

Canada

## Memorial for Air India victims unveiled

Canada regrets slow reaction to act of mass murder: PM

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The initial reaction of many to the Air India bombing in 1985 was a "terrible, hurtful mistake, one that Canada will always regret," Prime Minister Stephen Harper said at ceremony Saturday to remember victims of the attack.

Harper made the comments in Toronto at the unveiling of a black granite wall, a monument listing the names of passengers and crew who died, as well as two baggage handlers who were killed in a related bombing.

"Twenty-two years ago today, Air India Flight 182 exploded in the air off the coast of Ireland. The bombing followed an explosion earlier that day at Narita Airport in Japan. Altogether, 331 lives had been lost," he said.

"Our country was stunned and the families of the 280 Canadian men, women and children who died aboard Flight 182 were pitched into an unimaginable abyss of grief," Harper added.

"Then we learned it wasn't a tragic accident, but rather a deliberate act of mass murder. It was the worst act of terrorism in Canadian history, planned and executed in the name of a cause that had nothing to do with Canada, nothing to do with the people who were killed."

The bombing was blamed on Sikh separatists who were using Canada as a base in their campaign for an independent homeland in India.

The prime minister said the flight may have flown under the flag of India, but the murder of its passengers was "a singularly Canadian crime and tragedy."

### 'Many initially looked the other way'

"And worst of all, many Canadians didn't realize this until much later. Like bystanders at a public assault, many initially looked the other way and thought it's none of our business. This was a terrible, hurtful mistake, one that Canada will always regret," he said.

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty told the dedication ceremony he hopes the memorial will help Canadians "remember a terrible tragedy and its devastating consequences."

"This act of violence was committed by cowards and it was repugnant," he said.

Toronto Mayor David Miller called the bombing an abhorrent crime and the deaths that resulted, a great loss to his city. About two-thirds of the Air India victims lived in Toronto.



The memorial features a granite wall inscribed with the names of the dead, most of whom were Canadians of East Indian origin. ((CBC))

A sundial sits in front of the memorial wall, built in Humber Bay Park East, near the city's lakefront. The sundial reads: "Time flies, suns rise, and shadows fall, let it pass by, love reigns forever over all."

Relatives of the victims laid wreaths at the monument. Many ran their fingers over the names, while some lit incense.

Later this summer, a memorial playground will be unveiled in Vancouver's Stanley Park. The site will include a stone wall listing the names of those who died in the attack.

There will also be memorials built in Ottawa and Montreal.

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