

# BBC NEWS | England | Killer's long campaign over conviction

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Music celebrities campaigned for Ram's release

Satpal Ram's supporters have always claimed he acted in self-defence during a racist attack when he stabbed and killed 21-year-old Clarke Pearce in 1986.

They say his conviction was one of the worst miscarriages of justice in recent years.

Ram was a 20-year-old warehouseman when the murder occurred in November 1986.

He was eating with two friends in the Sky Blue Asian restaurant in the Lozells area of Birmingham when a group of six people, including Mr Pearce, arrived.



Ram claims he was the victim of a racial attack

Ram said the group started racially abusing the waiting staff and an argument broke out over the playing of Asian music.

In the ensuing fight, Mr Pearce was killed with a small packing knife that Ram used in his job as a warehouseman.

Ram himself was stabbed twice with broken glass.

At his trial and during the subsequent years afterwards, Ram said Mr Pearce had racially abused him before attacking him and slashing him with broken glass.

## **Parole denied**

The judge at his trial had recommended he serve an 11 year sentence, but he was kept in jail longer because he refused to admit his guilt.

Despite a high-profile campaign to clear his name, he lost an appeal against his conviction in 1995.

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Satpal Ram

And in August 2001, the then Home Secretary Jack Straw denied him parole, contrary to a recommendation from the Parole Board.

The following month an application to have his case referred to the Court of Appeal was refused.

The criminal cases review commission, which investigates alleged miscarriages of justice, decided that Ram's conviction was safe.

The commission investigated and deliberated for nearly a year before reaching its conclusion.

In the last 16 years, Ram has been moved between more than 60 prisons and has alleged that he was beaten regularly by prison guards.

In an interview with the Guardian newspaper in October 2000, Ram said: "I've been weathering the storm for 15 long years now.

## **Celebrity support**

"I've reached a stage where I take it a day at a time. I've come through the pain barrier."

His cause has attracted support, particularly from musicians.

In 1997, the Asian Dub Foundation released a single, "Free Satpal Ram" and have been campaigning for his release ever since.

Singer Apache Indian likened him to a political prisoner.

The campaign has also been backed by the groups Primal Scream and widely covered in the music press.