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HIGHLIGHTS



FROM
2004-2005



*Sant Baba Thakur Singh Ji
(1915-2004)*



SIKH FEDERATION (UK)

The first and only Sikh Political Party in the UK

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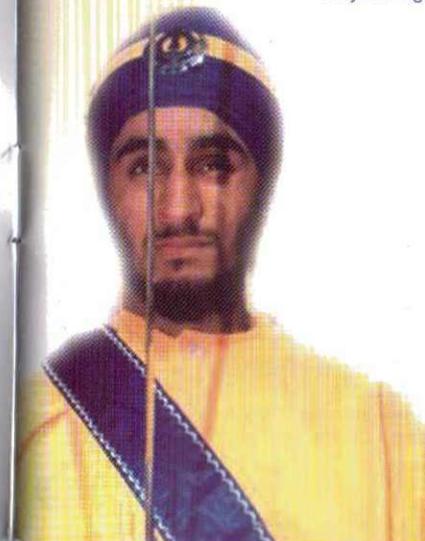
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SIKH FEDERATION (UK)
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KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Federation recognised by leadership of all three political parties

More than 10,000 Sikhs took part in the National Sikh Convention in September 2004, which marked the first anniversary of the establishment of the Sikh Federation (UK). On its first anniversary the Federation was in a position to demonstrate it had firmly established itself as a key player with regards to political contacts and networks. Alan Duncan MP the Shadow International Development Minister spoke at last year's National Sikh Convention making him the third Shadow Cabinet Minister to have addressed the Convention in each of the last three years. He reiterated the Conservative Party's unconditional support on the key issue of separate recognition and monitoring of Sikhs. Other issues raised included the Dastaar issue and the plight of Sikh children in France and the international concern about the Panjab river waters dispute. Politicians at the Convention were apprised of the historic decision by the Panjab Assembly against Indian states that are depriving Panjab of what naturally belongs to it.



Alan Duncan MP



John Hemming MP



Rt. Hon Ian McCartney MP

The Liberal Democrats continue to demonstrate their willingness to address international issues that other parties often avoid. Simon Hughes MP, the President of the Liberal Democrats, openly supports the Sikhs right to self-determination and has joined Sikhs to protest against India's genocide of the Sikhs. At the Convention last year he arranged for Parmjit Singh Gill, the first Liberal Democrat MP from an ethnic minority and John Hemming, the Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council and now the newly elected MP for Birmingham Yardley to speak about the importance of the separate recognition of Sikhs and the Sikhs right to self determination.

Whilst Labour MPs were once again represented at the National Sikh Convention the absence of a Labour Government Minister did not go unnoticed. However, the Labour Party Chairman Rt. Hon. Ian McCartney MP wrote to the Federation to say he wanted to meet to discuss how the Labour Party might be more effective in its dealings with the Sikh community.

Following the Convention the Federation released a 40+ page booklet showing the highlights of its work in the first year - 2003-2004. Please go to the download section of the Sikh Federation (UK) web site www.sikhfederation.com for a PDF version of the "Highlight from 2003-2004" booklet.

Federation announce the setting up of Young Sikhs (UK)

At the National Sikh Convention last year it was announced that Young Sikhs (UK) was being established in recognition of the need to do more for the younger generation and encourage younger Sikhs to become more involved in the full range of activities organised by the Federation. Young Sikhs (UK) was therefore established alongside Young Labour, Young Conservatives and Young Liberal Democrats.

The Young Sikhs (UK) initiative built on the excellent showing and support provided by youngsters during the June 2004 "Rally and march for remembrance, justice and freedom" in central London and increased

activism with the peaceful protest against extremists groups like Al-Muhajiroun in Trafalgar Square and the launch of the Respect for Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji Campaign.



Young Sikhs at the "rally and march for remembrance, justice and freedom"

The leadership of the Federation was very conscious of developing a long-term strategy that gives proper recognition and encouragement to the younger generation. Young Sikhs (UK) was established one year after the launch of the Sikh Federation (UK) and has been a move that has been warmly welcomed by all the main political parties that appreciate the importance of fully engaging young people in mainstream political life.

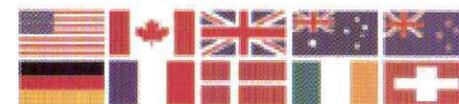
In recognition of the need to fully utilise the skills offered by the younger generation, six members of the National Executive Council (NEC) of the Sikh Federation (UK) announced last year were those born and/or educated in the UK. Additionally a number of other young Sikhs approached to be members of the NEC expressed the wish to instead work in the background by helping develop younger Sikhs by taking forward specific projects.

Federation announce international network to co-ordinate Sikh campaigns

At the National Sikh Convention and on the third anniversary of 9/11 the Sikh Federation (UK) announced that it had been in discussions and meetings with leading Sikh organisations in Europe, the USA and Canada on the formation of an international set up to co-ordinate activities worldwide on common issues of concern.

The aim of the international network was to allow the sharing of ideas, approaches and tactics on important matters of common concern to Sikhs and the ways in which these matters are being addressed at the national level. The hope was the development of international strategies and greater co-ordination where it is assessed that Sikhs lack an international voice and there is a need to exert pressure, lobby and influence globally. The objective was to give Sikhs more political clout at a national and international level. Key issues on the agenda have been:

- * the international challenge to the Sikh identity and the need to safeguard and promote the Sikh way of life;
- * the international approach to highlighting human rights abuses of the Sikhs and seeking action at an international level against those responsible for perpetrating such abuses;
- * seeking international support for the practical implementation of the Sikhs right to self-determination as part of the human rights agenda.



COMBATING CHALLENGES TO THE SIKH IDENTITY

Protecting the right of Sikh children to wear the Kirpan in schools

In November 2004 the Department for Education and Skills launched the "walking tall" campaign about searching school children for knives. It was suggested this may cause difficulties for Sikh children wearing Kirpans and resulted in the Sikh Federation (UK) receiving a number of media enquiries, including from the BBC.

The Sikh Federation (UK) immediately contacted the Department for Education and Skills and confirmed that the existing guidelines allowing Sikh children to wear the Kirpan were unchanged. The existing guidelines on School Security, drawn up by the Department in consultation with the Sikh community, point out the Kirpan is exempt under section 4 of the Offensive Weapons Act 1996 and state:



"Sikhs who have been initiated in a ceremony called Amrit Pahul are required to carry a Kirpan at all times. There is no age limit, but the child must be old enough to understand the significance of the ceremony. Children of primary school age have undergone the ceremony."

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education and skills

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Part of the guidelines also make reference to "Sikhs believe that the Kirpan must be around eight inches long, with a five inch blade", which has provided sufficient flexibility to allow Sikh children to continue to practice their faith.

The guidelines also state: "The courts have ruled that Sikhs are a "racial group" for the purposes of the Race Relations Act 1976. A rule which operated to forbid the wearing of a Kirpan, or resulted in, for example, the exclusion of a pupil who insisted on wearing one, might be alleged to constitute unlawful indirect discrimination under section 17 of the Act". The guidelines published by the Department for Education and Skills can be obtained using the following link: www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolsecurity/dwtannexf.shtml

Pressure results in UK Government promising a Code of Practice

Following the Sikh Lobby Day on 9 March and numerous Parliamentary Questions to virtually all Government Ministers in the run up to the General Election regarding the Sikhs right to wear the Kirpan the Home Office announced in Parliament that it "will be drawing up a code of practice concerning the wearing of Kirpans by Sikh employees. This will recognise the Sikh's religious freedom to carry an article of faith and will take account of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000."

The announcement also stated the Criminal Justice Act 1988 "exempts Sikhs from criminal prosecution on the grounds that the Kirpan is a religious article and Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam 1999 and the Human Rights Act 1998 also protect the right of individuals to follow their chosen religion."

In a press statement in April 2005 the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "We welcome the Home Office announcement, it is long overdue. It is now important for the Home Office to consult Sikh organisations that represent grassroots opinion and the views of Amritdhari Sikhs. Sikhs will need to make sure the code of practice is properly drawn up and can be applied to all Sikh employees, whether they work in the private or public sectors."

"Although the announcement in Parliament only mentions the wearing of Kirpans by Sikh employees we should work with the UK Government to try and ensure the code of practice extends to all Sikh articles of faith. At the Sikh Lobby Day on 9 March we suggested the UK Government agree to a major project across government to develop a strategy in conjunction with the Sikh community to address and find solutions to issues concerning the safeguarding of the Sikh identity and articles of faith. We will work with other like-minded Sikh organisations and our elected representatives to try and get the Home Office to use this opportunity to extend it not only to all Sikh articles of faith, but to all Sikhs - employees and members of the public that also experience difficulties, such as Sikhs who use the Passport Office or Sikh children that still have problems in schools."

With this in mind Early Day Motion 558 (reproduced below) was tabled in July 2005 after the General Election to remind the UK Government of the promise before the General Election.

EDM 558 - Code of Practice on Sikh Articles of Faith

That this House welcomes the Government's announcement in April 2005 that it will be drawing up a Code of Practice concerning Sikh articles of faith, in recognition of the Sikh's right to religious freedom and the need properly to protect the Sikh identity and articles of faith; urges that this Code of Practice covers all Sikh articles of faith and all Sikhs; and calls upon the Government to consult with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for UK Sikhs to learn more of the views of Sikh organisations representing the grassroots opinions and views of Amritdhari (practising) Sikhs.



Sikh articles of faith

ACTION POINT

Constituency MPs can sign EDM 558 until November 2006. Gurdwaras, Sikh organisations and individual Sikhs throughout the UK that are concerned with Sikh articles of faith are urged to ensure local MPs sign EDM 558 and write to the Home Secretary to indicate their support for a comprehensive Code of Practice on Sikh articles of faith.

Mayor backs law to ban religious discrimination

The Londoner - January 2005 (Extract)

The Mayor has welcomed government plans to extend the laws against religious discrimination and the incitement to religious hatred. At present Jewish and Sikh communities are protected under the Race Relations Act as 'ethnic groups'. Muslims and Hindus receive no such protection. The new legislation would give the same protection to all religious communities.

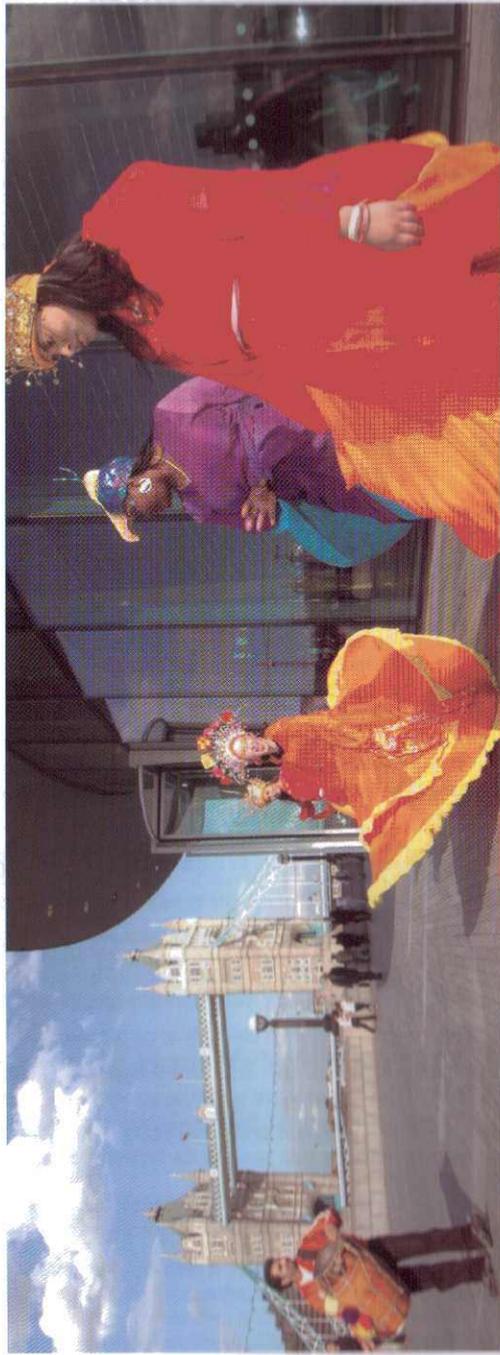
Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh and other religious leaders have all come out in broad support of the government's proposals.

The Church of England has voiced support in principle but is waiting to see the detail. Muhammad Abdul Bari, Deputy Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, welcomed the move saying: 'Religious discrimination should be unlawful in the same way that race discrimination is unlawful.'

The new incitement law would work both ways he added - it would not just protect Muslims but the Muslim community would also be subject to it: 'Everybody would have to be careful of what they did, said and wrote that could incite religious hatred.'

However, the Board of Deputies of British Jews said the law as it stands is pretty ineffectual. The Board's Director General, Neville Nagler, said: There are so many conditions that have to be fulfilled before any prosecution can be brought that it makes it very difficult to actually prove incitement.' Dabinderjit Singh of the Sikh Secretariat, took a similar view. 'At the moment the law against incitement is hardly ever successful. So what would be the point of extending it to include other religions without totally rewriting it first?' he said.

TheLondoner



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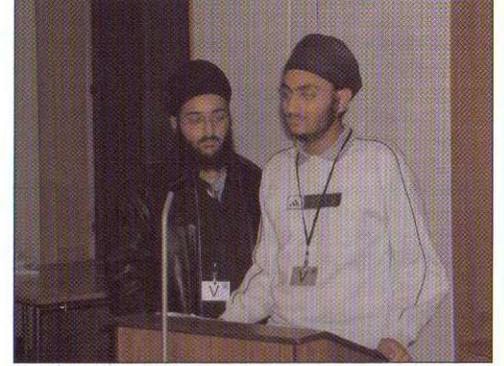
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CAMPAIGN FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS IN FRANCE

Appeal to UK MPs by young Sikhs expelled from French schools

One of the most pressing matters brought forward at the Sikh Lobby Day in the UK Parliament in November 2004 involved three young Sikhs who have been expelled from their schools in France because they refuse to take off their turbans. The law, which is actually hundreds of years old, has only now been enforced and requires that children attend school without demonstrating any personal article of faith. The three young Sikhs: Bikramjit, Jasvir and Ranjit have had the courage to challenge this law and are in the process of taking their high school to court over the matter.



French Students addressing UK MPs at the Sikh Lobby Day

Two of the young men involved, Jasvir Singh and Ranjit Singh, along with Karamvir Singh accompanied by Raghbir Singh and Shamsher Singh from Siri Guru Singh Sabha in Paris came to share their experiences with UK MPs and their Sikh brothers and sisters. Karamvir Singh, is another young man who has been refused entry in five universities on the basis that he wears a turban. The three representatives spoke with sincerity about their predicament and urged UK MPs to assist them in putting pressure on the French authorities to amend their unjust law.



MP's present at the Sikh Lobby Day

All three young men spoke passionately about their struggles growing up in France where Sikhs are still relatively few in number when compared to the UK and North America. Although fluent in French first, the three Singhs fervently addressed the gathering in French, English, and Panjabi. They described their childhood when they were teased and harassed on the schoolyards by other children. Today, as young adults they are still under attack, only this time by the lawmakers of the land.

Often emotional and heart wrenching, Jasvir Singh, Ranjit Singh and Karamvir Singh's testimonies had the gathering in tears, while at the same time their positive attitude and radiant smiles managed to uplift the spirits of all Sikhs in their presence. Over and over again, all three young men

asserted that they are committed to fight for their Sikh identity regardless of the challenges. While acknowledging and thanking all those who have supported them already, the Singhs also requested more of the UK Sangat to join them in this fight for the Sikh identity.

Dominic Grieve MP who helped coordinate the Sikh Lobby Day, mentioned that when the French sent delegations to Britain for their views on this law prior to it being put into force, British politicians and advisors had urged them to stop such a policy from going forward. He voiced his concerns then and warned the French that this was a mistake. After hearing the plight of the three young French Singhs, MPs assured the gathering that they would continue to have a dialogue with their French colleagues on this matter.

Tony Blair urged to pressure President Chirac during his UK visit

In November 2004 President Jacques Chirac came to the UK on a two day visit to mark the 100th anniversary of the "Entente Cordiale" - a pact ending centuries of hostility between Britain and France. The Sikh Federation (UK) wrote to Tony Blair prior to his meeting with President Chirac on 18 November to urge him to raise the issue of religious freedoms in France and the specific issue of Sikh children expelled from French schools. The letter was copied to the Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary and Mayor of London.

Ken Livingstone wrote to Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) the day prior to President Chirac's visit saying "I am appalled to learn that Sikh children have been expelled from French schools. Please let me know if there is any way in which you think I can help in such cases".

In the letter to Tony Blair the Federation reminded him that they also wrote to him on 6 February before he met President Chirac in Berlin on 18 February requesting his assistance in opposing the proposed law in France. In April the Federation wrote to the Home Office to tell them they feared that those negotiating an accommodation by drawing up specific guidance for schools to allow the wearing of the turban will be unable to secure an adequate safeguard for Sikhs in France.

The letter continued by stating "Last Thursday two of the three young Sikhs that have been expelled from a French school came to the UK to take part in the "Sikh Remembrance Day" and address UK politicians from all political parties at an event in Portcullis House. All politicians in attendance were unanimous in their opposition to the French law and promised to do all they could to pressure the French authorities."



Blair and Chirac to mark the 100th anniversary of the "Entente Cordiale"

MEPs challenge French Government in European Parliament

In February a cross-party group of MEPs tabled a 'Written Declaration' in the European Parliament calling for respect for religious rights and freedoms in France and throughout the EU, including the right to wear the Sikh turban, Jewish skullcap, Muslim hijab and Christian cross in state establishments. The cross-party group comprised London MEPs Claude Moraes (Labour) and Sarah Ludford (Liberal Democrat), Conservative MEP for the West Midlands Phillip Bushill-Matthews, Green MEP for the South-East Caroline Lucas and French Green MEP Alain Liptiez.

The MEPs believe a ban on demonstration of personal faith to be an infringement of human rights, in particular rights guaranteed in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Making specific reference to the French ban on 'conspicuous religious symbols' in schools, the declaration asked the French government to rethink its ban, consider options for the integration of religious minorities and called on all Member States to permit expressions of faith.

Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP, who is Liberal Democrat European justice spokeswoman, said: "Bans like the French one in the name of secularism may be well-intentioned, but they operate in an authoritarian manner, failing to acknowledge individual preferences and the diversity in Europe's population."

"The French tradition of assimilation through non-recognition of difference can be contrasted with the British tradition of pluralism. The whole of Europe is searching for a model of integration that works, but we suggest that the starting-point must be respect for freedom of expression."

A press conference to mark the launch of the declaration and the campaign to collect signatures was held in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, on 23rd February. The Sikh Federation (UK), wrote to all 78 UK MEPs urging them to attend the launch and sign the written declaration. The Federation also contact leading faith organisations in the UK, such as the Church of England, Roman Catholic Church, Jewish Board of Deputies and Muslim Association of Britain to encourage them to contact relevant faith organisations across Europe to ensure pressure is exerted on MEPs in all 25 Member States.

A Federation spokesman said: "Some are of the view that the Indian Government led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will resolve this issue. However, in our opinion serious doubts exist regarding the sincerity of the Indian regime. Following pressure from Sikhs in Europe we have seen many statements from the Indian Government on the right of Sikh children to wear the turban. They continue to claim to be engaged in diplomatic efforts with the French Government - however the reality is that Sikh and other children in France are suffering."

"Indian High Commissions and embassies of other countries that are opposed to the law in France have an ideal opportunity to exert diplomatic pressure in the next 90 days. They should write and pressure all 732 MEPs throughout the 25 EU Member States to prove they are genuine in their desire to have the ban in France overturned."

The Federation has confirmed with MEPs that the Indian Government through its High Commissions and Embassies took no action whatsoever in the three month period of the Written Declaration to gain support for religious freedoms in France. This can be contrasted with the actions of the Mayor of London who at the request of Sikhs wrote to all MEPs.



Press Conference in the European Parliament

Mayor for London supports lobby in European Parliament

The Sikh Federation (UK) organised a meeting with the Greater London Authority in April that was attended by representatives from a number of Sikh organisations, including the National Council of Gurdwaras, Young Sikhs, United Sikhs, Khalsa Human Rights and the Sikh Secretariat. As a result the Mayor for London Ken Livingstone wrote to all MEPs urging them to sign the Written Declaration on religious rights and freedoms in France and throughout the European Union.

In his letter Ken Livingstone stated: "I believe that banning the display of religious symbols is an infringement of human rights and therefore fully agree with the Declaration's request that the French Government reconsider its ban of conspicuous religious symbols in schools."



Ken Livingstone



"As a city with such a diverse multicultural population, any form of discrimination against cultural or religious freedom has, in my view, the effect of stigmatising many of London's communities and create further division and intolerance. Therefore, London has an interest in seeing basic human rights such as the right to freedom of religious expression upheld everywhere, including in the rest of Europe."

"This is why I strongly encourage you to endorse this Declaration."



To help increase the number of MEPs signing the Written Declaration the Mayor for London instructed his office in Brussels to set up a signing station outside the entrance of the Chamber during the plenary session of 27-28 April in Brussels

When the declaration lapsed on 21 May it had been endorsed by MEPs from 17 of the 25 EU Member States with substantial support from across the political spectrum. Around 40% of the signatures from MEPs were from the UK.

Sikh leaders lobby against Paris bid

Saturday May 21, 2005, Guardian

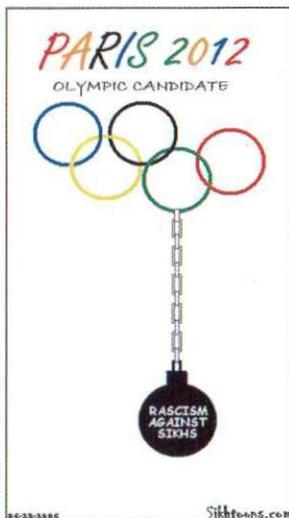
The Guardian Sikh leaders in Britain have written to all 117 International Olympic Committee members urging them not to vote for the favourites Paris when they meet to elect a host city to stage the 2012 games next month.

They claim that the controversial French law banning the Sikh dastar (turban) along with other religious articles of faith in schools is discriminatory and that Paris does not deserve to be awarded the Olympics.

"We publicly stated that, if the law in France was implemented to deny Sikh children the right to wear the turban, we would have little choice but to lobby against the Paris bid for 2012," wrote the Sikh Federation (UK) Chairman Bhai Amrik Singh in a letter to each of the IOC members.

"In a meeting at the French Embassy in London in January 2004 we informed them that we meant business. We believe it is inconceivable for such a prestigious international event to be hosted in a country where the laws infringe the basic human right of religious freedom."

The Federation has urged other religious groups to boycott Paris's bid as well as calling for a boycott of French goods and an international embargo on the purchase of defence equipment.



Sikhs claim religious discrimination in France may help London 2012



On the eve of the critical vote in Singapore on 6 July 2005 to decide the host city for the 2012 Summer Olympics the Sikh Federation (UK) in a press statement suggested that the laws and practices in France, which discriminate against those that wish to freely practice their faith may lead to the downfall of the Paris bid.

The Federation said London would be the natural beneficiary from any IOC members that listen to its concerns. Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Federation said: "We have written to all IOC Members encouraging them not to support the Paris bid. Sikh children in French public

schools are being denied the right to wear the turban. It is inconceivable that such a prestigious international event as the Olympics could be hosted in a country where the laws are infringing the basic human right of religious freedom."

"The French law not only deprive Sikh children the right to education while at the same time practising their faith, but also impacts on Sikh public employees. In France, Sikhs with turbans are also being denied IDs wearing their turbans, they are unable to take up "public sector" jobs, such as, lecture at university or become police officers, teachers etc. The law in France prevents Sikhs in the EU from freely working there and is a clear breach of one of the fundamentals of the 1957 Treaty of Rome that established the freedom of movement of labour."

The Federation specifically targeted 45 of the 117 voting IOC members who are from countries where religion is of paramount importance. A Federation spokesman said: "We have been particularly interested in putting our concerns to IOC members from what may be termed "Roman Catholic" or "Islamic" countries. Whilst there is a complex inter-play of issues that will affect how each IOC member votes, we are of the view that some will be influenced by what we have had to say. It could easily be the case that one or two votes will make all the difference."

"One of the IOC members, Randhir Singh, is a Sikh who wears a turban and is well aware of our campaign. We have pointed out that freedom of religious expression is a fundamental human right enshrined in international law that should not be ignored when making the final decision. Randhir Singh knows of the importance of the Sikh identity and that the outward expression of individual faith is one of the most basic and precious freedoms for a Sikh. We hope he will use his influence so France is sent a clear message that it must get rid of its discriminatory laws before it is worthy of holding the Olympics."



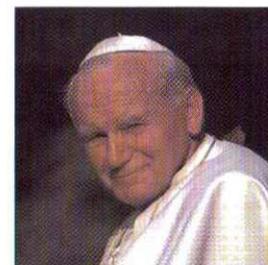
Randhir Singh

A Federation spokesman added: "Despite the relatively small size of the worldwide Sikh community and our limited resources we have been taking the lead in challenging the law in France using more imaginative methods. Our strategy to overturn the French ban has many angles, political and diplomatic pressure, legal action and other forms of direct action."

On 6 July London beat Paris to win the nomination for hosting the 2012 Summer Olympics. Sikhs gathering for a meeting with Rt. Hon. Ian McCartney MP, Labour Party Chairman, provided a timely response to awaiting media outside the Houses of Parliament as the decision came through from Singapore. The Mayor for London, Ken Livingstone has congratulated the Sikh community for its support.

British Sikhs pay tribute to Pope John Paul II

Hindustan Times, April 6 2005



The Sikh Federation of Britain paid tribute on Tuesday to Pope John Paul II, signalling its gratitude for his support of Sikhs during the past 20 years.

The pope's expression of "great sadness" at the Indian army assault on the Golden Temple in Amritsar in 1984, was an example of the late Pope's support, the Federation said in a statement.

The pontiff also voiced his "universal horror and dismay" at the massacres of up to 20,000 Sikhs in November 1984 after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards.

The group said contrast that bloodbath with his own reaction and that of one billion Roman Catholics after he was shot and seriously wounded in 1981 by Mehmet Ali Agca, a Turkish fanatic whom the pontiff later publicly forgave.

More recently the Pope had intervened in the French debate about the wearing of religious symbols in schools saying it was an "inalienable right" of Sikhs in France to practice and propagate their faith and said "no government should interfere with the inner core of any religion."

Several Sikh organisations sent a letter to the Vatican last week saying that its faithful were praying for the Pope and the Catholics of the world, the statement said.

SEPARATE RECOGNITION AND MONITORING OF SIKHS

Labour Government put under pressure on separate monitoring

In March Sikhs from across the UK took part in a successful Sikh Lobby Day. With a General Election approaching the theme of the lobby was "Do Sikhs have a voice? - Make the Sikh vote count!"

Separate recognition and monitoring of Sikhs was high on the agenda given that Sikhs have campaigned for many years on this issue. In the last two to three years Sikhs have won the cross-party support of over 200 MPs, including Ministers, to be separately monitored by public bodies as regards the provision of public services. The Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats have gone as far as to state that the separate recognition and monitoring of Sikhs is official party policy.

At the Sikh Lobby Day on the eve of the General Election it was made clear that Sikhs were being unfairly treated and the Labour Government should start listening to the arguments being put forward and the practical reality that Sikhs were being ignored as regards public service provision. A spokesman for the Sikh Federation (UK), the main organisers of the lobby said: "Labour must listen to our arguments and commit to a policy that enforces the legal recognition of Sikhs, so public bodies are able to make informed decisions on public service provision to Sikhs at a local and national level".

Labour Ministers John Spellar MP and Chris Pond MP, who attended the public meeting in the Houses of Parliament, were supportive of the Sikh position and were unwilling to defend the position being adopted by the Home Office.

Whilst Home Office Ministers have been prepared to defend their position by writing to individual MPs they avoided addressing this issue face to face by addressing Sikhs and answering questions on the Sikh Lobby Day. During the lobby it was pointed out that two and half years after the introduction of new guidance by the Commission for Race Equality (CRE) and Office for National Statistics (ONS) only around 20 out of 40,000+ public bodies had opted to monitor Sikhs.

A spokesman for the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "This demonstrates the optional CRE and ONS guidance has failed the Sikhs and the Home Office must now change the statutory Code of Practice to enforce the separate monitoring of Sikhs by public bodies. If the Labour Government is genuine about proper and fair public service provision to Sikhs it should make this change at the first practical opportunity."



UK GENERAL ELECTION 2005
WILL SIKHS HAVE A VOICE?
SIKH LOBBY DAY
WEDNESDAY 9th MARCH 2005

Arrange to meet your MP between 1.30 - 3.00pm in the Central Lobby of the Houses of Parliament.
Listen to MPs and Lords and ask them questions between 3.00 - 5.00pm in Committee Room 10.

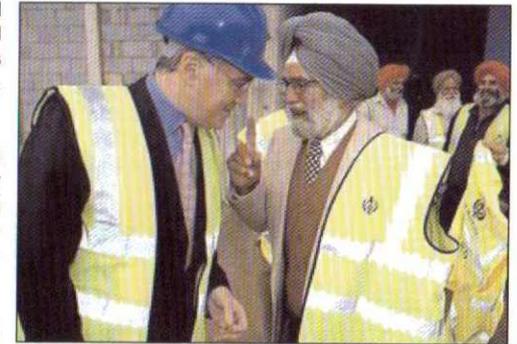
MAKING THE SIKH VOTE COUNT!

Assemble at 1.30 pm outside the Houses of Parliament, Westminster (St. Stephen's entrance)
Organised jointly by: Sikh Federation (UK), National Council of Gurdwaras, Young Sikhs, Khalsa Human Rights & Sikh Secretariat

www.sikhfederation.com
email: info@sikhfederation.com

Separate monitoring raised on the eve of the General Election when Conservative leader visits new Gravesend Gurdwara

On the eve of the General Election Michael Howard, the Conservative Party leader, visited the site of the new Gurdwara in Gravesend. His visit was televised on all major channels - BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky.



Michael Howard visits Gravesend Gurdwara

On 18 April the New York Times reported: "Sikh leaders showed him around the Gurdwara under construction. A flier from the Sikh Federation (UK) proclaimed: "British Sikhs are honest, hard-working, law-abiding citizens that the Labour government is ignoring and taking for granted."

The Labour Government were accused of failing to give fair treatment to the estimated 700,000 British Sikhs, despite them being the largest and most distinct ethnic minority in the country and being recognised for over 20 years as a separate race and ethnic group by the highest legal authority in the country.

Since the introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 the Labour Government has ignored Sikhs and failed to ensure fair treatment as regards the provision of public services, such as health, education, employment etc.

The Sikh Federation (UK) stated: "The Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats have made it clear that it is official party policy to support the separate recognition and monitoring of Sikhs by public bodies. We also have cross-party support from over 200 MPs, including many Ministers. However, the Labour Government has to date ignored Sikhs and our elected representatives. We are grateful for support from many individual MPs - Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, SNP, PC etc. Labour is urged to stop denying Sikhs the right to fair treatment as recognised by law."

"Lawyers have suggested the Labour Government if prosecuted could be found guilty of racism in failing to require public bodies to separately monitor Sikhs for the purposes of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. We feel the time is right for the Labour Government to respond to legitimate Sikh demands for fair treatment."

Federation receive positive response from Home Secretary



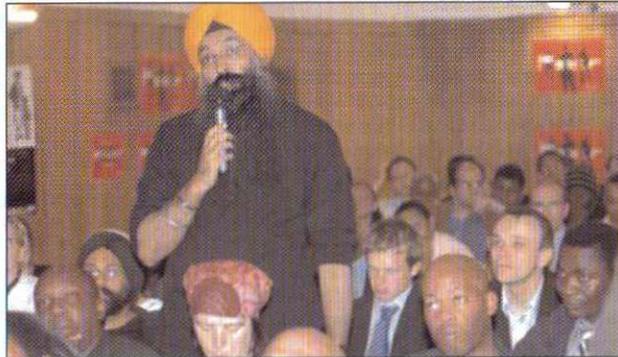
Two days before the General Election at a special "Question Time" in central London organised by Operation Black Vote representatives of the Sikh Federation (UK) asked each of the main political parties represented to make a public commitment to the separate recognition and monitoring of Sikhs for the purposes of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. In the question it was made clear that Sikhs were simply asking for fair treatment and for Government to recognise the legal backing Sikhs have had since the 1983 Mandla v Lee case in the House of Lords.

The special "Question Time" chaired by the Commission for Race Equality Chair, Trevor Philips provided an ideal opportunity to raise this issue before the General Election. The panel of politicians comprised the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke MP, Dominic Grieve MP, the Conservative Shadow Home Office Minister, Ed Davey MP, the Liberal Democrat spokesman for local government and Jean Lambert a Green MEP from London.

Ed Davey MP referred to the Early Day Motions in Parliament that he and many other MPs from across the political spectrum had signed. Around 200 MPs signed the EDMs or wrote to the Government in support of Sikhs on this issue. Dominic Grieve MP repeated the Conservative Party's public commitment to fully support the separate recognition and monitoring of Sikhs. As an MEP Jean Lambert was less familiar with the issue, but commented that Sikhs were the most distinct ethnic minority and she could not understand why Sikhs were not being treated fairly.

The Home Secretary, Charles Clarke MP, agreed with the Sikh Federation (UK) on the importance of the introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act in the last four years. He also agreed it was important to monitor distinct ethnic groups, such as Sikhs and gave a public commitment to have a dialogue with the Sikh community and resolve the issue that had been raised.

The audience for the Operation Black Vote event was dominated by members of the black and afro-Caribbean community. Many of the questions concerning issues such as immigration, slavery, deaths in police custody, stop and search etc. were made very forcibly. Despite the request from Trevor Philips many of the questioners often resorted to mini-speeches and disrupted responses from the panel. In short the Sikh representatives present put themselves across extremely professionally unlike many others who were ill-disciplined. The politicians left with many impressions, not least that the Sikh community has representatives that they can do business with.



To keep up pressure on the UK Government Early Day Motion 556 (see below) was tabled in July 2005.

EDM 556 - Separate Recognition and Monitoring of Sikhs

That this House recognises the considerable contribution made to society by UK Sikhs; believes that, because UK law recognises Sikhs as a separate ethnic and racial group, it would be helpful for public authorities to monitor Sikhs separately, firstly to ensure that the estimated 700,000 UK Sikhs are treated fairly and given proper protection from discrimination, and secondly to enable a proper assessment to be made of the level and appropriateness of public service provision; and therefore calls on the Government to issue a revised Statutory Code of Practice relating to the operation of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 which will properly reflect the need separately to recognise and to monitor Sikhs, thereby allowing public bodies the opportunity to offer a fair and equitable system for the provision of public services.

ACTION POINT

MPs can sign EDM 556 until November 2006. Gurdwaras, Sikh organisations and individual Sikhs throughout the UK are urged to ensure local MPs sign EDM 556 and write to the Home Secretary to call for the Statutory Code of Practice relating to the operation of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to be revised and submitted to Parliament to ensure public authorities separately monitor Sikhs.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS BEFORE THE ELECTION

Federation join main political parties to lay wreath at the Cenotaph

Hundreds of Sikhs from across the UK came together on 11 November in London on Remembrance Day to recall Sikh sacrifices in the First World War and mark the 20th anniversary of the massacre of up to 20,000 innocent Sikhs in anti-Sikh pogroms in Delhi and cities throughout India in November 1984. It was also an opportunity to welcome Sikh children from France and hear their passionate appeal for help from British Sikhs and UK Parliamentarians to challenge an unjust law in France.



The day began with Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) joining a representative from each of the three main political parties to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph to commemorate Sikh sacrifices. The wreath of poppies had a large Khanda at the centre and the words "We will never forget Sikh sacrifices" and "Never forget 84."



Bhai Amrik Singh



Ivor Caplin MP



Lord Strathclyde



Paul Keetch MP

Thousands, including hundreds of war veterans, watched Bhai Amrik Singh accompanying Ivor Caplin the Labour Minister for War Veterans at the Ministry of Defence, Lord Strathclyde the Conservative Leader in the House of Lords and Paul Keetch MP, Liberal Democrat Defence spokesman. Sikh participation was greatly appreciated at the remembrance event and this was formally acknowledged by Bruce Simpson the Chairman of the Western Front Association that organise the event to take place on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month that officially marks the end of the First World War.

Memorandum of Understanding developed and released to exert pressure on politicians

In January the Sikh Federation (UK) released a Memorandum of Understanding for the use of Gurdwaras and Sikhs throughout the UK when meeting MPs or Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) in the run up to the General Election.

The Memorandum, which is available in the download section of the Sikh Federation (UK) web site www.sikhfederation.com created considerable awareness and was designed in a tick box format to allow maximum flexibility to MPs or PPCs in terms of the issues they wished to support. It is understood that MPs and PPCs in around 150 constituencies either used or were at least aware of the existence and contents of the Memorandum.



UK Government reminded of Sikh concerns in Parliamentary debate

In February a parliamentary debate was initiated by Rob Marris the MP for Wolverhampton, South West. The UK Government was reminded on the floor of the House of Commons of a number of issues of concern to British Sikhs.

Rob Marris was without doubt the most active MP in the last Parliament in taking up issues on behalf of Sikhs. He commenced the debate by reminding UK MPs that Panjab was divided by partition in 1947 and there are many Sikh holy sites in Pakistan, most notably the birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

In what many believe to be a swipe at the Indian High Commission and its supporters in the UK he also referred to his private visit to Panjab last October and made it clear during the debate that he paid for the visit himself. Some have questioned him about his visit to Harmandar Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, Chandigarh and Jalandhar by implying members of the British Sikh community sponsored his visit.



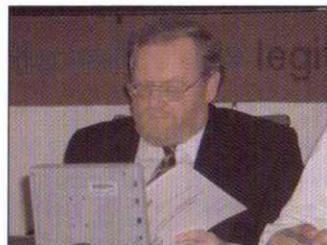
Rob Marris MP

At the start of his speech Rob Marris also referred to the number of Sikhs in the UK being about 700,000. This is significant in that this number was not contradicted by the UK Government in its response. Rob Marris then raised a number of issues with the Labour Government.

He specifically asked for:

- * The separate monitoring of Sikhs to discover the demographic profile and to help target the provision of services. He pointed out Sikhs are recognised as a separate race in UK law and Sikhs had considerable cross-party support on this issue.
- * Separate consultation with the Sikh community and steps to encourage an increase in the number of public appointments in local and national decision-making bodies.
- * A change to the pension credit rules that penalise those who are abroad for more than four weeks, suggesting a thirteen week period would be more appropriate.
- * The Government to rethink its policy regarding English language proficiency tests for Granthis, Kirtanis and Katha Vachaks as no Government should seek to dictate the language in which a religion is practised.
- * Clear guidance to the police regarding Nagar Kirtans to facilitate road closures and Government support for Vaisakhi celebrations.
- * Government support for Sikh faith schools.
- * Information on what progress has been made on the issue of the wearing of Kirpans by Sikh employees in restricted areas at UK airports and what steps the Government are taking to widen knowledge of the importance of the Kirpan and the sensitivities surrounding it.
- * Information on what representations the UK Government has made to the Government of France and to the EU regarding Sikhs right to wear the Dastar.
- * Information on what further pressures the UK Government and the EU are bringing to bear on the Government of India for a proper investigation and, where appropriate, for proper criminal charges to be brought and convictions secured, particularly against police officers, for those human rights abuses in June and November 1984 and for many years after that.

Sikhs build political powerbase to influence UK Government



John Spellar MP
Labour

In a press statement the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "We believe this is a significant political development that has been welcomed by all the main political parties. The plan is for the group to be the focal point of all significant contacts between the UK Government and the Sikh community and will be set up so it can provide a rapid and positive response to all Sikh concerns."



Sandra Gidley MP
Liberal Democrats

A member of the National Executive Council of the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "We are determined to make the APPG for UK Sikhs a success and make it work for the benefit of all Sikhs." Rob Marris MP, who chaired the meeting formally announced that the APPG for UK Sikhs would be set after the General Election and that this was consistent with the increasing demands from the Sikh community.

Politicians and Government feel Sikh pressure in run up to elections

In the run up to the General Election Sikhs in many towns and cities up and down the country used the Memorandum of Understanding produced and widely distributed by the Sikh Federation (UK) some months earlier to exert pressure on UK politicians. Where the Memorandums of Understanding were used by the local Sikh community they were very well received by MPs and prospective candidates.

In feedback obtained from politicians it was indicated they were impressed with the way in which British Sikhs are now far better organised and more politically aware than at any other time. Many commented on the success of Sikh Lobby Days to increase awareness and the leadership and direction being provided by the Sikh Federation (UK). The behind the scenes professionalism of the Sikh Secretariat to build close working relations with each of the main political parties was also praised. Local MPs that signed the Memorandum thought it was an excellent initiative and welcomed the openness and flexibility provided by the tick box design.

At the Sikh Lobby Day in March one of the key announcements was the setting up of the first ever All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) working for Sikhs in the UK. The announcement was made at a packed public meeting at the Houses of Parliament. The number of Sikhs taking part was so great that there was frantic activity to find a room large enough in Parliament to accommodate those wishing to attend. Many still remained standing for the entire two hour public meeting.



Dominic Grieve MP
Conservative

The success of the new parliamentary group appeared to be guaranteed with support from politicians across the political spectrum and at the highest levels. Labour Ministers John Spellar MP and Chris Pond MP who were present for the announcement confirmed the new group had tremendous potential to influence and shape government policies and practices towards the Sikhs and was a logical step forward.



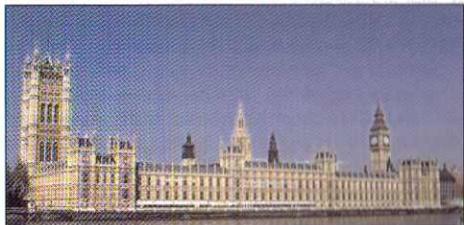
Alex Salmond MP
Scottish National Party

The signing of Memorandums was accompanied by a series of associated Parliamentary Questions in the House of Commons. For example, in the weeks running up to the elections the Home Secretary was asked:

- * What representations he has received on the separate monitoring of Sikhs under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
- * If he will revise the statutory code of practice to ensure that all public bodies separately recognise and monitor Sikhs for the purposes of the Race Relations Act 2000.
- * What representations he has received from the Indian High Commission concerning India's opposition to the separate recognition and monitoring of British Sikhs by public bodies in the UK.
- * What discussions he has had with Sikh representatives to discuss the problems of racist attacks; when he next intends to meet Sikh representatives; and if he will make a statement.
- * How many violent attacks perpetrated against Sikhs have been recorded in each of the last five years; and in how many of these attacks race or religion was deemed to be a factor.
- * What measures he has taken to counter racism against Sikh and Muslim communities.
- * What his Department's policy is on the wearing of the Kirpan by Sikh employees.
- * What the Prison Service's policy is on practising Sikh officers wearing the Kirpan; and if he will discuss the issue with RESPECT.
- * If he will meet representatives from (a) the Sikh Federation (UK), (b) the National Council of Gurdwaras, (c) Young Sikhs and (d) the Sikh Secretariat to discuss developments since 2001 on the Sikh Agenda for the UK Government; and if he will make a statement.
- * To explain which Sikh organisations he has met in each of the last three years.
- * Whether a Minister from his Department will attend the Sikh convention in 2005.
- * When he last reviewed the list of Sikh organisations included in the list of groups proscribed in the UK; and if he will make a statement.
- * Whether the Government plans to undertake a comprehensive review of the proscription of the International Sikh Youth Federation.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office was asked:

- * What assessment he has made of progress since June 2001 in increasing the number of public appointments to (a) local and (b) national decision-making bodies of members of the British Sikh community; and what estimate he has made of the number of such appointments since that date.
- * What steps he has taken in the last four years to increase the number of applications received from members of the British Sikh community for public appointments to (a) local and (b) national decision-making bodies.
- * What guidance the Cabinet Office has issued to Government departments on separately (a) recognising and (b) monitoring service provision to British Sikhs in relation to race relations legislation.
- * How many people employed by the civil service state their religion as Sikh.
- * If he will remove restrictions on the wearing of the Kirpan by Sikh employees and Sikh members of the public in Government buildings.



The Foreign Secretary was asked:

- * What representations his Department has made to the Indian Government concerning its decision to end the UN moratorium on the death penalty.
- * What recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Indian Government on the UN Convention Against Torture.
- * How often the former Director General of the Punjabi Police, Mr K. P. S. Gill, has visited the UK since 1995; and what the duration of each visit was.
- * What discussions he has had with the Indian Government about investigations into the attacks on Sikhs in Delhi in 1984.
- * What representations he has made to the Indian Government concerning the recent violent attacks on members of the Sikh community of Chattisgarh.

The Solicitor General was asked whether the Attorney General will initiate a prosecution against the producers of the play Behzti on the grounds it was offensive to Sikhs.

The Secretary of State for International Development was asked what assessment he has made of steps taken by the Indian government to ensure tsunami relief aid reaches the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked whether he is discussing with the Office for National Statistics changes to the 2011 Census forms which would recognise Sikhs as an ethnic group.



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Indian press reporting of the Sikh "factor" in the UK elections

Below are some extracts from Indian press reports of the Federation's input to the General Election.

Extracts from Times of India article - 2 May 2005

The Sikh Federation, the UK's first and only Sikh political party . . . told TOI: "The Sikh vote matters in about 40 to 50 key constituencies, marginals, where there are a large number of Sikh votes and where there are (Labour) cabinet and junior Ministers that 'depend' on the Sikh vote."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

A Federation spokesman explained: "I know we have Sandy Parmar, a Sikh woman married to a Hindu, standing in Wolverhampton South. But she is not a practising Sikh. The Sikh community would be loathed to lose its sympathetic MP, the Labour incumbent Rob Marris. He has done a lot on Sikh issues. Sikhs don't care if their Wolverhampton South MP is Sikh or not. They do care that he is interested in Sikh issues."

The Hindu - 1984 anti-Sikh riots an issue in U.K. elections

THE HINDU LONDON: The 1984 anti-Sikh riots in India have emerged as a significant issue in Britain's general election campaign. Sikh voters are seeking a commitment from candidates that, if elected, they will help the victims get justice from the Indian Government.

There is widespread anger among the country's 700,000-strong Sikhs that more than 20 years after the "massacre", the perpetrators have still not been punished.

"We are asking every candidate who comes to us to give an assurance that they would raise our concerns in Parliament and lobby with the Government to take it up with the Indian Government," said Ajit Singh, who was a sarpanch in Jalandhar when the riots took place. Now he helps to run a Gurdwara in Leicester, which has a sizeable Sikh electorate.



Families of many British Sikhs suffered in the riots, which followed the assassination of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. They are bitter that successive governments have failed to get them justice. They want British politicians to put pressure on New Delhi to allow independent international human rights groups to investigate the killings.

In Leicester, Asian candidates Keith Vaz (Labour) and Paramjit Singh Gill (Liberal Democrat) said they shared the concerns of their Sikh constituents. Mr. Gill said he supported the demand for an investigation by human rights organisations and wondered why New Delhi should oppose it.

In Southall, a predominantly Sikh area in west London, voters said they felt "let down" as even a Sikh Prime Minister had not done anything. "When Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister, we hoped that he would do something but he has also disappointed us," said a bus driver.

The Sikh Federation (UK), Britain's only Sikh political party, has urged voters to use the election to raise their concerns about the protection of minorities in India.

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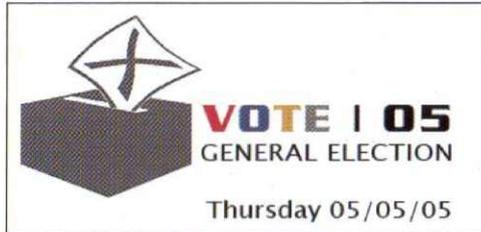
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INTERPRETING THE UK GENERAL ELECTIONS

Implications of the UK General Election results for British Sikhs

Following the General Election the Federation wrote to the leaders of each of the three main political parties and the Scottish National Party indicating the need to work closely with the Sikh community to ensure issues of concern to Sikhs are properly addressed.

In a press statement the Federation said: "In our view a smaller majority for the Government is a positive and healthy development. Having analysed the results for each party and considered the assurances that have been given to us by senior figures in each of the main parties we believe we are now much better placed to achieve success on Sikh issues."



"The results have been analysed for each political party and for individual candidates that have indicated their willingness to enter into a partnership with us to address issues of concern to Sikhs. We are delighted to report that virtually all sitting MPs or candidates that were likely to win and signed up to the Memorandum of Understanding, which we have been pushing for the last four to five months, have been elected."

"We are now entering a new era where we are hopeful for a massive increase in Sikh membership of each of the mainstream political parties, over the next few years, which will help deliver lasting political clout for Sikhs in the UK."

A spokesman for the Federation said: "Almost all Labour MPs that were being supported by the Sikh community have been elected in towns and cities, such as Barking, Bedford, Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Coventry, Derby, East Ham, Glasgow, Huddersfield, Leeds, Leicester, Luton, Newcastle, Nottingham, Slough, Southampton, Telford, Walsall, West Bromwich, West London and Wolverhampton."

On 7 May the Times of India reported:

Narinderjit Singh, General Secretary of the UK's first and only Sikh political party, the Sikh Federation said: "Almost all Labour MPs that were being supported by the Sikh community have been elected." In similar vein, the Federation publicly shed no tears over the electoral demise of Sikh Parmjit Singh Gill at the hands of Labour's Peter Soulsby in Leicester South. "This was to be expected," said the Federation, insisting it was better to support Sikh-friendly white English MPs rather than non-practising Sikhs.

"We were particularly pleased with the re-election of Labour candidates, such as Rob Marris MP, in key marginal constituencies, who have been working tirelessly for the Sikh community. We know they will appreciate the efforts by the local Sikh community to have them re-elected. We have also developed good contacts with newly elected Labour MPs, such as Pat McFadden, who will remain indebted to the huge support from his Sikh constituents in Wolverhampton."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

A spokesman for the Federation added: "The results for candidates in the Conservative Party who have been very supportive on Sikh issues were also critical to maintain our influence across the political spectrum. In the past few years the likes of Oliver Letwin MP, Dominic Grieve MP, David Cameron MP, Caroline Spelman MP, Alan Duncan MP etc. have been very vocal in their support for Sikhs. Therefore, we are very pleased they have all been re-elected."

"In addition, Conservative MPs have gained seats from Labour in Gravesham, Ilford, Milton Keynes, Northampton and Reading. We already have links with several of these newly elected MPs. Our aim will be to work closely with these new MPs in these marginal constituencies, which have a sizeable number of Sikh constituents, to ensure they are pro-active in supporting Sikhs on the full range of issues that concern us."

The spokesman continued: "The Liberal Democrats have had a successful General Election with the biggest rise in the share of the vote. Whilst the party lost its one and only Sikh MP, Parmjit Singh Gill, this was to be expected. Similarly, Satnam Kaur Khalsa as the first practising Sikh woman to fight a general election achieved a very respectable share of the vote in a safe Labour seat. As a party, the Liberal Democrats have been the most supportive of the three main parties on the full range of Sikh issues and we are excited by the prospect of new MPs in Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Leeds, Manchester and Solihull."

"We are thrilled to see the election of the likes of John Hemming, the new Liberal Democrat MP for Birmingham Yardley. He spoke passionately at the last National Sikh Convention in Wolverhampton in September 2004 on several of our key issues, such as his support for the separate recognition and monitoring of Sikhs and the Sikhs right to self determination.

"In overall terms we are encouraged by the make up of the new Parliament, including some of the new members of the House of Lords, such as Dennis Turner and new members from the Scottish National Party, led by Alex Salmond MP. We think Sikhs can make huge strides over the next few years with our influence across the political spectrum and the soon to be formed All Party Parliamentary Group for UK Sikhs. If we keep up our efforts the Sikh community should be very well placed to ensure practising Sikhs enter the UK Parliament next time round or much sooner via the House of Lords. If we are able to encourage a sufficient number of young Sikh professionals to take up this challenge we are hopeful that in the next decade we will see practising Sikhs at Ministerial level."

Sikh Agenda for the UK Government

An eight-point Sikh Agenda for the UK Government was launched at the National Sikh Convention in September 2001 at Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara, Wolverhampton. The Sikh Agenda was agreed after a three-month consultation period after the 2001 General Election and revealed a diverse range of aims and objectives for the Sikh community in the UK. The agenda represented the aspirations of the disparate parts of the UK Sikh community that could be progressed with the UK Government, the Opposition and individual Members of Parliament.

The Sikh Agenda concept recognised that all Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations should be able to relate to, support and take forward one or more items within the agenda. At the same time no Gurdwara or Sikh organisation was being asked to sign up to the Sikh Agenda in full. A similar logic applies to individual MPs who are able to support and take forward specific items in the agenda without having to back every item.

The Sikh Agenda has provided the UK Government with a clear understanding of the broad range of needs of the Sikh community in the UK and what is required to ensure Sikhs are able to play a more effective part in our multicultural society. The agenda recognises that British Sikhs and the UK Government have an active role to play in promoting British-Sikh relations in the UK and globally.

Each year the details of the eight-point Sikh Agenda are revisited based on experiences and developments over the last twelve months. The eight elements of the agenda are shown below and the details can be found on the Sikh Secretariat web site at www.sikh-secretariat.com.

- Agenda Item 1 - British Sikhs and the establishment
- Agenda Item 2 - Government funding for Sikh organisations and projects
- Agenda Item 3 - Promoting the Sikh identity and way of life
- Agenda Item 4 - Sikhs and our education system
- Agenda Item 5 - Preserving and promoting Sikh heritage and culture
- Agenda Item 6 - Upholding respect for human rights and promoting humanitarian aid
- Agenda Item 7 - Self determination for the Sikh Nation
- Agenda Item 8 - Challenging civil liberty restrictions on Sikhs and their organisations

SIKH SECRETARIAT

EMAIL: info@sikh-secretariat.com

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE ELECTION

Launch of the All Party Parliamentary Group for UK Sikhs

The launch of the All Party Parliamentary Group for UK Sikhs officially took place on the Sikh Lobby Day on 12 July. The Press Release issued by Rob Marris MP, the Chair of the group is reproduced below:

At a packed meeting in Parliament on Tuesday 12 July 2005, over 30 MPs and Lords - including Home Office Minister Tony McNulty MP - welcomed the public launch of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for UK Sikhs. MPs and Lords from across the political spectrum gathered with representatives from the 360 Gurdwaras (temples) and Sikh organisations, who had been invited to attend.

The inaugural meeting of this brand new APPG was held on 14 June 2005, and it agreed that the purpose of the APPG is:

"To represent within Parliament and with government the interests and concerns of the UK Sikh community and to provide the government and the UK Sikh community with a better two-way consultation process to inform improved decision-making."

The level of interest shown in the APPG for UK Sikhs by so many Parliamentarians is a just reflection of the considerable contributions made to society by UK Sikhs. The membership of the APPG, and the excellent response from the Sikh communities, stem from an increasing desire amongst UK Sikhs to contribute fully to the UK's democratic institutions and decision-making processes.

Afterwards, the Chair of the APPG Rob Marris MP said:

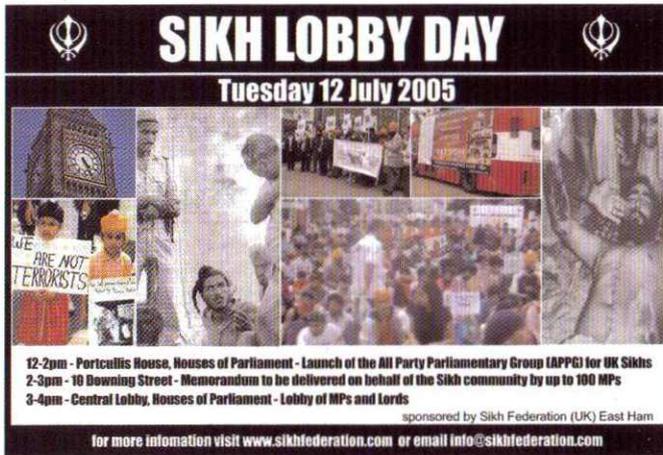
"I am delighted by the huge response from Sikh organisations and Gurdwaras, many of whom have now committed themselves to work in close partnership with the APPG for UK Sikhs, in order to ensure that UK Sikhs' views are properly understood and presented to government by Parliamentary representatives."

"This is even more important following the London terrorist bombings, and the totally unacceptable attacks on Sikhs and their places of worship - due to the ignorance and hatred of those who would seek to divide our society. They will not succeed."

All those present at the meeting expressed their outrage at the bombings themselves, and wholeheartedly condemned all attacks on people and on places of worship, including those against Sikhs who are the largest and most visible ethnic minority in the UK.

Immediately after the launch at Parliament, several Sikhs representatives [accompanied by MPs belonging to the APPG for UK Sikhs] submitted a Memorandum to 10 Downing Street. The Memorandum not only indicated those representatives' main areas of concern, as discussed at the launch meeting, but also made specific reference to the condemnation by Sikhs of last Thursday's terrorist attacks.

Because there seemed to have been little or no mention by senior politicians of the attacks on UK Sikhs, and no real visibility of Sikh leaders at faith or community events associated with the London bombings, an urgent request was made for Downing Street to condemn publicly all hate crimes including specifically those aimed at Sikhs and their religious institutions.



Memorandum from UK Sikhs submitted to 10 Downing Street

Immediately following the launch of the APPG for UK Sikhs on 12 July a Memorandum was submitted to 10 Downing Street by Sikh representatives and MPs belonging to the group. It highlighted that MPs and Lords from across the political spectrum had formally come together to establish the APPG for UK Sikhs at the inaugural meeting of the new APPG held on 14 June.

The Memorandum mentioned the importance of the group with office holders at senior levels from each of the main political parties, for example the five Vice-Chairs are as follows:

John Spellar MP for Warley (Labour)

Minister for the Armed Forces - 1997-2001

Minister for Transport - 2002-03

Minister for Northern Ireland - 2003-05

Dominic Grieve MP for Beaconsfield (Conservative)

Shadow Minister for Constitutional Affairs and Scotland 1999-2001

Shadow Home Office Minister - 2001-03

Shadow Attorney General - 2003 -

Simon Hughes MP for Southwark North & Bermondsey (Liberal Democrat)

Shadow Home Secretary - 1999-2003

President Liberal Democrat Party 2004 -

Shadow Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2005 -

Alex Salmond MP for Banff and Buchan (Scottish National Party)

Leader Scottish National Party - 1990-2000, 2004 -

Elfyn Llwyd MP for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Plaid Cymru)

Leader, Plaid Cymru Parliamentary Party 1997 -

It also indicated that the APPG for UK Sikhs had today tabled four Early Day Motions, mentioned below, informing government of some of the issues that concern MPs.

- * Government consultation on Sikh issues
- * Separate recognition and monitoring of Sikhs
- * Code of Practice on Sikh articles of faith
- * Anglo Sikh heritage

The Memorandum also pointed to other subjects for EDMs that are likely to be tabled in the coming weeks and months.

- * Attacks on Sikhs due to "Mistaken Identity"
- * Religious rights and freedoms in the EU
- * Panjab river waters and desertification
- * Lack of justice for the November 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms
- * Access to Panjab for the UN and international human rights organisations



Sikhs and politicians delivering the Memorandum to 10 Downing Street

The Memorandum mentioned the next APPG for UK Sikhs event was likely to be in November and invited the Prime Minister to show his appreciation of the contribution of the Sikh community by addressing Sikhs at this event.

In conclusion the Memorandum reminded the Prime Minister that many Sikh organisations had totally condemned the terrorist attacks that targeted innocent civilians in London and also sent their condolences to the victims and their families. However, it said they were deeply concerned that many senior politicians had failed to acknowledge attacks against Sikhs and Gurdwaras who were being targeted through what is sometimes termed "mistaken identity".

At the meeting Sikhs pointed to their activities in support of the London Olympic bid for 2012 and opposition to the Paris bid due to restrictions on religious freedoms in France. The Federation mentioned their lobbying and letters to all IOC members with specific targeting of around 50 members. These activities were noted approvingly by the Mayor and reflected in his thanks in his News Release.

The Mayor indicated the Olympics in London 2012 should allow him to support a major international Sikh event to be organised in the 4 year period running up to 2012. Young Sikhs (UK) who were represented at the meeting have set up a project team to organise a major international event in the Autumn of 2008.

In the context of hosting the first ever Sikh Identity Conference the Mayor said he would welcome a special feature in the Londoner newspaper on the Sikhs - their philosophy, history, identity and contemporary issues.

The Mayor went much further than expected on a possible legal challenge to safeguard the right to religious freedoms in France. He agreed to seek a legal opinion on whether he can challenge the French authorities on behalf of Londoners. For example, he indicated he was keen to look into the possibility of supporting a legal challenge by a turban wearing Sikh police officer or teacher who is currently denied by French law and practices the right to work in France without compromising his or her fundamental right to religious freedoms.

The final issue covered at the meeting was a pledge by the Mayor about those involved in genocide and human rights abuses against minorities like the Sikhs not being welcome in London and facing possible prosecution under UK law. This sent an important and very clear message to the international community about what may happen to those that have been involved in torture, disappearances and genocide of Sikhs in India. The Mayor was shocked to learn that Amnesty International and the UN Rapporteur on Torture are still denied access to Panjab and indicated his desire to visit Amritsar provided the Indian authorities do not object to his presence.

A specific plea was also made on behalf of the Transport for London Sikh Association, as Sikhs continue to experience a lack of equal opportunities. A number of actions were agreed in this and in a related context that should allow Sikh representation at senior levels in decision making bodies to improve.

Mayor meets Sikh leaders - News release by the Mayor of London

Friday 22 July 2005

LONDON

London Mayor Ken Livingstone has met with representatives of the British Sikh community. Following the meeting the Mayor issued the following statement:

'I have met with representatives of the British Sikh community and thanked them for their enthusiastic support for the successful London 2012 Olympic bid. Sikhs helped in a number of ways to ensure the success of our bid, for which I am truly grateful.

'The Sikh community in London and indeed throughout the UK make a vital contribution to life in the capital through their hard work and honesty. I pay tribute to the Sikh community who have been very vocal in unequivocally condemning those responsible for the terrorist atrocities committed against innocent civilians in London on 7 July and thank them for being at the forefront in paying their respects and condolences to the victims.

'Given the excellent standing of the Sikh community and their contribution, I have been appalled to hear reports of race hate crimes and assaults against Sikhs in London, other parts of the UK and in several cities in other parts of Europe. A number of Gurdwaras have been firebombed and vandalised by a small minority of racist bigots. I have no hesitation in condemning attacks against Sikhs and their religious institutions. These attacks against Sikhs are totally unacceptable and those responsible will be caught and prosecuted.

'My staff have been working with representatives from the Sikh community to encourage public bodies to recognise and monitor Sikhs as a separate and distinct ethnic minority for the purposes of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. I have therefore agreed that the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and the London Development Agency will start to monitor the provision of public services to Sikhs as a separate ethnic group.

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FOR BUSINESS AND JOBS



'I will also be actively encouraging individual London Boroughs, the Metropolitan Police and other public bodies in London to follow our lead by offering the same protection and fair treatment afforded to other ethnic minorities.

'The meeting also touched upon my opposition to laws and practices in France and other parts of Europe that are denying Sikhs, Muslims and other faith communities the right to freely practice their religion. The Sikh community have informed me they may persuade a turban wearing police officer working for the Metropolitan Police to launch a legal challenge against the law and practices in France as turban wearing Sikhs are prevented from working as police officers in France. I am prepared to fully support a campaign by any Londoner who wishes to work in France who is denied his or her fundamental right to religious freedoms.

'I am aware the French law not only deprives Sikh children the right to education while at the same time practising their faith, but also impacts on Sikh public employees. In France, Sikhs with turbans are being denied IDs wearing their turbans, they are unable to take up "public sector" jobs, such as, lecture at university or become police officers, teachers, and so on. The law in France prevents Sikhs in the EU from freely working there and is a clear breach of one of the fundamentals of the 1957 Treaty of Rome that established the freedom of movement of labour.

'Given the challenges faced by the Sikh community I have agreed to host the first ever Sikh Identity Conference, which I hope can be arranged later this year. I will be inviting Government Ministers and senior policy makers across the public sector to take part in the conference that is designed to increase awareness and understanding of the Sikh identity and the importance of recognising and separately monitoring Sikhs.

'My meeting with the Sikh community also covered the visit to London of those involved in genocide and human rights abuses against minorities like the Sikhs. I would like to make it totally clear that those involved in torture, disappearances, and genocide are not welcome in London. The conviction this week of Faryadi Zardad in London should send a message across the world to those involved in human rights abuses that the UK authorities will take firm action against those involved in torture.'



DEFENDING OUR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN THE UK

Lobby to ensure £500m pledge to faith schools benefits Sikh schools

Within hours of the Labour Government being re-elected it pledged £500m to rebuild faith schools. The newly elected Government overturned a 60-year old rule by pledging to rebuild every faith-based secondary school in England.

Chancellor Gordon Brown had previously announced that every secondary school in the country would be rebuilt by 2015 under a £5bn refurbishment programme. Under existing rules, it would have meant that the 500 voluntary-aided faith schools in the country would have to contribute to 10 percent of the total cost. Faith representatives protested that they would not have enough money to fund such a programme.

Education Secretary, Ruth Kelly, therefore made her first major concession to faith schools since the General Election when she agreed to waive the rule in a deal to treat faith schools the same as the rest of the schools. The current proposal would benefit 350 Roman Catholic schools, 130 Anglican schools, 23 schools run by Christians groups, five Jewish schools, two Muslims schools, and the Sikh school in Hayes.

During the election campaign, Mr Brown had also announced plans to rebuild half the country's primary schools under a separate programme. Officials had also signalled the Government could waive the 10 percent rule for the 3,800 faith-based primary schools.



Ruth Kelly



Planned Sikh school in Slough

The Sikh Federation (UK) has written to Ruth Kelly welcoming the Government's decision to help rebuild faith schools. "We are delighted with this decision. This will be welcome news to not only the existing Sikh school in Hayes, but a major help in building the new Sikh

school in Slough. We will be urging the Slough Sikh School Trust to contact you as soon as possible to ensure the new Sikh school in Slough is built as soon as possible and opens in September 2006."

A spokeswoman for the Department for Education said, "All pupils deserve 21st-century facilities and the decision to include the voluntary-aided sector equally ensures we will deliver on that commitment."

Gurdwaras Lobby MPs over new immigration rules

Another challenge that Sikhs and our Gurdwaras have faced in the last twelve months is Government interference in the language proficiency of Sikh Granthis, Kirtanis and Katha Vachaks.

Earlier this year Rob Marris MP tabled Early Day Motion 464 relating to English Language Proficiency Visa Rules. The motion expressed concern for Sikh Gurdwaras of the Home Office's new immigration rules, which came into effect from 31 August 2004. The new rules require Sikh Granthis, Kirtanis and Katha Vachaks applying to enter the UK on temporary visas to demonstrate proficiency in the English language to Level 4 and, in due course, to Level 6.

In the motion Rob Marris MP pointed out that the irony is that before those rule changes came into effect Sikh Granthis, Kirtanis and Katha Vachaks were on occasion initially refused visas because of their fluency in English. The motion states "it is not clear what business it is of the Government to be concerned with what language is spoken in a Gurdwara" and calls upon the Home Office "to review immediately the new immigration rules with a view to removing unwarranted English language requirements".

In a written statement the National Council of Gurdwaras said: "The Government has failed to understand how Gurdwaras undertake parchar and the best way to impart the teachings contained in the Guru Granth Sahib. Many Gurdwaras already provide facilities in English, although more could be done. The Government has no jurisdiction in insisting Granthis, Kirtanis and Katha Vachaks have a certain proficiency in English for undertaking their duties".

"We urge every Gurdwara to immediately contact local MPs, including Labour Ministers, and insist these new immigration rules are dropped in relation to Sikhs and Gurdwaras."

In a separate but related move Keith Vaz, the MP for Leicester East raised the following Parliamentary Questions on the same subject.



To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Sikh ministers of religion have taken the International English Language Testing System certificate test this year?

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Sikh ministers of religion have been denied entry to the UK this year?

Sikh response to the Play Behzti

The one event in the year that attracted far more public and media attention than it deserved was the Sikh response to the play Behzti. Considerable national and international media attention was devoted to the response to the play by Sikhs as it was cancelled following protests. The Sikh Federation (UK), was one of many Sikh organisations that opposed the play and issued the following statement:

We are deeply concerned at the media portrayal of the circumstances surrounding the decision by the Repertory Theatre in Birmingham to cancel the run of the play Behzti.

"To date we have deliberately remained silent from making a public statement on this controversial and divisive play as we did not wish to give more attention to the play than it deserved. However, we believe the facts are not being properly portrayed in the media and the Sikh perspective is being lost in all the hype."

Sikhs are law-abiding and support freedom of speech

The first thing to make clear is that Sikhs are law-abiding and in favour of freedom of speech, provided it is within the law. Politicians have made much of the proposed law of incitement to religious hatred without necessarily giving adequate consideration of whether the contents of the play may already fall foul of existing laws.

Has the Repertory Theatre incited racial hatred?

Under Part III of the Public Order Act 1986 it is an offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent or likelihood to stir up racial hatred. Case law has determined that Sikhs are covered by this legislation. The play is based in a Gurdwara and the Repertory Theatre in Birmingham knew this would be seen by many Sikhs as abusive and insulting.

A Gurdwara is a place to learn spiritual wisdom, for religious ceremonies and where children learn about the Sikh faith, ethics, customs, traditions and texts. The Gurdwara is also a community centre, and offers food, shelter, and companionship to those who need it. It is estimated that around 39 per cent of Sikhs,

some quarter of a million Sikhs, visit a Gurdwara once a week, and almost all Sikhs go to the Gurdwara on Gurpurbs i.e. the festivals of the Gurus.

Repertory Theatre to blame for the threat to public order

Sikhs are sensible and tolerant people who respect the views of others. Anyone who has Sikh friends will know Sikhs are hard working and amongst the most tolerant community in Britain. We understand some local Sikhs in Birmingham advised the theatre to change the plot away from a Gurdwara as the plot in a Gurdwara would be seen as abusive and insulting to Sikhs.



Prior to the unfortunate events of Saturday local Sikhs had protested peacefully outside the Theatre. However, the theatre showed no sign of changing the plot so as not to cause offence and insult to Sikhs, despite signs that the protest may not remain entirely peaceful. The theatre was clearly chancing its hand hoping public order would not be threatened.

However, on Saturday when a larger number of Sikh protesters had gathered, tempers boiled over. Sikhs were frustrated as they were continuing to be insulted.

Violence is unacceptable, all must learn from this experience

The violent scenes by a small minority of the protesters on Saturday have been blown out of all proportion. The insulting nature of the play and the vandalism are totally unacceptable to law-abiding Sikhs. All concerned - the Theatre, West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council, the Government, politicians and the Sikh community must learn from this regrettable incident and ensure such scenes are never repeated.

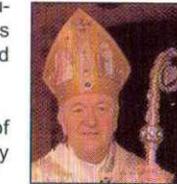
Proper consultation is essential to avoid a repeat of such incidents

The Repertory Theatre has made much of the consultation with the Sikh community prior to the showing of the play. It is clear from the events of the past few days that those the theatre consulted were looking from a narrow local perspective and they were out of touch with the strength of feeling of the Sikh grassroots.



Bernard Weatherill

Sewa Singh Mandla, Chairman of the Council of Gurdwaras (Birmingham) was reported in the Times to say that when the protest became national he struggled to keep the protest peaceful. He said: "People came from Leeds, London, Manchester. When it became violent I was pushed and jostled by people. They called me sissy and told me to resign." The Times reported that Sewa Singh Mandla pointed the finger of blame at members of the Sikh Federation. However, when challenged by the Federation the Council of Gurdwaras (Birmingham) disassociated itself with any statement concerning members of the Federation and Sewa Singh Mandla denied making an accusation



Rev. Vincent Nichols

against the Federation. He provided the Federation a copy of a letter of complaint he sent to The Times stating he had never made any accusations against Federation members.

Various politicians and religious representatives supported Sikhs through this difficult period. During a debate in the House of Lords, Bernard Weatherill, a Christian and independent politician sympathised with the "Sikh community's distress and anger about that play" and hoped it had been scrapped for good. Another Lord said the play had "hurt the deepest feelings" of the Sikhs.

Anglican and Roman Catholic church leaders broadly supported Sikhs. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, the Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, said: "Such a deliberate, even if fictional, violation of the sacred place of the Sikh religion demeans the sacred places of every religion."

WAHE GURU JI KA KHALSA

Khalsa belongs to the Lord

WAHE GURU JI KI FATEH

Victory to the Lord

ROOM 145
Victoria Block, N.S.Y.
10 BROADWAY ST
LONDON
SW1H 0BG
020 7230 0141
07887627719

"The Metropolitan Police Sikh Association is committed to making a difference in your working environment, to change it for the better for all our members. We will be working with the Metropolitan Police Service and other associations to:"

- Act as a source of information regarding the Sikh religion and culture to the police service and the public/community
- Improving relations & confidence between the Police and the Sikh community
 - Take active part in arranging in Religious & Community events
 - Provide a social network for social events
- Improve the recruitment and retention of Sikh employees by working in conjunction with service projects, policies and strategies
 - Provide welfare, support and mentoring
 - Reduce premature resignation of Sikh employees
- Ensure that MPS provide equal opportunities to all MPS employees
- Take an active part in policy development i.e. ensuring the policy that Sikh Officers and Staff are allowed to wear their religious articles of faith

For information on recruitment within the MPS please see

www.metpolicecareers.co.uk

Metropolitan Police Sikh Association

SIKHS DEMONSTRATE OPPOSITION TO TERRORISM

British Sikhs call for a Royal Commission of Inquiry

In March the Sikh Federation (UK) welcomed the acquittal of Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri of all charges in the Air India bombing case, at the end of a gruelling 233-day trial. The Federation immediately called for a Royal Commission of Inquiry that examines all the facts relating to the investigation of the tragedy that killed 329 innocent citizens in 1985. It pointed the finger of blame at the Indian Government and its intelligence agents for the murder of 329 innocents on Air India Flight 182.

The Royal Commission should pay particular attention to the role of the Indian Government and its intelligence agents who had most to gain from this tragedy by trying to discredit Sikhs calling for the establishment of an independent sovereign Sikh State. A Federation spokesman said: "We believe the Indian Government was directly responsible for the murder of 329 innocents on Flight 182 and this most heinous crime was committed to divert attention away from the Indian Government's massacre of tens of thousands of innocent Sikhs in 1984 and the Sikhs legitimate demands for an independent sovereign Sikh State."

The Commission should have the opportunity to examine the facts that explain why important illegal tape recordings were erased, why documents were lost, and why millions of Canadian taxpayer dollars have been wasted. We note that the judge has described the destruction of evidence by the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service as "unacceptable negligence" - we must find the truth behind this statement.

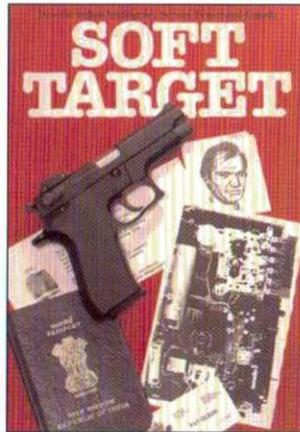
The Air India case should have been quickly and efficiently prosecuted and brought to a resolution that afforded survivors, and their families, some measure of peace and dignity. The investigation has been an unmitigated disaster. It will take many years to overcome the negative image of Sikhs that has been unfairly portrayed by the media in this case. The Canadian Government and media bosses should do all they can to ensure heads roll for allowing the worldwide Sikh community to be unfairly targeted over the last 20 years.

A small measure of justice has been done for Sikhs through this acquittal however we expect the world media to rise to the challenge and expose the Indian Government through proper investigative journalism. An excellent place to start is the book *Soft Target* by Canadian journalists Zuhair Kashmeri of the Toronto Globe and Mail and Brian McAndrew of the Toronto Star who exposed India's responsibility for the Air India bombing.

In the book, Kashmeri and McAndrew quoted a Canadian Security Investigative Service (CSIS) investigator as saying, "If you really want to clear the incidents quickly take vans down to the Indian High Commission and the consulates in Toronto and Vancouver, load up everybody and take them down for questioning. We know it and they know it that they are involved." A Federation spokesman said "journalists should be asking the Canadian authorities why three Indian consuls general were asked to leave the country after the bombing."

US Court decides to convict UK Hindu terrorist for up to 67 years

In May a Hindu businessman from Britain was found guilty, by a jury at New Jersey District Court in Newark, of attempting to sell missiles to terrorists said to be planning to attack planes in the United States. Hemant Lakhani, 69, from Hendon, North London was also convicted of illegal weapons brokering, two counts of money laundering and for importing merchandise into the US using false statements. He now faces up to 67 years in jail.



Lakhani was arrested in August 2003 in an FBI sting after presenting a sample shoulder-fired missile to an informant posing as a member of a Somali terrorist group in a Newark hotel room. He told the agent

rockets he was selling could be used to shoot down 10 to 15 aeroplanes simultaneously on the second anniversary of the September 11 terrorist outrage, and offered a further 50 missiles. Lakhani had demanded \$5m (£3.1m) for the 50 missiles. Lakhani is also said to have offered to supply anti-aircraft guns, tanks and tons of plastic explosive. He also allegedly claimed he could provide a "dirty bomb" to spread deadly radiation.



Lakhani

When Lakhani was arrested, British anti-terrorist police raided two addresses in London - one of which was Lakhani's home. Scotland Yard said the raids were conducted at the request of the FBI. As many as 20 detectives broke down the front door of the semi-detached house in Hendon. Officers also raided another address used by Lakhani nearby. Scotland Yard anti-terrorist officers found catalogues of Soviet-made armaments, tanks and plastic explosive at his home.

Following Lakhani's arrest India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), said it was investigating Lakhani's background and his links in India. They said: "We are trying to find out more about him. We have no information about him at the moment. We are trying to verify exactly who he is." Almost two years later it is hardly surprising the Indian CBI is silent.

Intelligence sources in the UK have said: "It is well known that Indian arms dealers have long been involved in procuring weapons from Russia and the former Soviet Union. New Delhi has traditionally acquired most of its military hardware from Moscow, its ally during the cold war. The role of Indian middlemen in brokering arms deals has come under intense scrutiny before, when a team of investigative journalists uncovered widespread corruption in India's defence ministry several years ago."

A source close to British intelligence described Lakhani as a "known arms dealer" who was thought to conduct most of his business with his links in India. He put "feelers" out and "clearly knew who he was selling the missiles to," the source added, making the point that Lakhani would not have been involved in a "blind deal".

Lakhani was one of three people arrested following an operation by the FBI, UK and Russian intelligence services. The evidence against him was his own words, which were captured on video tape by the FBI, which were played and replayed to the jury. The FBI taped 150 of Lakhani's conversations. The tapes showed Lakhani saying that Osama Bin Laden did a "good thing" and "straightened them all out".

Lakhani said "the Americans are bastards" and suggested the country would be shaken if 15 airliners were shot down. The Federal Court prosecutor stated: "There is no question that Lakhani was sympathetic to the beliefs of the terrorists who were trying to damage our country. He, on many occasions in recorded conversations, referred to Americans as bastards and Osama Bin Laden as a hero." Speaking from jail, he admitted: "Yes, I said those terrible things. But I didn't mean them. I'm a devout Hindu and don't believe in violence."

Lakhani - originally from Gujarat in India - was a lawyer when he arrived in London in September 1958. By the late 60s, he owned his own garment business. In 1977, Lakhani claimed to earn £150,000 a year. He drove a Rolls-Royce and met Prince Charles. The late Lady Diana inaugurated a building of Sangam, a local women's organisation, headed by Lakhani's wife. When Lakhani was arrested C B Patel, the London-based publisher of two ethnic weeklies, Asian Voice and Gujarat Samachar, told press that the Gujarati community in London was in a state of shock. He said Lakhani was held in high regard in the Gujarati community and was known as Babubhai.

In a desperate attempt to try and save his skin Lakhani was described in court by his own defence as an "idiot" and a "clown" incapable of selling illegal arms. Lakhani's lawyer described his client as a "joke" who

"couldn't finish a deal if his life depended on it". However, this strategy failed to impress the jurors and the US courts. Since the conviction the Indian press and intelligence have been down playing the whole matter in an attempt to reduce the fallout and influence the length of the sentence. The only stories being run have had headlines such as, "I don't want to harm the US, I'm a peace loving Hindu".

In a press statement the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "One of the biggest untold stories is that India was in league with the Saddam regime for years in terms of scientific cooperation. Now a prominent Indian businessman has been caught red-handed and convicted of being involved in the most serious terrorist activities against the United States. We urge Sikhs in the US to shout from the rooftops about today's conviction in the US of Lakhani. He led a group of Indians, who were selling 50 shoulder-held Russian surface-to-air missiles - the Igla - to be used against US commercial airliners and kill thousands of innocent American civilians on the second anniversary of 9/11. The Igla missile, which has a 4km range and an infrared capability is a deadly weapon. It is an advanced surface-to-air missile, which could have had devastating potential in the hands of terrorists." On the afternoon of the terrorist attacks in London on 7 July the Sikh Federation (UK) issued the following press statement:

Sikh response to the London terrorist attacks

We totally condemn this morning's terrorist attacks targeting innocent civilians in London. These are the acts of cowards and a challenge to the international world. Those responsible have no respect for human life. It is clear the attacks are timed to coincide with the opening of the G8 and deflecting attention away from important international issues, such as combating world poverty and protecting our environment.

We send our profound condolences to the victims and their families. Our thoughts are with those that have been injured and the families that have lost loved ones.

The Sikh community in the UK had been planning a "pro human rights" protest in central London tomorrow with the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to the UK. However, we have taken police advice and cancelled our protest as we had no wish to put a drain on police resources at this tragic time. We have offered our full support to the UK Government and the Metropolitan Police to help them in any way we can to bring the culprits of these terrorists attacks to justice.

We must unite in our efforts to tackle such acts of terrorism that are aimed at killing and maiming innocent civilians. The international community must also work together to challenge rogue states and states that have little or no respect for human rights. Today's events should strengthen our resolve to eradicate all forms of terrorism.

The Sikh Federation (UK) delivered one of the most scathing and damning statements condemning the perpetrators of the

London terrorist atrocities. The BBC reported the Federation as saying: "We totally condemn the terrorist attacks targeting innocent civilians in London. These are the acts of cowards and a challenge to the international world. Those responsible have no respect for human life."

Poor government response to Sikhs becoming victims of mistaken identity

The Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, met with Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh leaders following the bomb attacks, in order to coordinate responses with Britain's faith communities. On the one hand it was good that the Sikh community was not overlooked, but most politicians statements showed they had not learnt the lessons from the 9/11 aftermath.

Politicians when making speeches and the press almost totally failed to mention the mistaken attacks on Sikhs even though the first place of worship attacked, within 24-hours of the terrorist atrocities, was a Gurdwara in Erith, Kent. The Gurdwara was firebombed, although the damage was limited to a broken window as the firebombs failed to ignite.

Sikhs are the largest and most visible ethnic minority and were the victims of mistaken identity following 9/11 throughout the world, including the UK. It is inexcusable that the authorities in the UK, where there are an estimated 700,000 Sikhs, including around 200,000 in London, some three and half years later were unable to find a way of recognising and finding a solution to the dilemma faced by Sikhs. Namely, that Sikhs are law-abiding and have nothing whatsoever to do with terrorist attacks but are being abused and attacked for standing out and being different.

To make matters worse the Federation, which was the most vocal Sikh organisation in condemning these barbaric acts of terrorism had its concerns about the threats to the Sikh community ignored. Indeed some of its key members were targeted with threats, with no police action against those making threats.

The Government and the authorities were accused by the Sikh community of doing nothing publicly and simply paying lip service to Sikhs in private. Civil servants and politicians were so conscious of making public statements protecting the Muslim community from an unfair backlash that they were unknowingly discriminating against Sikhs.

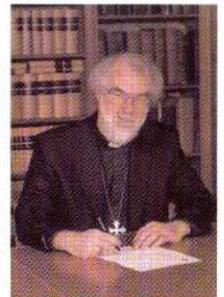
In a press statement the Federation said: "Nothing will change with the Home Secretary meeting with one so-called Sikh "leader" that has a well known reputation within government of being a useful person to invite to such meetings and allow civil servants and politicians to tick the Sikh box. When the lives and religious institutions of ordinary Sikhs living in the UK are stake this will not do. The authorities need to ask if they are properly dealing with the complex dilemma faced by Sikhs and why no public messages of reassurance are reaching the grassroots of the Sikh community."

Soon after the 7 July terrorist attack senior religious representatives gathered at Lambeth Palace to issue a joint statement. The representatives included the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the Free Churches Moderator, Dr David Coffey, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Sir Jonathan Sacks, and the Chair of the Council of Mosques & Imams, Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi.

Lambeth Palace criticised for ignoring Sikhs

The Sikh Federation (UK) became aware of the statement to be issued around six hours before it was issued after it was mentioned on BBC Radio 4's Sunday programme. At 9.30am Lambeth Palace was asked to confirm whether or not a Sikh representative was invited to take part and if not why not. It was clear from the evasive reply that it was not simply an oversight. The speculation was that the one "acceptable" Sikh "representative" was probably not available and Lambeth Palace may have been advised not to invite any other Sikh.

The Federation asked to see a copy of the Faith Leaders' Statement before its issue and despite the short notice said it could arrange to send a Sikh representative to Lambeth Palace for the planned press conference in the afternoon. It was explained that Sikhs are the largest and most visible ethnic minority, were being



Rowan Williams

mistakenly targeted and it was important that they were represented at such events. Those at Lambeth Palace failed to realise the significance of a Sikh absence and only sent a draft of the statement around 30 minutes before its official release.

Sikhs were not only being ignored by senior politicians during their public speeches, but also by faith representatives that should know much better.

Sikhs get better representation but limited coverage



Sikh representative signing the book of condolence

Following the terror attacks on 7 July a book of condolence was publicly opened at City Hall to enable written tributes to be paid to the victims. The first official memorial for the victims was also opened in the Victoria Embankment Gardens on the same day.

In a sombre and silent ceremony at City Hall, Ken Livingstone was the first to sign the book of condolence. He shed tears after writing "The city will endure. It's the future of our world. Tolerance and change. We are going to carry on with our lives".

Dignitaries ranging from sports figures to religious representatives lined up behind him to enter their names. They included Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair;

Sebastian Coe, a former Olympic middle-distance champion who led London's successful bid for the 2012 Summer Olympics; and Tessa Jowell, the government minister dealing with the aftermath of Thursday's attacks.

In the afternoon London Mayor Ken Livingstone, culture secretary Tessa Jowell and London 2012 bid leader Sebastian Coe were among those who joined faith representatives from across the capital for the opening of the London Memorial Garden in Victoria Embankment Gardens.

Following a complaint by the Federation to Ken Livingstone's office regarding his glaring omission of any mention of Sikhs it was a pleasant surprise to see five turbaned Sikhs in the 200 or so present at City Hall. Similarly, the Sikh Missionary Society (UK) was represented at the London Memorial Garden event.

Sir Iqbal Sacranie, leader of the Muslim Council of Britain, appeared to be the only Muslim among those who signed and there appeared to be one Hindu representative. It was disappointing that some of the media still chose to only mention the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu faiths being present.

The condolence message from the Sikh Federation (UK) read: "The thoughts and prayers of the Sikh Nation are with those that have tragically lost their lives and with their families."

Throughout the week Sikhs continued to take part in other events to guarantee Sikh visibility. Whether this be the community reassurance event at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre on Monday, 10 Downing Street and the Sikh Lobby Day at the Houses of Parliament on Tuesday, various meetings with the police at New Scotland Yard, providing interviews to BBC News 24, ITN TV News and various national radio stations, Vigil in Trafalgar Square on Thursday and Sir Ian Blair's visit to Dasmesh Darbar Gurdwara on Friday. Whilst Sikhs had better representation in the week following the tragic events of Thursday 7 July there remained a problem of insufficient coverage and acknowledgement of Sikhs in political circles.



Young Sikh ladies at the vigil in Trafalgar Square

Mayor and police chief visit London Gurdwara to reassure Sikhs

A memorandum setting out the key concerns of the Sikh community was presented to Sir Ian Blair on 15 July upon his visit to Dasmesh Darbar Gurdwara and was widely reported by the mainstream media and local media.

The Associated Press reported:

"Sikhs are the largest and most visible minority so we are constantly looked at with suspicion because of our turban and beards," said Jagtar Singh, a member of the National Executive Council of the Sikh Federation UK. "For every crime that is reported, our own information show there's 30, 40 or 50 that are not reported."

BBC News On-line reported:



Jagtar Singh, of the political party Sikh Federation (UK), said: "Sir Ian spoke to us to give us reassurance following the attacks on Sikhs after last Thursday's terrorist attacks." Mr Singh said Sikhs were "the largest and most visible" ethnic minority in London, which put them "at the greatest risk of race hate crimes".

At the meeting he presented Sir Ian with a memorandum outlining the concerns of the Sikh community in the UK. Mr Singh said attacks against Sikhs were "spreading and increasing in seriousness", including a knife attack reported in Ireland. "We have had numerous reports of race hate crimes targeting Sikh taxi drivers, bus drivers and even tube workers that interact with the public in providing essential services," he said. He added that Sir Ian was also presented with a 'Kirpan', a 3ft sword symbolising justice.

A local Newham paper reported:

Newham's Mayor Sir Robin Wales accompanied Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair (pictured below) on visits to meet Sikh faith leaders and worshippers in Manor Park on Friday. The visit by the Commissioner was to reassure people and increase public confidence in the wake of the central London bombings last week.

Sir Robin said: "We all share the outrage at the terrorist attacks. Newham is a community with a strong cultural diversity and we respect the life and dignity of all peoples. We must stand united against anyone that would seek to exact revenge or reprisal against innocent people.

"Newham Council wants all members of our community to be reassured that harassment of any form will not be tolerated. We will continue to work with the police and other partner agencies to bring confidence, particularly in communities where people may feel vulnerable at this time."



UK Sikhs feel the blast heat

Times of India - 9 July 2005

LONDON: British Sikhs, the country's large, most visually distinct minority, have claimed that they are falling victim to a post-9/11 style backlash because of mistaken identity and that British politicians are glossing over this inconvenient fact in public statements.

The Sikh Federation, the UK's first Sikh political party, which claims to represent the aspirations of the estimated 500,000-strong community, said on Saturday that the first Gurdwara was attacked within 24 hours of the terrorist atrocities.

The Federation accused Britain's political and intellectual class of "simply paying lip-service to Sikhs in private." It complained that the sporadic mistaken identity attacks were "all the more surprising (because Britain has) just hosted Manmohan Singh, a turban wearing Sikh Prime Minister."

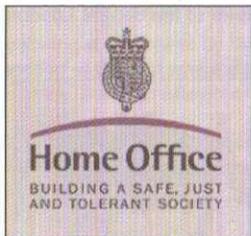
The Federation said the Gurdwara in Erith, Kent was "firebombed, although the damage was limited to a broken window because the firebombs failed to ignite."

The party said that several of "its key members have themselves been targeted with threats since Thursday, with no police action against those making threats".

Three-and-a-half-years after 9/11 resulted in widespread attacks on Sikhs in the US and the UK, the community is once again "being abused and attacked for standing out and being different," it said.

There is no independent confirmation of the Federation's claims.

Federation respond to Home Office consultation regarding exclusion or deportation from the UK



In August the Federation responded by providing general support for what was being proposed to prevent all acts of terrorism in the UK, such as those which took place in London in July 2005 and acts of terrorism targeting innocent civilians that take place abroad.

The Federation also welcomed the acknowledgement that the Government has and will continue to exclude or deport those it has reason to suspect were involved "in war crimes or crimes against humanity regardless of whether convicted." The Federation said that was "an essential element of the fight against terrorism and is an area where the Government should do more to demonstrate to the British public that it does and will continue to take action."

The key concerns on the practical application of what is proposed were also set out by the Federation. These included abuse of the proposals by other countries, such as India, who may exert undue pressure on the UK to silence political opposition abroad on the premise of maintaining good relations with the UK. The Federation said: "We fully support the fight against terrorism and urge the UK Government to adopt policies and practices that prevent it from being accused of doing the "dirty work" of other countries." Criticising or condemning foreign governments should be lawful and not subject to these proposals, irrespective of whether the foreign government is regarded as friendly or otherwise.

Another area of concern was the absence of the use of exclusion against those involved in crimes against humanity. The response said: "Successive Indian governments, including the current government led by Manmohan Singh have been unable or incapable of ensuring those responsible for "crimes against humanity" have been subject to a proper legal process resulting in convictions." The Federation urged the UK Government to closely examine its policy on exclusion of named Indian Government officials, police officers and security personnel that were directly involved in anti-Sikh pogroms, elimination of human right activists, torture, fake encounters and disappearances.

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The Federation also urged the UK Government to shift the balance from "political correctness" to those that pose the greatest threat to terrorism in the UK. It was suggested there was a need to target limited resources to those that pose the greatest threat. The Federation said when atrocities like "9/11 or 7/7 occur Sikhs due to their high visibility and their institutions become the target of widespread race and hate crime that can result in Sikhs becoming the victims of serious assault, including murder and their places of worship being vandalised and subject to arson."

However, despite being the innocent victims Sikhs are often politically ignored and excluded. But when measures like those proposed or anti-terrorist measures are being considered and implemented Sikhs are not ignored due to what many politicians privately admit is "political correctness". The end result is the combination of "political correctness" and pressure by the Indian government result in Sikhs becoming victims of terrorism in more ways than one. The example of the continued proscription in the UK of the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), which was both controversial and questionable in March 2001, despite the relative peace in Punjab since the early 1990s demonstrates the dangers of "political correctness" and the pressure that was exerted by the Indian government to silence an organisation lobbying for an independent Sikh State.



NEVER FORGET

1984

250,000 Sikhs murdered and disappeared since 1984



25,000 Indian armed forces attacked the Golden Temple complex with heavy artillery and tanks

"I do not fear physical death but death of the conscience a sure death is"

(Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale)



The June 1984 attack laid the foundation stone for KHALISTAN.

Events for year 2005

12 June 2005 - Rally and march for remembrance, justice and freedom - Hyde Park, London - 21st anniversary of the June 1984 massacre of Sikhs
 July 2005 - Sikh Lobby Day - Houses of Parliament, Westminster - Official launch of the All Party Parliamentary Group for UK Sikhs
 July 2005 - National Sikh Identity Conference - hosted by the Mayor of London City Hall - increase awareness of the Sikh identity within Government
 August 2005 - Young Sikhs (UK) Conference - inspiring Young Sikhs to lead the way in the media, politics and public affairs
 11 September 2005 - National Sikh Convention - Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Sedgley Street, Wolverhampton - Prominent politicians expected
 30 October 2005 - Remembrance Rally - Central London - To mark the 21st anniversary of the anti-Sikh pogroms of November 1984

If you require further information on the events or wish to join Sikh Federation (UK) visit our website www.sikhfederation.com or email: info@sikhfederation.com
 SPONSORED BY GURU TEGH BHADHAR GURDWARA, EAST PARK ROAD, LEICESTER



© SIKH FEDERATION (UK)

THE FIRST AND ONLY SIKH POLITICAL PARTY IN THE UK

website www.sikhfederation.com email: info@sikhfederation.com





Know about any disrespect to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji?

"Under command of the Immortal -Being, the Panth was started. All Sikhs are ordered to accept the Granth as their Guru. Consider the Guru Granth as representing the Guru's body."

Today, many people, who call themselves 'Sikh, have sunk so low that they are taking Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji to hotels, clubs,

pubs, banqueting halls etc. In the name of 'convenience' and 'modernity'. Take one step towards Guru ji and he will take thousands towards us.

If you know of any disrespect being done to the Saroop of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, let us know!

Respect for Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji



Contact us

Tel: 07944-445651

Email: sikhalerts@yahoo.co.uk Website: www.GuruGranthSahibji.com



INDIAN DEMOCRACY EQUATES TO CRIMINALITY AND CORRUPTION

Federation expose the true face of Indian democracy

The Sikh Federation (UK) has been prominent in highlighting the actions of Indian politicians with regards to criminality, corruption and contempt for minority communities. Earlier this year the Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi ridiculed Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and insulted the Sikh community with reference to "12 midnight" and the partition when conservative estimates suggest 40% of all Sikhs became refugees and an estimated 500,000 lost their lives.

Statements of condemnation came in from many quarters following Modi's derogatory remarks during his election campaign in Maharashtra. An apology from Modi was not forthcoming and demonstrated the Akali's weakness who have maintained ties with the BJP.



Then Jagdish Tytler, the Congress Indian Union Minister for Non Resident Indians (before his recent resignation) made direct threats on national TV on the life of Harvinder Singh Phoolka, 49, a prominent human rights activist and advocate of the Supreme Court of India. Tytler declared on national TV that he will harm and "finish" Harvinder Singh. The Sikh Federation (UK) made an online video file available, which shows the Indian Union Minister, Jagdish Tytler threatening Harvinder Singh. A complaint was filed in the Ludhiana High Court against Tytler.

India MPs face criminal charges

A Federation spokesman said: "Modi and Tytler are openly insulting and threatening Sikhs. It is time for the Sikh masses to pressure the impotent Sikh leadership in the Indian sub-continent to take concerted action against such individuals. We will continue to exert pressure from abroad and expose the falsehood of Indian democracy. Incidents such as these illustrate that Sikhs need to wake up to the hard facts and campaign for an independent sovereign Sikh state, Khalistan."

"The likes of Modi, Tytler, KPS Gill and others that have been directly involved in instigating pogroms, torture and human rights abuses should take note of the historic action that is being taken in the UK. Faryadi Sarwar Zardad, an Afghan man charged with conspiring to kidnap and torture in Afghanistan in the period from 1991-96 is this week being tried in the Old Bailey in London. The case is the first of its kind. Section 134 of the Criminal Justice Act allows Britain to try alleged torturers regardless of where the crime is alleged to have occurred. This is in line with the United Nations Convention Against Torture. The Attorney General Lord Goldsmith, who is prosecuting has said: Although the matters did not concern the UK, some crimes are so heinous they can be tried in any country."

In October the BBC produced the following story, which highlights the sad state of political representation in India. The Sikh Federation (UK) spokesman at the time said: "We need to make sure politicians in the West do not get taken in by the myth of the Indian democracy by making them aware that many politicians in India are corrupt and include murderers and rapists."

BBC Online - 28 October 2004

A report on the backgrounds of MPs elected this year in India has shown that one in four face criminal charges. The study by the Bangalore-based Public Affairs Centre says MPs from almost all political parties are involved.

The independent study is based on sworn statements filed earlier this year by the more than 540 MPs before they contested the polls. The statements were required by a new rule enforced by the Supreme

Court to improve transparency in public life. The report found that the MPs faced charges ranging from murder to extortion and rape.

"It's a shocking indictment of the system that one-fourth of our elected representatives to the highest democratic body have criminal cases against them," Samuel Paul, chairman of the group which has been campaigning for cleaner politics, is quoted as saying by Reuters. The findings of the report have coincided with another decision of the Indian government which has been criticised by those concerned about probity in public life.

On Wednesday, the Indian cabinet deferred long pending anti-corruption legislation aimed at bringing the country's top most public officers within the ambit of an ombudsman.

Indian election laws allow politicians facing criminal charges to run for public office, but not those who have been convicted.

Sikhs deliver Tsunami aid despite Indian government interference

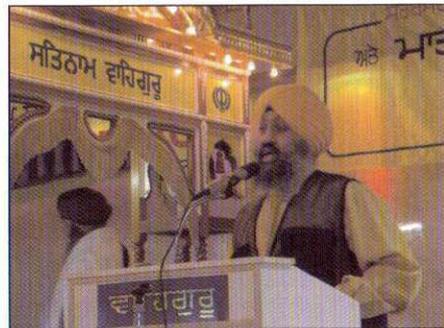
Relief organisations, such as, Khalsa Aid and United Sikhs were supported to deliver aid to the tsunami victims. However, difficulties were experienced that are highlighted in the Scotsman article below:

India has hijacked Tsunami relief supplies says Red Cross

Scotsman 13th January 2005

Red Cross officials in India's remote Andaman islands accused the government of "hijacking" their relief materials today, as squabbles over aid continued in the archipelago devastated by the tsunami. A Rotary Club official also said the group had been given the cold shoulder by government officials when they offered to build hundreds of homes for tsunami victims.

In the weeks since the waves battered the Andaman and Nicobar islands, Indian and international relief agencies have complained that the government of the federally run territory does not appear to want them to travel to the faraway islands, where survivors say relief has come very late.



Chair of Khalsa Aid - Amrik Singh

The Indian Red Cross Society said relief supplies it had in Port Blair, the territory's capital, had disappeared from the docks and were later found to have been taken by government workers. "They hijacked our relief material. They robbed it," said Basudev Dass, joint secretary of the Indian Cross Society. "They want to take all the relief material and distribute it. We are very clear that we will go and distribute it to the real beneficiaries." Lieutenant Governor Ram Kapse, the territory's head of government and the head of the Red Cross Society in the Andamans, declined to comment on his organisation's complaint.

"Not only us, but all NGOs are facing this," said Dass. He also said that 12,000 litres of mineral water intended for tsunami victims had been used as bath water by a district official. Residents say the official, who has been recalled to Port Blair, was attacked by local villagers. Officials confirmed he was assaulted, but said he was called back because he was "suffering from fatigue."

The aid stand-off appears rooted with officials who want to control the distribution of relief supplies, rather than allowing aid agencies to deal directly with survivors, many of whom are taking refuge in relief camps on several islands. It's a policy that infuriates many residents.

"The camps are being run well here in Port Blair by these NGOs, but why aren't these NGOs being taken on our islands? Things are so bad there," said John Paul of Car Nicobar, the worst-affected island. He is currently in a camp in Port Blair.

But Federal Tribal Affairs Minister PR Kyndiah, who toured the region this week, insisted the relief work was going well. "The relief operation is splendid. It is the way we in the government of India expect it to be," Kyndiah said. "There was no serious complaint." But an official of the Indian branch of Rotary International said the organisation had offered to build homes for 1,500 people on remote Campbell Bay Island, but the offer was turned down by local officials.

The Sikh Federation (UK) congratulated the International Development Select Committee in the UK Parliament for recommending in March this year that the UK Government stop providing £300 million annual development aid to India. The recommendation came when the 12-member Committee published a long awaited report titled: "DFID's bilateral programme of aid to India".

The Department for International Development (DFID) has for many years been providing UK's bilateral assistance to four states: West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. On the basis of the UK demographic situation - large numbers of Sikhs/Panjabis - the Sikh Federation (UK) has for very good reasons been actively lobbying DFID to provide a considerable proportion of UK taxpayer aid to projects in Panjab. For example, proposals were discussed with DFID for the UK Government to fund and support torture rehabilitation centres and orphanages in Panjab.



However, the Government of India, led by Manmohan Singh has expressed a reluctance to allow the UK Government to determine which States should be awarded UK development assistance. The Government of India had expected DFID to contribute solely to central government development initiatives once the existing partnership agreements with individual States had run their course.

The parliamentary report states: "To some extent this shift is already happening. The Government of India

UK Government urged to stop 300m annual development aid to India

is directing DFID strongly in the direction of support to centrally sponsored schemes." In what many say is a major rebuke to the Indian Government the report asks "is it possible to be confident that the money being given by DFID to central government programmes is . . . not simply substituting for central Government contributions?"

Due to the attitude of the Indian Government, its opposition to targeted assistance by the UK Government and almost certainly resistance to a change in UK Government policy to provide aid to Panjab the parliamentary report has concluded there should be "a drastic reduction" in the volume of DFID's bilateral assistance to India.

A Federation spokesman said: "The Government of India has tried to dictate to the UK Government as to where it should provide development aid and control all funds centrally. It was clearly opposed to UK Government funds being pumped into Panjab. Given the circumstances created by India we fully support the recommendations of UK Parliamentarians. India has brought this on itself."

The Sikh Federation (UK) wrote to President Bush and David T. Johnson, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, the

Modi denied entry to the United States - US urged not to submit to Indian "terrorism"

most senior US Government representative in London, applauding the decision of the US Government of denying a diplomatic visa to Hindu nationalist leader Narendra Modi.

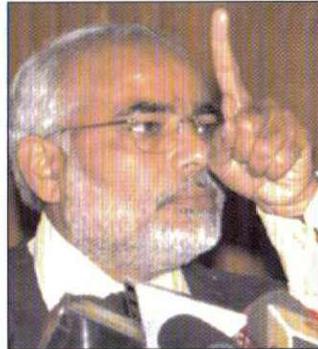
The US State Department last week not only revoked Modi's existing tourist/business visa under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, but also denied him a diplomatic visa. Under the act people can be barred from entering the US and getting a visa if they have been found to be responsible for violations of religious freedom.

The denial of the visa by the US last week has resulted in anti-American statements, slogans and violence in India. At the weekend nearly 150 activists barged into the warehouse of US-based PepsiCo in the western city of Surat, smashed bottles and set fire to the building. The demonstrators were from the Bajrang Dal, a group affiliated with Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP. The protesters also ransacked a nearby PepsiCo office and demonstrated outside the U.S. consulate in Bombay. Some of the protesters carried placards reading, "Down with the United States" and "Boycott the U.S. goods and the Americans."

Supporters of Modi also burnt an effigy of President George W. Bush during a protest in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad. The letter from the Sikh Federation (UK) to President Bush and David T. Johnson says: "The only words that can describe these actions are "Indian Terrorism" demonstrating the US has made the right decision and can not give in to such pressure".

The Congress worried about the implications for the likes of Jagdish Tytler, KPS Gill etc. by the precedent that was set with the US decision, formally gave a demarche - a formal letter from the Indian Government to the US Government. A Federation spokesman said: "It is ironic that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has decided to use a demarche in this case to help the likes of Modi, but has not sanctioned a demarche in the case of Sikh children in France who have been suffering for many months. It is clear where his priorities lie".

The Federation understand that once a visa application is formally revoked, the details are immediately recorded. This makes it watertight and, if the decision has to be overturned, persuasive arguments should be put forth to negate the earlier assessment - which means the US will have to contradict itself. The US has said its decision to cancel the Gujarat chief minister's visa was based on the National Human Rights Commission's report that his administration "failed" to control "persistent violations of rights".

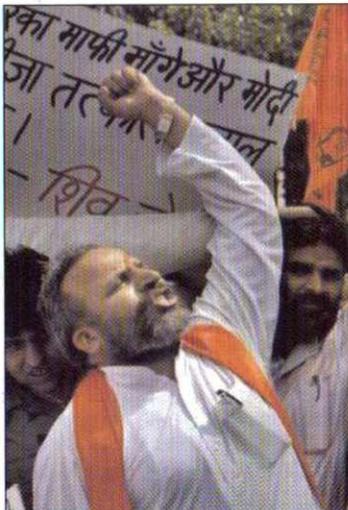


Chief Minister Narendra Modi

The letter from the Federation says: "We understand the decision by the US State Department has been taken after due consideration. Given that a reaction to the decision from the BJP and the Congress Government of India was on the cards, this would have been factored in before going public with the visa denial. Therefore, there should be no question of the US State Department changing its mind."

In a related development, the US-based alliance that campaigned actively against Modi's visit, the Coalition Against Genocide (CAG), in an open letter to Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, suggested that he "not contest" the denial of the visa to Modi as it was a "clear victory" for supporters of human rights and justice. In the letter CAG said we are "appalled that the Indian Government has lodged a strong protest to the American embassy and asked for an urgent reconsideration".

A spokesman for the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "We congratulate the US-based Coalition Against Genocide for taking this action. Particular praise should go to Voices For Freedom (VFF) who led the US Sikh community in a signature campaign urging the Department of State to reject Modi's visa under Section 604 of the US International Religious Freedom Act which makes any foreign official who has engaged in "particularly severe violations of religious freedom" inadmissible to the United States."



March, 2005
New Delhi - Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena party members protesting the denial of U.S. visa to Modi. Banner in Hindi reads 'Down with American government. Apologise to Narendra Modi.'

The Federation understands that within two days, more than twenty Gurdwaras, including the Sikh Gurdwara of Fremont (CA), San Jose (CA), Sacramento (CA), Stockton (CA), Washington DC, New York, Detroit (MI), Dallas (TX) endorsed the signature campaign. Other Sikh organisations that supported the campaign were Khalistan Affairs Center (Washington DC), Sikh Youth of America, Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) and ENSAAF. Twenty US Congressmen, led by Joseph Pitts, also supported the signature campaign.

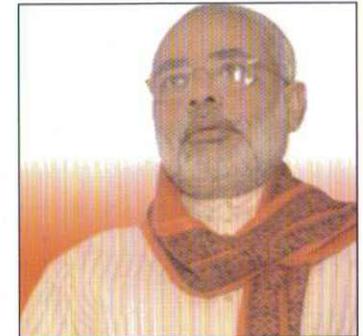


Hindu Nationalist - Shiv Sena protesting

Modi too frightened to visit the UK - Victory for anti-genocide protesters in the UK

The Sikh Federation (UK) greeted the decision by Narendra Modi not to visit the UK as a victory for anti-genocide protesters. Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) said:

"Sikhs had been in close contact with the South Asia Solidarity Group who were co-ordinating the protest. We had plans for many Sikh protesters to be outside Gate 9 of the Albert Hall on Saturday to show him that ordinary people in the UK were not prepared to let the likes of Modi visit without highlighting his involvement in genocide.



The Indian Government has quoted "security concerns" as the reason for him staying away from the UK, but we know it was the negative publicity and embarrassment that the Indian Government feared. We are also aware of the role certain prominent members of the UK Government have played in the last 48-hours in encouraging the protest - this will cause the Indian Government most concern."

A Federation spokesman said: "The events of the past 10 days have been a total disaster for the image of the Indian Government abroad. First came the acquittal of two Sikhs in Canada, that has again raised questions about the involvement of Indian intelligence in killing 329 innocent people on Air India Flight 182, to try and discredit the Sikh independence movement so soon after 1984. In the UK this was followed by calls, by an influential group of Parliamentarians, for £300m development aid to India to be stopped due to unnecessary interference by the central Government of India. Within 24 hours Modi was denied a visa to enter the US, which the US State Department has upheld despite a violent and predictable response on the streets of India. Now the anti-genocide protesters in the UK have frightened Modi to stay away."

Before Manmohan Singh arrived in New York in September he received an assurance from Tony Blair in Britain for India's effort to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Some asked why 24 hours later, when Manmohan Singh met with President Bush, he did not ask for US support for India to become a permanent member of the Council.

Indian officials indicated they believed the Americans were not yet ready to support India's case, despite this being a major focus of Manmohan Singh's visit. In a press statement the Federation suggested that he did not want to be embarrassed on his first major international trip by raising this issue and then being rejected by the US.

While other organs of the United Nations make recommendations to Governments, the Council alone has the power to take decisions which the 191 Member States are obligated under the UN Charter to carry out.

KHALSA HUMAN RIGHTS



To highlight the human rights violations, being perpetrated in Panjab....and the whole of India

Khalsa Human Rights (KHR) is an independent human rights organisation.

KHR was set up in response to the failure of the Indian Government to allow independent investigation of alleged human rights abuses by internationally recognised organisations such as Amnesty International and the UN.

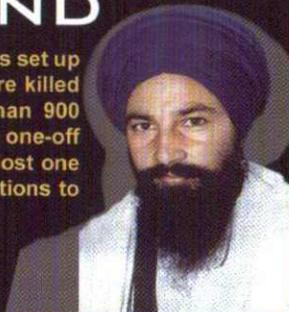
KHR has a comprehensive HR exhibition which has been on tour throughout the UK, Europe, USA, Canada and Asia.



BHAI AMRIK SINGH SHAHEEDI FUND

A separate fund called the Bhai Amrik Singh Shaheedi Fund was set up in 1991 to send money to bereaved families of those who were killed during the conflict in Punjab. The Fund supported more than 900 families in Punjab by sending regular financial assistance and one-off donations to help pay for the weddings of children that have lost one or both of their parents. The Fund also sent significant donations to charitable organisations, such as those looking after orphans.

Khalsa Human Rights,
65 Jellicoe Road, Leicester, LE5 4FP



EXPOSING INDIA'S APPALLING HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Why India should be denied permanent membership of the UN Security Council

All Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. There are currently 15 members on the UN Security Council with each Council member having one vote. However, decisions on substantive matters require nine votes, including the votes of all five permanent members. This is the rule often referred to as the "veto" power. India is desperate to try and secure this power.

The Federation said it would be a disaster for the UN if India was made a permanent member of the UN Security Council and wrote to Tony Blair questioning his support for India's membership. In the letter to the UK Prime Minister the Federation set out why India should be denied permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The key reasons quoted in the letter were:

"India has little or no respect for the United Nations and its decisions. It has defied the UN on Kashmir, been condemned by the Council for carrying out nuclear tests, refused to become a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and is not prepared to accept the right to self-determination, which is enshrined in International Covenants on Economic, Social, Cultural, Civil and Political Rights."

The Federation reminded Tony Blair of the UN Security Council's resolutions and outrage following India and Pakistan's nuclear tests and quoted Robert Fowler, the Canadian representative on the UN Security Council at that time, who stated:

"Countries that deliberately undermined peace and security and flout the will of the international community had voided their claim to Security Council membership, let alone a permanent place in the management of the post-cold war world."

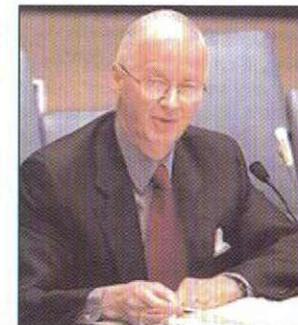
The Federation continued in the letter by stating "Sikhs will always oppose India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council until it accepts without any condition that Sikhs are allowed to freely exercise their right to self determination, including the ability to establish an independent sovereign Sikh state, Khalistan."

The Federation reminded Tony Blair of the dangerous rhetoric in India towards the UK and the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council. The letter to the PM stated: "In the last few days some in India have described the UN as a group of USELESS NATIONS (UN) and described the five permanent members on the Council as ROGUE Nations that bully other nations. One Indian commentator has said: "the UK is now almost a third world nation, a shameless insignificant stooge without teeth or a backbone whose questionable claim to fame ended many decades ago."

It has been pointed out by the Federation that it is this sort of rhetoric which demonstrates why India should not be allowed to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. A Federation spokesman said: "We are confident that the issues we have raised will register and that statements coming out of India will



Tony Blair and Manmohan Singh



Robert Fowler

not go amiss with the five permanent members.

The letter to the PM also made a number of other relevant points concerning India's lack of suitability as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The Federation described India as a sprawling political patchwork, with tensions between regional governments and the centre. It pointed out that Party affiliations are weak and corruption or wealth is at the heart of the political set up. The Delhi Government is itself described as a loose alliance of more than 15 parties. The Federation suggested India should be tackling poverty, its poor human rights record and the lack of adequate social and physical infrastructure rather than wasting its time seeking international power.

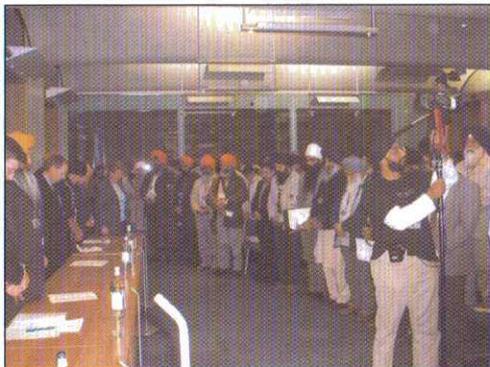
The Federation's press statement concluded by saying: "How can arrogant India seek permanent membership to the UN Security Council if it will not accept the UN's decisions and principles, is unable to tackle its own domestic communal problems and disrespects basic human rights. It has now been denying Amnesty International access to Panjab for more than 25 years and is still unwilling to allow the UN Rapporteur on Torture to investigate in Panjab. We are hopeful that Member States will look closely at India's poor record on human rights and disregard for the international community on nuclear proliferation. If you combine this with India's volatility, right wing fanatics and old regional animosities with nuclear rival Pakistan, we believe it makes it impossible to accept India as a permanent member."

UK MPs release report on November 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms "Twenty years on - A call for action"

The organisers of the Sikh Lobby Day - the Sikh Federation (UK), Young Sikhs, National Council of Gurdwaras, Khalsa Human Rights and the Sikh Secretariat invited Rob Marris MP to officially launch the report titled: "Twenty years on - A call for action".

The Human Rights Advisory Group of the Panjabis In Britain All Party Parliamentary Group produced the report. The report was circulated to UK MPs that attended the presentations in the Attlee Suite in Portcullis House on 11 November.

Rob Marris MP describing the report said "it's horrifying, it chills your blood and it's worth reading, it's a very sobering report". He then called for a minute's silence for the tens of thousands of Sikhs that were massacred in 1984. The minute's silence was observed with utmost dignity by the 250 or so that packed the room. Please go to the download section of the Sikh Federation (UK) web site www.sikhfederation.com for a PDF version of the November 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms "Twenty years on - A call for action" and the specific actions that could be taken by the international community.



Sikh Lobby Day on 11 November 2004 - MPs and Sikhs across UK present in a minute silence

Sikh Remembrance Day to be held on November 11

Hindustan Times, November 8 2004

Sikh representatives from across the UK will meet constituency MPs in the Central Lobby of Portcullis House on November 11 to observe the 20th anniversary of November 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms as the Sikh Remembrance Day.

The day will provide an opportunity to reflect on the lack of justice for Sikhs over the last 20 years. UK MPs/Lords will be encouraged to urge the UK Government to take the lead in the international community to establish an independent UN inquiry into the failure of successive governments in India to take sufficient actions against those responsible for the events of November 1984.

It will also provide an opportunity to hear directly from Sikh children from France about their experiences in being denied the freedom to practice their religion at school and to find out what UK politicians can do to help challenge the law in France.

Participants will receive an update on the paper produced and adopted by the Human Rights Advisory Group to the Panjabis in Britain APPG on the Sikhs right to self determination.

Other topical issues of importance to British Sikhs such as continued failure of public authorities not to separately recognise and monitor Sikhs, the British Library's failure to ensure the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is treated with respect, the offensive actions of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in denying visas to Kirtani Jathas and referring to them as "amateur entertainers" will be also be discussed at the meet.

The Sikh Federation (UK) has jointly organised this event with the National Council of Gurdwaras, Young Sikhs, Khalsa Human Rights and the Sikh Secretariat. Leaders from all three of the main political parties and MPs and Lords with Sikh constituents/contacts have been invited to take part in the Sikh Remembrance Day event in Portcullis House.

Federation submit evidence to Foreign Affairs Committee

In December the Sikh Federation (UK) submitted a written memorandum to the Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Committee concerning the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Annual Report on Human Rights 2004.

In the written submission the Federation stated: "The most disappointing aspect of the Annual Report on Human Rights 2004 is there is no reference whatsoever to Sikh human rights abuses by India in the 300+ page report." However, the Federation noted several important observations in the report regarding India's position on human rights.



Foreign &
Commonwealth Office
London

1) India is the only country that did not support the resolution at the UN General Assembly regarding the protection of human rights while countering terrorism

The Federation stated: "In our opinion India's unilateral opposition to the protection of human rights while countering terrorism highlights a fundamental weakness in India's respect for and approach to human rights. The Sikh community has suffered enormously in the last twenty five years due to India's complete disregard for human rights using the excuse of countering insurgency in Punjab."

2) India continues to fail to ratify the International Criminal Court (ICC)

The UK Foreign Office report also notes India's failure to accede to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC represents a major advance in international justice and the fight against impunity for perpetrators of international crimes. India's opposition to the ICC is unacceptable and has been maintained despite 37

lobbying exercises carried out by the EU from July 2003 to June 2004. In its submission the Federation stated "the British Sikh community regards the failure of India to ratify the ICC as most disappointing and another example of India's refusal to accept international law, which they breached with the massacre of tens of thousands of Sikhs in June and then in November 1984 and the continued abuse of human rights for the last twenty years."

In a press statement the Federation said "these wrongdoings by India constitute the most serious international crimes since Indian independence. India fears its senior police officers, security personnel and Ministers could be hauled up before the ICC as justice is not being served in India. We believe a time will come when the perpetrators of international crimes against the Sikhs in India will be brought to justice."

3) Human rights violations by Indian security forces continue in Panjab and Kashmir and the UN and international human rights organisations continue to be denied access

The UK Foreign Office report states: "We remain concerned at the credible reports of human rights violations by Indian security forces operating in Kashmir. In our contacts with them, we urge the Indian authorities to investigate all abuses of human rights, and to bring the perpetrators to justice. We also encourage the Indian authorities to permit international human rights organisations to operate effectively in Kashmir."

The Federation stated in its submission that "We are most disappointed that the report fails to make any mention of human rights violations of the Sikhs in Panjab and India's failure to allow Amnesty International and the UN Rapporteur on Torture access to Panjab since 1984. This is particularly worrying as these issues have been raised publicly by MPs in Parliament in the last two years via Early Day Motions and Parliamentary Questions."

4) India defies the UN and ends the moratorium on the death penalty

In August 2004, India ended the long-standing moratorium on the death penalty despite a strong EU lobby against the return to executions. The Federation's submission stated: "British Sikhs find India's position on the death penalty totally unacceptable and the ending of the moratorium as a most backward and retrograde step."

The Federation also made reference in the submission to the death penalty imposed on the Sikh activist Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar who was returned to India from Germany. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office were urged to work with EU partners to maintain pressure regarding the Professor so the threat of the death penalty can be removed and an early release secured.

Reference was also made by the Federation for the release of the one hundred or so Sikh political prisoners known to British Sikhs that are still languishing in Indian jails. Some have been held for many years without yet being charged or convicted.

The submission by the Federation concluded by reminding the UK Government that it should demonstrate its supports for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reject the notion often peddled by India that criticism of a country's human rights record means interfering in its internal affairs. The Federation said: "The UK government should break its silence on the continued abuse of Sikh human rights by India that many independent human rights groups have documented. It is incumbent on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that its reports should reflect the views of the British Sikh community and our democratically elected representatives."

What India calls Republic Day marks the day in 1950 when India adopted its Constitution, but for minorities and nations of South Asia it is recognised as "Betrayal Day".

A significant move this year is that Sikhs protested not only in capital cities such as London and

Washington, but also in Panjab where Sikhs unfurled a saffron flag, fired a volley of shots into the air in salute and were either arrested or are to be charged for their protest actions that were entirely peaceful.

Sikhs throughout the world protest on India's Republic Day

Successful Protest in London by UK Sikhs



In London up to 200 British Sikh representatives from across the UK took part in a successful protest outside the Indian High Commission to stress the demand for Sikh Independence and highlight the atrocities committed against the Sikhs. Thousands of eye-catching A5 cards produced by the Sikh Federation (UK) were distributed to those passing close to India House. The back of the cards set out "India's disgraceful record since gaining independence in 1947" and concluded that Khalistan was the only solution.

This year the event took on new significance with many "traditional" faces choosing to stay away and being replaced by Sikhs from the younger generation. It was particularly promising to see scores of new and younger faces, including young women. This positive development continues the trend established at the 20th anniversary "Rally and march for remembrance, justice and freedom" on 6 June 2004 and the Sikh Remembrance Lobby at the Houses of Parliament on 11th November 2004.

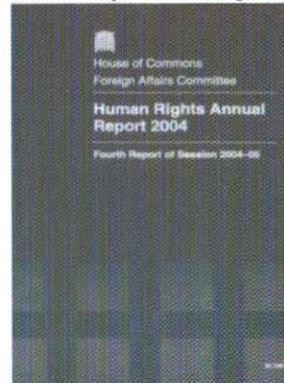
UK Prime Minister urged to support the Sikhs lawful right to Self Determination

For the first time for many years the non-Sikh media, photographers and a TV crew were present not only outside the Indian High Commission, but also when Sikh representatives delivered a Memorandum to the UK Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street, which called for UK Government support for the Sikhs lawful right to self determination.

The 4-page Memorandum to the Prime Minister available at www.sikhfederation.com pointed out that political leaders had declared in 1930 that no constitution of independent India would be acceptable which did not give "full satisfaction" to the Sikhs. However, promises made to Sikhs prior to independence were quickly forgotten resulting in Sikh representatives refusing to sign the Indian Constitution. Article 25 of the Indian constitution even denied Sikhism separate recognition for legal purposes.

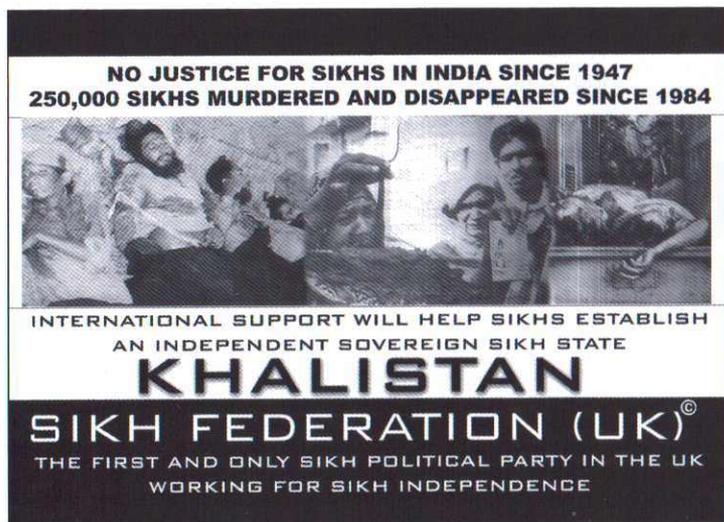
The Memorandum pointed to the impact of Partition in 1947, which resulted in 40% of all Sikhs becoming refugees and an estimated 500,000 losing their lives. A summary was provided of the systematic discrimination of the Sikhs by the Indian authorities in the 1950s and 1960s and the violent suppression of all demands for greater rights and autonomy in the 1970s and 1980s.

Reference was made to the June 1984 Indian army attack on the Golden Temple Complex and the massacre of tens of thousands of innocent Sikh pilgrims in cold blood, many with their hands and feet bound, including women and children. Attention was also drawn in the Memorandum to the failure of successive governments in India to take any actions against those responsible for the anti-Sikh pogroms of November 1984 - when over 20,000 innocent Sikhs were massacred in Delhi and cities throughout India by well-orchestrated mobs under the direct supervision of senior Indian politicians and officials.



The Memorandum urged the UK Prime Minister to listen to the 40 to 50 members of the Labour Government, including Ministers, who have written to the Sikh Federation (UK) to express support and sympathy for the plight of the Sikhs. In addition, an appeal was made to the Prime Minister to take note of the recommendation of 154 different UK MPs who have signed Early Day Motions in the last 12 months relating to 1984 and the violation of Sikh human rights. They have collectively called upon the UK Government to:

- i) lead the international community in demanding full access to Panjab to international human rights groups and the United Nations
- ii) take the lead in the international community to establish an independent UN inquiry into the failure of successive governments in India to take sufficient actions against those responsible for the events of November 1984.



Specific examples of India's blatant disregard and approach to the international community with respect to human rights that were set out in a written submission by the Sikh Federation (UK) to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in December 2004 were brought out in the Memorandum.

The Memorandum concluded that expectations of the Labour Government to deliver were high entering into the run up to a General Election. The Prime Minister was urged to make a personal commitment to represent the best interests of British Sikhs on the world stage and reflect positively on the UK Government position.

UN urged to hold international investigation into Sikh Genocide in 1984

Following the UN call in May for an independent investigation into the killing of protestors by Uzbek troops the Sikh Federation (UK) wrote to Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights calling for greater consistency in the international approach to killings by troops. The letter was copied to the UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and Benita Ferrero-Waldner the European Commissioner responsible for External Relations who have backed calls for an independent inquiry into the events in Uzbekistan.

The letter from Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK), stated: "We are pleased with the new found world order that allows the UN, EU and foreign governments such as the UK to legitimately call for an independent international inquiry when troops are used to kill protestors in countries like Uzbekistan.

However, we are still waiting for international action against those responsible for the genocide of Sikhs in 1984."

The letter stated: "We are fast approaching the 21st anniversary of the June 1984 assault by the Indian army on the Golden Temple complex, the Sikhs' holiest shrine, which resulted in sacred buildings and historic artefacts being destroyed or damaged beyond repair. The unprecedented action using artillery and tanks took place on one of the most important days in the Sikh calendar, when there were huge numbers of pilgrims in attendance. This was a well calculated and deliberate move by the Indian authorities that ended in thousands of innocent Sikhs being killed in cold blood, many with their hands and feet bound, including women and children. The genocide was not confined to the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar. Scores of other Sikh Gurdwaras were stormed by the Indian army throughout Panjab and tens of thousands of Sikhs were arrested, tortured, and killed."



Louise Arbour

In the letter the Federation urged the international community to undertake an independent UN investigation to ensure the prosecution of those responsible for the killings and destruction. A Federation spokesman said: "There must be international proceedings as there has been a persistent failure of successive Indian Governments to take any action against those responsible for the Sikh genocide."

The letter also asks the UN to ensure that the families of the victims are compensated and if the Indian authorities refuse to abide by UN requirements for there to be appropriate UN sanctions - trade and diplomatic. In the letter to the UN the Federation revealed that it is nearing an agreement in London that would see those responsible for genocide and gross human rights violations being either denied entry or facing prosecution under applicable local and international laws. The Federation told the UN it would like to see this move extended to a world wide ban on the movement of those involved in genocide and gross human rights violations.

A Federation spokesman said: "We will be working with international human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other NGOs to produce an "exclusion-list" that we hope can be endorsed by the UN. This will send a direct message to Indian police officers and army personnel that have been involved in genocide and human rights violations - the international community will ensure justice for the Sikhs."

Minister for press and information at the Indian High Commission under fire for his statement to the BBC

Kuldeep Bhardwaj, the Minister for Press and Information at the Indian High Commission, was heavily criticised following his statement to the BBC on Friday 10 June in relation to the 21st Anniversary of June 1984 and the Rally and March for Remembrance, Justice and Freedom on Sunday 12 June in London.

According to the BBC he declined to come on air, but told them that Britain was a free country where people were allowed to protest and it would be inappropriate for him to comment on the rally and march. Many have picked up on this as an admission that in comparison India is not a free country where minorities are free to protest about their treatment by the Indian authorities.

Commenting on the lack of justice for Sikhs for 1984 he said steps were being taken by the Indian Government to ensure justice for the Sikhs. This in turn has been interpreted as admitting Sikhs have not had justice for 21 years. He also expressed the view that the demand for Khalistan was a demand by the Sikh Diaspora and not that of Sikhs in India.

Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chairman of the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "It is a fact that Sikhs have not had any justice for 21 years. It is also a fact that Manmohan Singh has been the Indian Prime Minister for the last thirteen months and we are no nearer in getting any justice. If we look at the broken promises made to the Sikhs following Indian independence in 1947, at the treatment of Sikhs and the Panjab since 1947 and in particular we are of the firm view that India has demonstrated through its own actions and no one should be in any doubt that Sikhs will never get justice in India."

Bhai Amrik Singh continued by saying: "If you analyse what Kuldeep Bhardwaj has told the BBC, he in effect admitting India is not a free country and Sikhs and have yet to get any justice. The arrests and charges in the last few days against Sikhs such as Simranjit Singh Mann and Kanwarpal Singh Bittu for simply shouting slogans in support of a separate Sikh State is ample proof that India does not even respect a Sikhs right to freedom of speech. It is therefore hardly surprising he maintains the demand for Khalistan is a demand by the Sikh Diaspora."

Readers may be interested in listening to two interviews given on BBC Asian Network on Friday 10 June. These have been recorded and can be listened to on the Internet at:



Morning Show in English by Bhai Jagtar Singh
<http://june84.org/audio/bbc-june-10-2005.mp3>

Evening show in Panjabi by Bhai Amrik Singh Chairman of Sikh Federation (UK)
<http://june84.org/audio/bbc-panjabi-june-10-2005.mp3>

The first is in English from the morning show and the second is in Panjabi from the evening Panjabi show. Both interviews are in relation to the 21st Anniversary of June 1984 and Rally and March for Remembrance, Justice and Freedom on Sunday 12 June in London.

Sikhs remember Amritsar victims

BBC Online News - June 2005

A march has been held in London to remember those killed in the storming of Sikhism's holiest shrine, the Golden Temple of Amritsar, 21 years ago.

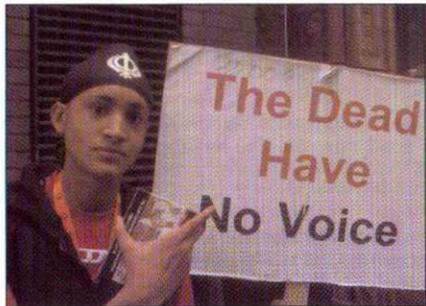
On 6 June, 1984, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sent the army into the temple to flush out militants.

There has never been agreement on the numbers killed, but Sikhs say thousands were massacred by Indian troops, many of them innocent bystanders.

The Sikh Federation march in central London ended with a rally. The military action 21 years ago led to Mrs Gandhi's assassination later that year by her Sikh bodyguards. That in turn triggered a wave of anti-Sikh rioting which left nearly 3,000 dead.



Young Sikhs



calls for Sikhs to be granted the right to self-determination.

"Sikhs from all generations took part in the protest," a spokesman for the Sikh Federation said of the London march.

"Many of the youngsters taking part were too young or not even born in June 1984 but demonstrated a great passion for seeking justice."

He added that some young people "were seen burning an effigy of Indira Gandhi near the Indian High Commission".

Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes addressed the rally, condemning human rights abuses in India and supported

London mayor meets Khalistanis, wants to visit Punjab

London - July 23 2005 [IANS]

London Mayor Ken Livingstone said he wants to visit Amritsar after a group of British Sikhs, including supporters of Khalistan, told him of alleged human rights violations in Punjab. Representatives of the British Sikh community who met him Friday said the mayor was "shocked" to learn that Amnesty International and the UN Rapporteur on Torture are denied access to Punjab.

The meeting was held in the backdrop of attacks on Gurdwaras in Britain following the July 7 terror bombings in London - part of a backlash whose racist perpetrators Livingstone said must be caught and punished.

Members of the pro-Khalistani Sikh Federation, who attended the meeting, said in a statement Saturday that Livingstone "indicated his desire to visit Amritsar provided the Indian authorities do not object to his presence".

Federation spokesman Jagtar Singh described the meeting as "one of the most positive developments for the British Sikh community in the last 30 years" and said it was also attended by members of the Sikh Secretariat, a group of professionals who include people who do not necessarily support the demand for Khalistan.



Come to London and risk being locked away

Separately, Livingstone also said that those involved in human rights abuses against Sikhs were not welcome in London. Friday's meeting, he said, covered "the visit to London of those involved in genocide and human rights abuses against minorities like the Sikhs".

"I would like to make it totally clear that those involved in torture, disappearances, and genocide are not welcome in London," Livingstone said, adding that the conviction this week of Afghan warlord Faryadi Zardad in London should send a message across the world to those involved in human rights abuses that the British authorities will take firm action against those involved in torture.

A London court sentenced Zardad, who lives in south London, to 20 years in prison after finding him guilty of torture and hostage-taking.

Jagtar Singh said the issue was raised in the context of a visit to London some years ago of Indian police officers who included "specific individuals who have court cases pending against them in India."

He said he will host - probably later this year - the first ever Sikh Identity Conference "to increase awareness and understanding of the Sikh identity and the importance of recognising and separately monitoring Sikhs".

Sikhs - along with Jews - have been recognised as a separate racial group in Britain since 1983, when the House of Lords ruled in favour of a Sikh man whose son was being told by his school not to wear a turban to school.

The British government is now bringing in a separate law that will outlaw discrimination against all religious groups, not just Sikhs and Jews.

Sikhs demand international action to deal with 21 years of injustice

Following the release of the Nanavati Commission report in August the Sikh Federation (UK) reacted to all the hot air following its release and the reaction of political opportunists in India. The contents of the report and the inevitable delay in the report being made public came as no surprise. The whitewash and clean chit it provided the Congress leadership simply reinforced the firmly held view that Sikhs will never get justice in India.



If India was a democratic country with respect for human rights and the right to life, the anti-Sikh pogroms would never have been allowed to take place. If the rule of law existed and prevailed Sikhs would have been protected and received some form of justice many years ago. Independent civil liberty groups identified and named the main perpetrators and instigators in reports produced within weeks of the massacres. However, successive governments, commissions and investigations have come and gone in the last 21 years with no action to provide justice to the tens of thousands of victims of the anti-Sikh pogroms. The little hope that victims had that Manmohan Singh's government may prosecute politicians and officials that have been implicated was totally shattered.

Some of those implicated, such as, Jagdish Tytler were forced to resign from the Cabinet and Sajjan Kumar stepped down as Chairman of the Delhi Rural Development Board. Much was also being written about Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's public apology. However, it took the publication of the Nanavati Commission report and political opposition for Manmohan Singh to realise the shame associated with the events of November 1984 and the need for him to apologise. The apology by Manmohan Singh had more to do with saving political face than a genuine desire to ensure all instigators are prosecuted. Resignations and apologies will soon be forgotten. The whitewash has done nothing but fuel the complete alienation of Sikhs within India.

On the 20th anniversary of the anti-Sikh pogroms British Sikhs launched a report in the UK Parliament titled: "Twenty years on - A call for action". The recommendations seemed all the more relevant as Sikhs who have been peacefully protesting in India about the lack of action following the Nanavati Commission report have been manhandled and injured in Delhi. This is the same police that stood by 21 years ago as Government supported gangs and mobs burned thousands of Sikh's alive, Sikh homes were destroyed, Sikh women were raped, and Gurdwara Sahibs and sacred scriptures of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji were burned. All this went on not just under the watchful eyes, but with the full blessing of some of the highest seats in Indian authority.

For over two decades high-ranking members of the Congress party have continued to enjoy political impunity for this violence. For every day, and every year which passes without convictions, injustice is still being served to the broken, shattered homes of Sikhs. The lack of justice is strengthening the resolve of Sikhs across the world to lobby the international community to not only take action against India and the culprits, but to continue the campaign for the establishment of an independent sovereign Sikh State.

UK Government signals change in attitude towards human rights abuses in India

On India's 58th Independence Day and on the back of the Nanavati Commission report the Sikh Federation (UK) revealed that pressure on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by UK MPs about its position on human rights abuses in India was beginning to have an impact.

In a letter received from the UK Government it was confirmed it was revisiting its position on whether to

"support a UN inquiry into the events of 1984". The Foreign Office said "it is for the government of India to investigate and bring culprits to justice." However, the UK Government also indicated it was closely watching the outcomes from the Nanavati Commission report to see what actions are taken by the Indian government.

A Federation spokesman said: "The signal by the UK Government of its willingness to take matters to the UN on behalf of Sikhs is significant. Given India's track record over the last 21 years prosecutions against the perpetrators of the anti-Sikh pogroms in 1984 is unlikely. We urge Sikhs, Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations up and down the country to keep up pressure on MPs to ensure the UK Government push for a UN investigation into the events of 1984. The investigation must look at the failure of successive Indian Governments and ensure those responsible for the indiscriminate killings of Sikhs are prosecuted."



Another key issue where the Federation has been lobbying is the release of Sikh political prisoners. The letter from the Foreign Office stated: "We are not indifferent to the problem of long term imprisonment without trial, and the wider issues of judicial reform and the need for a fairer, more efficient system for managing undertrials (prisoners awaiting trial) in Indian prisons. The context is one of hundreds of thousands of undertrials in Indian prisons."

The Foreign Office letter also highlighted the seriousness of the situation in India. It indicated there are "approximately 225,000 in Indian prisons awaiting trial, which is equivalent to 74% of the total prison population. Recent media reports have highlighted the cases of five people held without charge or trial for over thirty years (54 years in one case). There are vast numbers of cases pending in the Indian judicial system (the most pessimistic estimates are of around 30 million)."

A Federation spokesman said: "India should be ashamed by the details revealed by the UK Foreign Office. On the one hand the Indian Government is totally failing to bring to justice the named murders of over 20,000 innocent Sikh men, women and children in the November 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms and on the other many Sikh political prisoners are being held for many years under false or fabricated charges and some without trial. If the Indian Government is genuinely apologetic about the events of 1984 this must be followed by actions that demonstrate its remorse. All Sikh political prisoners should be released without further delay or it will be clear to the international world that Sikhs will never be treated with any respect or dignity in India."

The Foreign Office concluded its letter by stating: "We do raise these broader issues during official-level discussions with the Indian authorities, and we are concerned about the wider human rights dimension (i.e. lengthy undertrials)." The letter acknowledged the disappointment expressed by UK MPs that the Foreign Office was not doing enough to raise the issue of Sikhs and long term imprisonment without trial. However, the Foreign Office explicitly indicated in writing that it "will specifically raise these concerns- as matters of legitimate UK public and parliamentary interest- with both the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and the National Human Rights Commission." Rob Marris MP, the Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for UK Sikhs wrote to say he will be following this up with the Foreign Office.

WHY THE RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION MUST BE ON THE AGENDA

UK Parliamentarians discuss applicability of self determination for the Sikhs

The Sikh Lobby Day on 9 March this year was notable in more ways than one. Sikh representatives in the

UK took an important step in their modern political history by seriously engaging UK politicians in the subject of self determination for the Sikhs.

A paper titled "Self determination as a human right and its applicability to the Sikhs" was formally released in the UK Parliament in the hope it would open the debate with UK politicians on why Sikhs believe it is legitimate to seek their agreement on the Sikhs right to self determination.

Alex Salmond MP, the leader of the Scottish National Party, spoke passionately about the Sikhs fulfilling all conditions required for self determination. He praised the fifteen organisations that contributed and put together the paper, saying it was an excellent reference document for those concerned in understanding the applicability of self determination to the Sikhs. He said he would be making extensive use of the paper as it was one of the best papers he had read for several years.

Parmjit Singh Gill MP, speaking on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, confirmed not only his support, but that of his party for the Sikhs right to self determination. He reminded those gathered that Simon Hughes MP, the President of the Liberal Democrats, had on several occasions expressed his party's full support for the Sikhs right to self determination and his considerable concern about human rights abuses and the treatment of minorities in India, that were touched upon by several speakers at the public meeting.

Lord Ahmed the Labour Peer added his support for not only the Sikhs right to self determination, but for an independent sovereign Sikh State. This was well received by the hundreds of Sikhs that were packed into the Thatcher Room in the Houses of Parliament.

The Green Party were also represented at the public meeting by David Wood a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate in Slough. He wrote to the organisers of the Sikh lobby reminding them that the Green Party in 1989-90 adopted an official resolution and subsequent policy statement endorsing the Sikhs claim to political self determination and expressed concerns about the widespread human rights atrocities by the Indian authorities to crush Sikh political activism. On his advice copies of the self determination report were being sent to the Green Party Chairman, Hugo Charlton QC, a Human Rights barrister, and the two Green MEPs - Jean Lambert and Dr Caroline Lucas. He agreed to take steps with them to push the Sikhs right to self determination up the Green Party agenda as well as highlighting to Green Party members the problem Sikhs are facing in India.

A spokesman for the Sikh Federation (UK), the main organisers of the event said: "With the support of the Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party and Green Party Sikhs are sending a clear message to both the Labour and Conservative parties. There must be an open dialogue with Sikhs on their right to self determination and that the "territorial integrity" of India can not be used as an excuse according to principles that have been established at the UN."

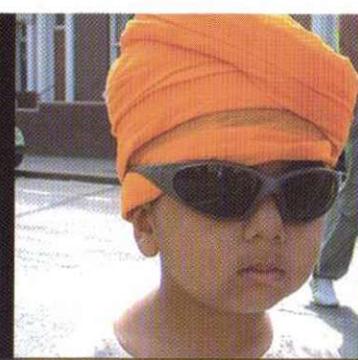
"Politicians that apply the territorial integrity "limitation" to India need to be reminded:

The limitation only applies where "States conduct themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination" - India opted out of this defence in 1966 when they put down a "reservation" when ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. India in effect stated in the UN that the right of self determination only applied to people living outside India. France, Germany and the Netherlands objected to the reservation on the grounds self determination must apply to ALL people. The UN has invited India to withdraw this reservation, but India has neglected to respond.

It is now internationally recognised that any government which is oppressive to peoples within its territory may no longer be able to rely on the ground of 'territorial integrity' as a limitation on the right of self-determination.

UK Parliamentarians were also reminded about the past treaties with the Sikhs and due to the unique Anglo-Sikh history the British Government were under a moral obligation to insist, at an international level, that the Sikh people be given the right to self determination.

RADIO SHOWS



SIMRAN SESSIONS

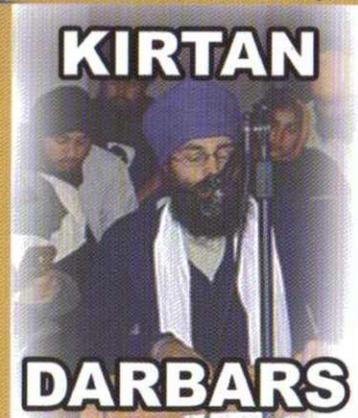
Young Sikhs (UK) was set up a year ago in recognition of the need to do more for the younger generation and involve youngsters in the full range of religious, cultural, sporting, educational and political activities. It is committed to inspiring Young Sikhs born and bred up in the UK to lead the way in the media, political and public fields and also aiding in the spiritual path in the Sikh way of life.

Last year we hosted Young Sikhs RSL radio shows, in which Young Sikhs discussed issues affecting them. Young Sikhs from all over the country took part in the radio forum, which allowed them to express their views on their politics, their needs and their Sikhi. We held a series of regional workshops, weekly simran sessions, organised events to collect money for the victims of the Tsunami and jointly organised a National



PROMOTE SIKH CULTURE & RELIGION

KIRTAN



DARBARS

Raensabai Keertan for the victims of the Genocide of Sikhs in 1984. Young Sikhs have increasingly been in the forefront at Sikh Lobby Days, rallies and protests concerning 1984 and contributed to campaigns such as the Respect for Guru Granth Sahib Ji campaign.

Young Sikhs (UK)
c/o Sikh Resource Centre
48 Kenilworth Drive
Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5LG



JOIN & CONTACT US

www.youngsikhs.org