

Amar Singh Chahal

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The organization is the brainchild of S. Amar Singh Chahal, renowned Criminal lawyer of Punjab and Chandigarh, who is its president. HE was born on 4 June 1944 in village Kaleke in District Amritsar. He is the younger son of his parents. He is a self-made man who himself wrote his destiny. He paved his way through the thorns. In 1960, after completing his graduation he left his village and came to Chandigarh where he got employed. In the morning, he performed his duties and studied law in the evening. Hailing from a peasant's family, he was not financially sound. He burnt midnight oil and completed his law in 1970. Thereafter he left the job, joined the legal profession, and started practicing law in the district Courts, Chandigarh. From there, he did not look behind and progressed rapidly. Today his hard work and dedication to the profession and expertise over criminal law have brought him laurels in the legal circle. He got the privilege to head the District Bar Association, Chandigarh.

Perturbed over the attack on Sikh Shrines including Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian Army in June 1984, he joined active politics in Punjab. Blessed with the versatile personality, he soon became popular in Punjab Politics. With his in built quality of leadership and sincerity to the Sikh cause, he became an eyesore in the eyes of the government. He was detained under National security Act along with many other leaders and remained in preventive detention for sixteen months. Later he was falsely implicated in two cases of murder and attempt to murder in 1984 but was discharged by the court. His services to the Sikh cause gave him due recognition as a true leader and the Sikh community made him the President of the Co-ordination Committee of Gurdwaras and Sikh institutions of Chandigarh. He remained at the post for few years, but when his professional duties affected his commitment to the cause, he resigned from the post and shifted to legal profession studiously and strenuously. During the period of state tyranny in Punjab, he witnessed many cases of Police brutality and his kind heart was moved at the colossal loss of human lives and he decided to form an organization of like minded persons to provide free legal aid to the victims of state violence and also involved many lawyers in the noble cause of serving the humanity. When he started defending the cases of people who were dubbed as "terrorists" by the police in the courts, he drew public attention and many people accused him of encouraging terrorism on the one hand and on the other hand, thousands of distressed persons approached him with gory tale of killing of their kith and kin in fake encounter, police torture and extra-judicial killing committed by the Punjab Police in the name of "fighting terrorism". At present, he has many cases

of acquittals of innocent people in terrorist related offences, to his credit. Finding few other like-minded lawyers inclined to promote the cause of human rights; he formed the organization, Lawyers for Human Rights in 1987. The word "International" was added later, when the organization extended its jurisdiction to international fora. He had acclaimed wide appreciation for fighting the case of a lady IAS officer of Punjab, Mrs. Rupan Deol Bajaj against the then Director General of Police, Mr. K.P.S. Gill, who was accused of molestation of the lady officer in a dinner party under the influence of liquor in 1998. At present, he is defending the assassins of the slain Chief Minister of Punjab, Beant Singh, who was killed on 31 August 1995 in a bomb blast in Civil Secretariat at Chandigarh.

He also contested the general elections as an independent candidate twice, but lost in both time, due to his non-compromising nature with cheap and shrewd politics. He is at present the president of Chandigarh Unit of Samajwadi Party, a national party headed by former Defence Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav. He is associated with many social organizations and has been donating for social causes generously. His son Manpreet Singh, an upcoming lawyer and two daughters from medical profession are following his footsteps and provide free legal as well as medical aid to the poor and indigent persons. He is regularly paying donations to many needy persons and running a charitable hospital where his children provide free medical treatment to the poor and indigent persons. He has recently contributed a sum of Rupees fifty one thousand in the memory of his father, Late S. Sohan Singh, in a trust created by the organization for providing rehabilitation to the kith and kin of those killed during the period of turbulence in Punjab. Besides this, he is providing fee legal aid to numerous litigants and serving the cause of human rights. In spite of having huge wealth and property, he is the symbol of simplicity. He is always eager to help the needy persons. He is quite amiable even with his enemies.