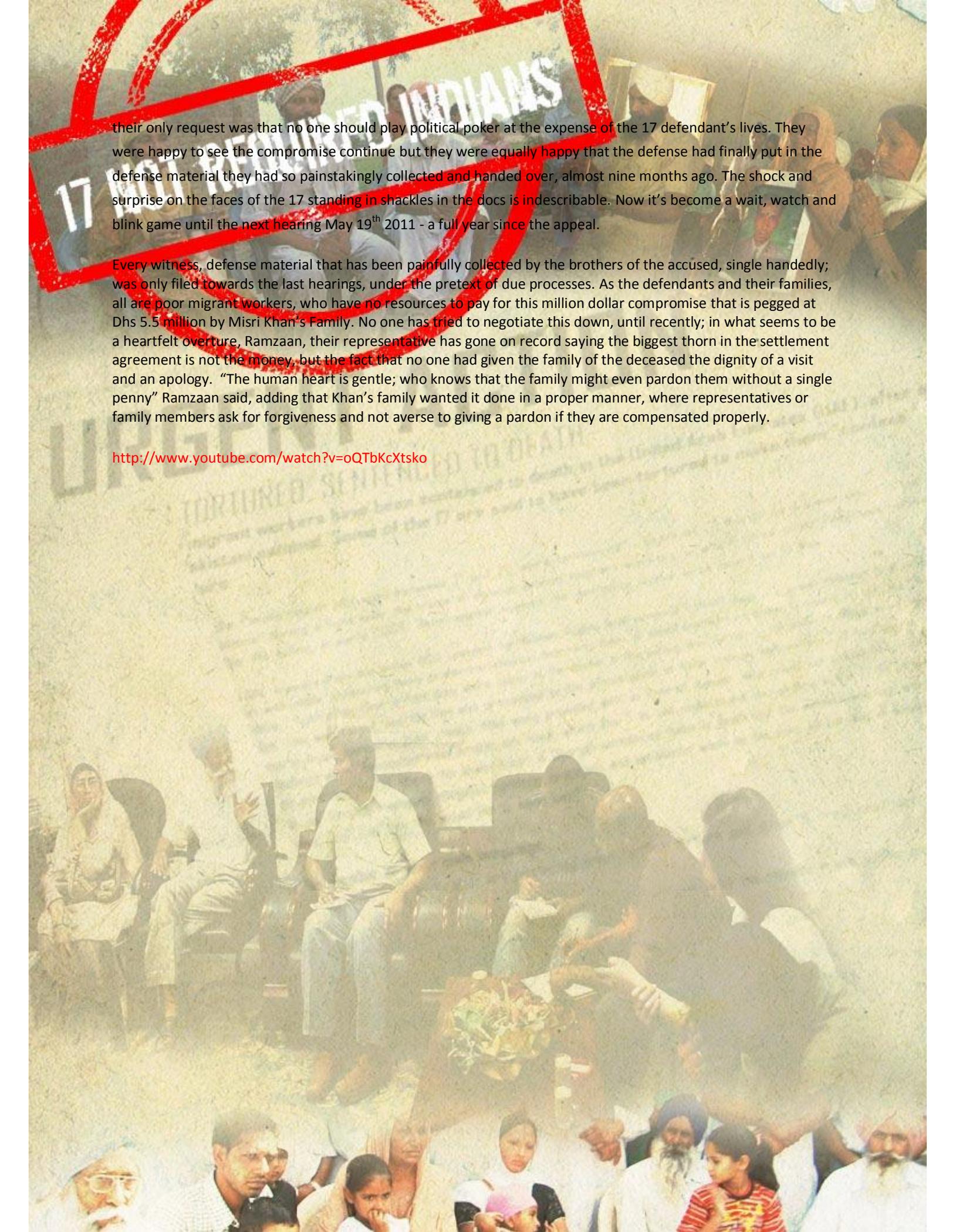
This is the third hearing where the judge has advised the defense team to proceed with a compromise, but the consulate shows apathy. Despite 12 hearings, over 12 months accorded to the defense team by the UAE Court the 17 still remain on death row. It was even more embarrassing as Ramzaan (the representative of the deceased negotiating the blood money payment) mentioned he had been approached on April 27th , by the Indian Consul and Bindu Chettur, who presented him with a paper that asked him to sign a waiver but without any settlement. Brushing everything aside, Judge Shamshi, explained the process of ‘Diya’ or blood money to both parties, asking them to do it amicably by May 19th. The shock on the faces of the 17 standing in shackles was indescribable. Now it’s has become a wait, watch and blink game.

Outside court mayhem erupted as Baljeet Singh Khalsa confronted Bindu insisting she was facilitating S P Oberoi, in keeping with the Indian Embassy’s wishes, accusing him of being well-known political player, deliberately derailing the possibilities of compromise. Ramzaan too utilized the defence team’s faux pas, flashing the paper the defence team tried to get him to sign in front of the local press. “Last night Bindu Chettur, the Indian Consul, came to me with a draft settlement, asking me to sign a pardon for all the accused unconditionally. She promised that she will also give some financial help, but didn’t know who would be paying the settlement money. I rejected the offer, because I was not convinced with the clauses mentioned in the paper.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPbzd9Cm5NU>

Chettur contradicted this saying that she had agreed to meet with Ramzaan, respecting the court’s behest to compromise, refuting the drafted agreement. But a press note issued by the consulate substantiates Ramzaan’s claim contradicting their defence team. Mohammad Salaam, the head of the defense team says he sees no reason for compromise. He has put in a key witness list; he feels the Pakistani’s have waived with their demands for too long. Salmaan said “It’s my duty to get an honorable acquittal, so far there is no proof available and no eye witness for me there is no case”. Rejecting overtures towards compromise, he insists he has a good defense prepared and was willing to take it to the Supreme Court. 9.2 + 9 images

Baljeet Singh Khalsa who has been in active negotiations with Ramzaan & Khan’s family informed the press that it was the Legal teams, the Embassy and S P Oberoi who have spoilt his ‘real efforts’ with their vested interest. Amidst all this mayhem, the humble brothers of the accused Arjinder and Jesbir left court, extremely dejected;



their only request was that no one should play political poker at the expense of the 17 defendant's lives. They were happy to see the compromise continue but they were equally happy that the defense had finally put in the defense material they had so painstakingly collected and handed over, almost nine months ago. The shock and surprise on the faces of the 17 standing in shackles in the docs is indescribable. Now it's become a wait, watch and blink game until the next hearing May 19th 2011 - a full year since the appeal.

Every witness, defense material that has been painfully collected by the brothers of the accused, single handedly; was only filed towards the last hearings, under the pretext of due processes. As the defendants and their families, all are poor migrant workers, who have no resources to pay for this million dollar compromise that is pegged at Dhs 5.5 million by Misri Khan's Family. No one has tried to negotiate this down, until recently; in what seems to be a heartfelt overture, Ramzaan, their representative has gone on record saying the biggest thorn in the settlement agreement is not the money, but the fact that no one had given the family of the deceased the dignity of a visit and an apology. "The human heart is gentle; who knows that the family might even pardon them without a single penny" Ramzaan said, adding that Khan's family wanted it done in a proper manner, where representatives or family members ask for forgiveness and not averse to giving a pardon if they are compensated properly.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQTbKcXtsko>