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## Tears, Anger Greet Air India Verdict

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (Reuters) - A Canadian judge cleared two Sikh militants on Wednesday of involvement in the 1985 bombing of an Air India jetliner over Ireland's Atlantic coast, history's deadliest bombing of a civilian plane.

Shocked families of the 329 victims of the bombing called the ruling devastating and urged the Canadian government to establish a public inquiry into the crime and

how it was investigated.

British Columbia Supreme Court Judge Bruce Ian Josephson found Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri not guilty of murder and conspiracy in connection with the bombing over the Atlantic as well as a related explosion at Tokyo's Narita airport that killed two people.

Judge Josephson ruled the testimony against the two men was not credible.



(Top) Relatives of passengers lost in the downing of Air India Flight 182 stand together following the not guilty verdict of Sikh activists Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri in a Vancouver court March 16, 2005. Relatives are (L-R) Lata Pada, Natasha Madon, Harri Venkatacharya and Perviz Madon.

(Below left) Sikh activist Ajaib Singh Bagri walks with his daughter Inderjit Kaur Bagri March 16, 2005, after he was found not guilty in the bombing of the Air India flight off the Irish coast in 1985.

Sikh activist Ripudaman Singh Malik smiles as he leaves a Vancouver court after being found not guilty in the 1985 bombing of an Air India flight off the Irish coast March 16, 2005. Malik and his co-accused were both freed after a Supreme Court judge ruled testimony against them was not credible.

Members of the victims' families wept in the courtroom as the judge read the verdicts following an epic, 19-month trial. Malik, 58, and Bagri, 55, smiled at their family members in court when the hearing ended.

"Oh my God. Oh my God," one of the victims' relatives cried to herself.

Josephson, who heard 115

witnesses during one of the most complicated and costly cases in Canadian history, called the bombing "fanaticism at its basest and most inhumane level" and agreed the devices that exploded off the Irish coast and in Japan probably originated in Vancouver.

But he said he could not believe key prosecution witnesses who

testified that Malik, a wealthy Vancouver businessman, and Bagri, a Kamloops, British Columbia, sawmill worker and Sikh priest, had admitted their roles in the plot.

The judge ruled that justice would not be served if there was

See page 5.

