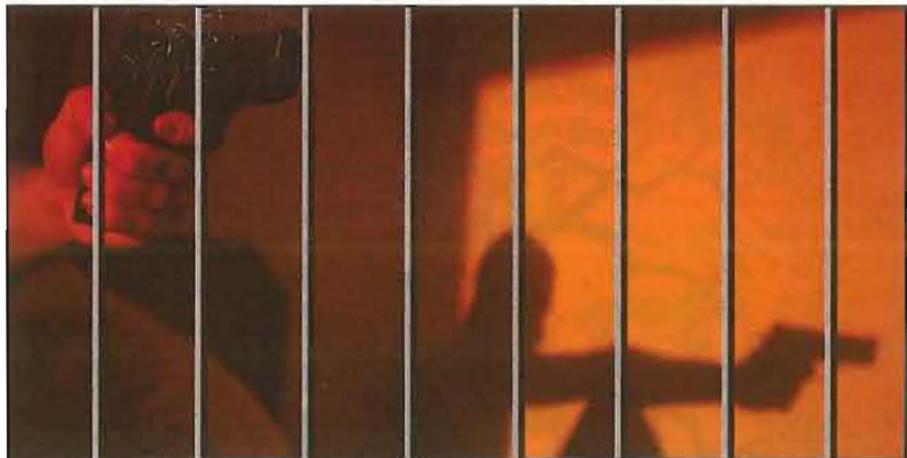


Outrageous!

AN OPEN PHOTO-EDITORIAL



MASTERFILE

Sarbjit Singh's death last month following assault in a Pakistani jail left us shocked and angry. Soon afterwards, Sanaullah Ranjay, a Pakistani prisoner, too, died after an equally barbaric attack in a Jammu jail. Ironically, it's Sanaullah's death in an Indian prison that should concern us more deeply. But why?

A study by the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), based on findings by India's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), reveals shocking numbers: 14,231 deaths in police and judicial custody recorded across India between 2001 and 2010. That is about four deaths every day! The actual figure could be significantly higher, since not all custodial deaths are reported to the NHRC. And the public doesn't always hear

about murders of citizens who can't defend themselves.

A report by the People's Union for Civil Liberties maintains that custodial deaths were usually the result of "torture to extort information or to teach the person concerned a lesson." Also, these deaths were not limited to hardened criminals, as some officials would have us believe. Many in custody were murdered because they were likely to name important persons who may have complicity in a crime.

While we must continue to call ourselves a civilized society despite these facts, what's the solution? We need police reforms, more accountability and stricter anti-torture laws, suggests Suhas Chakma, ACHR's director. ■