

Los Angeles Times
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1993
SECTION B
F/CC+

Valley

ALSO LOS ANGELES COUNTY NEWS, EDITORIALS, WEATHER

Dean Kevin O'Connell

Lawsuit Seeks to Oust Sikh Group That Seized N. Hollywood Temple

By JULIE TAMAKI
TIMES STAFF WRITER

A violent dissident group has taken over a Sikh temple in North Hollywood, forcing the temple's directors to go to court in an attempt to oust them, a lawyer for the directors said Tuesday.

A representative of the dissident group—which the directors accuse of occupying the temple since Oct. 10—alleged that the directors had tried to keep them out.

"In the holy book, it says that anybody

can worship at the temple," said Parampreet Singh, a defendant in the lawsuit, in a telephone interview from the temple Tuesday night. "It's for all people."

He said the group is preparing a counter-suit, accusing the directors of describing them as terrorists.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Robert O'Brien granted a temporary restraining order Tuesday against Sikh Youth of America and 23 named and hundreds of unnamed defendants, said Kevin O'Connell.

Please see TEMPLE, B5

TEMPLE: Sikh Dissident Group Is Ordered to Leave North Hollywood Site

Continued from B1
attorney for the board of directors of the Sikh Gurdwara of Los Angeles.

The order, commanding the dissidents to leave the temple, was granted after the Gurdwara filed suit Tuesday against the youth group and the other defendants, accusing them of civil conspiracy, assault and battery, emotional distress and violation of personal rights, O'Connell said. The suit seeks a court declaration establishing who has control over the nonprofit religious corporation's property and whether the directors have a right to expel trespassers, O'Connell said.

The lawsuit alleges that one of the defendants, Lakhbir S. Chima, instigated four youth group members to take the temple priest hostage in March and destroy security equipment. The lawsuit also alleges that some of the defendants beat several of the board members on Oct. 3, causing injuries that included a punctured ear and a fractured skull, neck and hand.

Temple security guards broke up the fights and handcuffed some of the suspects, and police were called, but officers made no arrests, O'Connell said. Police confirmed that there was a disturbance at the temple that night, but that no arrests were made.

As a result of the violence the temple was closed and the board decided to file a lawsuit, O'Connell said, but on Oct. 10, some of the defendants took over the building.

The lawsuit also alleges that the defendants are armed, that they have taken thousands of dollars in

donations and that they will try to take control of the temple by electing a new board sympathetic to them.

Some of the defendants testified at Tuesday's hearing that a new board had been elected, but offered no substantiation, O'Connell said.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified punitive damages, \$223,000 in general damages and \$25,000 for each alleged violation of a temple officials' civil rights.

A hearing on a preliminary injunction against the defendants has been set for Nov. 5, O'Connell said.