



The theme for the Convention this year is 'Preparing to work with the next UK Government to achieve our objectives'. When we meet next year there will be a new government in the UK.

There is little doubt that we are entering a period in UK politics when there will be many changes. Following the scandal of MPs expenses the public are more cynical of politicians from all the main parties and the country's financial situation means there will be difficult decisions to be made.

Given this background we need to be proactive at the local level in having an open dialogue with prospective candidates from the leading parties about the needs of the Sikh community. To this end the Federation will in the next few months be putting together a 'Memorandum of Understanding' that can be used by Gurdwaras and local community representatives as a basis for discussions with those seeking the votes of the Sikh community. In preparing for the next government the 8-point Sikh Agenda for the UK Government that was first launched in September 2001 by the Sikh Secretariat will be revisited and revised. The Memorandum of Understanding will be consistent with the key elements of the revised agenda.

At the national level the Sikh Federation (UK) will in the next six months build on the relationships established with leading politicians over many years to ensure the Sikhs are best placed to work with the next government to move closer to achieving our objectives. The Sikh struggle for freedom is a long one, but it is only a matter of time before our professionalism, honesty and methods of working will be rewarded.



Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair Sikh Federation (UK)

#### Sikh Federation (UK)

Tanglewood House, Pine Walk, Chilworth, Southampton, SO16 7HQ  
email: [info@sikhfederation.com](mailto:info@sikhfederation.com) website: [www.sikhfederation.com](http://www.sikhfederation.com)



## SIKH FEDERATION (UK) ANNUAL REPORT

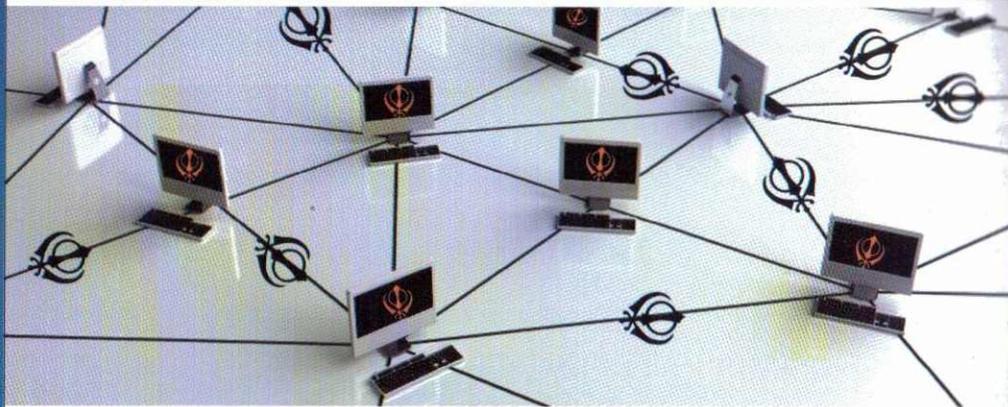
### HIGHLIGHTS 2008 - 2009

- International Sikh Convention
- National religious and awareness raising programmes in Gurdwaras
- Harvinder Singh Phoolka's visit on the 24th anniversary of November 1984
- Launch of the All Party Sikh Interest Group for Sikhs in the European Parliament
- Remembrance event in Ypres, Belgium
- Submission of the dastar case to the UN Human Rights Council, New York
- Giving direction to political lobbying in Canada and the USA
- Speech at the European Parliament on freedom of speech and expression
- Series of meetings at the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva
- 25th anniversary of the June 1984 massacre at the Darbar Sahib Complex
- 4-day educational tour of Europe – France, Belgium and Luxembourg
- Establishment of the UK, EU and World Sikh Lobby Network

## Working for justice and freedom



# UK, EU and World Sikh Lobby Network



The Sikh Federation (UK) already has an extensive network of branches and members in many towns and cities in the UK. This provides good coverage for around 70-80 MPs in and around certain towns and cities.

We have in the last two months established a regional network covering each of the twelve regions of the UK (East Midlands, Eastern, London, North East, North West, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South East, South West, Wales, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber) to better organise lobbying efforts and widen the coverage of MPs. Anyone wishing to join the Network can email their name and address to [info@sikhfederation.com](mailto:info@sikhfederation.com) or join the UK, EU and World Sikh Lobby Network group on Facebook.

By the time Parliament returns on 12 October 2009 we have set ourselves the target of covering 150-200 MPs. Longer term the Network wants to cover as many of the 650+ constituencies in the UK. To date it is estimated the UK Network has expanded its coverage to around 120-130 MPs. Establishing the network is important in the run up to the next General Election that must take place in the next 9 months.

In June this year Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were elected across the 27 Member States. We are also trying to get Sikhs to lobby MEPs in as many of the 27 countries as is possible. We have managed to expand the network into countries where very few Sikhs live. When the booklet went into print the EU Network had members from 20 of the 27 countries.

**JOIN US NOW** [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/sikhfederationuk)



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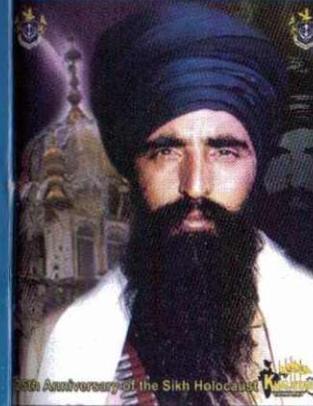
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50th Anniversary of the Sikh Holocaust



# BUILDING A STRONGER POLITICAL VOICE

## SIKHS AT A POLITICAL CROSSROADS

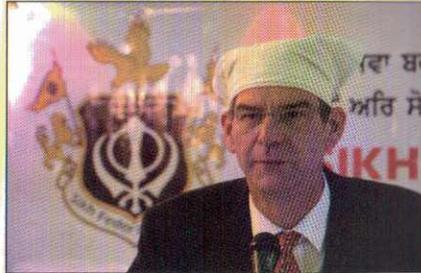
In September 2008 over 10,000 Sikhs took part in the Federation's 6th Annual International Sikh Convention at Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Wolverhampton. Many more listened on radio across Europe and via the Internet in other parts of the world.

The Convention marked the 5th anniversary of the setting up of the Sikh Federation (UK), which is often described as the first Sikh political party in the UK. The Federation has demonstrated it is the largest and most effective Sikh pressure group in the UK that works with all the main political parties.

At the Convention and on the eve of the party conference season the Federation declared Sikhs will be closely monitoring the actions of the Labour Government in the next 12 months on a range of issues where the British Sikh community have been demanding progress.

The issues are wide-ranging and include:

- Separate ethnic monitoring of Sikhs in the Census 2011
- Introduction of a Code of Practice for Sikh articles of faith
- Explaining the importance of the Sikh identity to other countries in Europe
- Taking legal action against torturers when they come to the UK
- Supporting the Sikh demand for self determination and independence



Rob Marris MP addressing the Convention



Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair Sikh Federation (UK)

Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation, pointed out that Sikhs are at a political crossroads. Traditionally Sikhs have supported Labour. However, the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and some of the other 'regional' or 'specialist' political parties - Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, Green Party and UK Independence Party have been very supportive on many issues.

A number of significant announcements were made by the Federation at the Convention including:

- Preparations and events for the 25th anniversary of June 1984
- Launch of an international campaign concerning the Sikh Reference Library on the 300th anniversary of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji
- Forthcoming events at the European Parliament



Dr Paramjit Singh Ajrawat (USA) addressing the Convention

The Federation also released its 2007-08 highlights booklet that received an excellent response.

## GREEN PARTY CONFIRMS SUPPORT FOR AN INDEPENDENT SIKH STATE

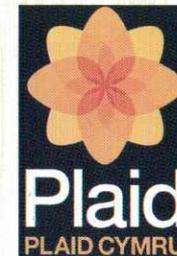
Speaking at the International Sikh Convention Jean Lambert MEP, the first UK Green MEP to be elected to the European Parliament in 1999, confirmed that the Green Party had passed a resolution at its Party Conference in support of an independent Sikh State. She also said that to call for independence was a right that Sikhs should be allowed to exercise and if you call for independence it did not make you a terrorist.



Jean Lambert MEP, confirming the Green Party passed a resolution in support of Sikh independence

Jean Lambert explained she was on the South Asia delegation of the European Parliament and had visited the Darbar Sahib Complex. She said she was struck by the peace and tranquillity in the Complex and contrasted this to the June 1984 attack. She said her party's resolution was directly linked to the June 1984 attack on the Darbar Sahib Complex and the 25th anniversary was an opportunity to reaffirm their support and for the international community to take action.

There are over 200 Green Party councillors in the UK, two members of the London Assembly, two Members of the Scottish Parliament, two UK Members of the European Parliament and a further 48 Green MEPs from 15 other countries in Europe that Sikhs should look for support on the issue of self determination and independence.

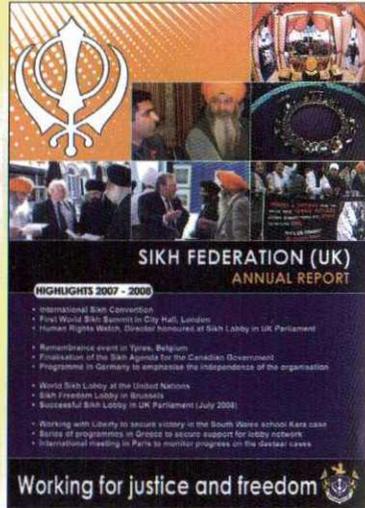


Alex Salmond, the Scottish National Party (SNP) leader, attended an earlier Sikh Federation (UK) Convention and spoke in support of the Sikh right to self determination. The SNP has over 360 councillors, 47 Members of the Scottish Parliament where they are the ruling party, seven MPs in Westminster and two Members of the European Parliament. Plaid Cwyr (PC) - 1 MEP, 3 MPs and 15 Assembly Members, making it the second biggest party in the National Assembly for Wales - have also been supportive on the issues of Sikh self determination and independence. The Greens, SNP, PC and UK Independence Party together represent a sizeable volume of political support for Sikh self determination and independence that has been worrying the Indian Government. Politicians from the three main political parties - Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have also privately expressed support for Sikh self determination.

## SIKH FEDERATION (UK) RELEASES 2007-08 HIGHLIGHTS BOOKLET

At the International Sikh Convention in September 2008 the Sikh Federation (UK) also released its 5th annual highlights booklet. Feedback suggested the latest annual booklet was very well received.

The Sikh Federation (UK) was set up in September 2003 and is believed to be the only Sikh organisation in the UK that provides such a comprehensive record of its work since its inception. This is the Federation's fifth highlights booklet and an electronic version is available by emailing [info@sikhfederation.com](mailto:info@sikhfederation.com)



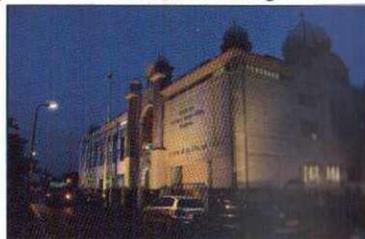
2007-08 booklet proved a huge success

## INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION REACTION TO CHANGE IN COMMITTEE AT SOUTHALL GURDWARA AND VICTORY FOR THOSE HOLDING PANTHIC VIEWS

In October the national leadership of the Sikh Federation (UK) welcomed the announcement of a change in the Management Committee at Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall.

A Federation spokesman said: 'This is a major victory for those that hold Panthic views. The local Sangat has made it known through the result announced today that it is time for a change. We are confident the assurances and commitments given by those that comprise the new Management Committee will signal a permanent change of direction from the last 14 years with respect to much greater support for Panthic issues in West London.'

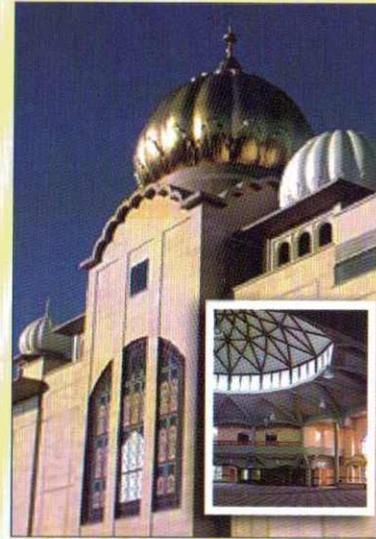
Following the result the leaders of the group forming the new Management Committee repeated their support for



Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Havelock Road, Southall at night



Panthic issues. The local leadership and membership of the Sikh Federation in Southall and surrounding towns, such as Slough, who publicly campaigned in support of the newly elected group, when approached said:



Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Havelock Road, Southall close up and inside

'We think this support for Panthic issues will translate into practical measures with a more flexible and open approach meeting the needs of the local Sangat. We expect restrictions on Panthic parchar to be lifted. Events will be held regularly at both Park Avenue and Havelock Road Gurdwaras and Sri Guru Singh Sabha will lead the way in supporting national Panthic events.'

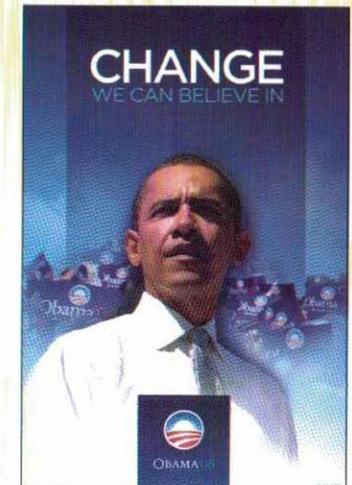
The Indian High Commission was also approached by the Federation Press Office and asked to comment on the results. Initially officials refused to comment, but later when pushed for a response an official stated they were disappointed with the outcome and feared this would signal a revival of Sikh activism across London and the South East. When asked to elaborate why the Indian High Commission regarded 'Sikh activism' an issue of concern the official refused to comment further.

In response a Sikh Federation (UK) spokesman said: 'the Indian High Commission should not interfere in the management of any of our Gurdwaras and leave it to the local Sangat to decide on the direction we take. There has almost been a complete vacuum in much of West London and the South East with regards to support for Panthic events. We expect this to totally change as the local Sangat has now put in place a new management Committee at Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall that has promised support for Panthic events.'

## SIKHS CALL FOR NEW US FOREIGN POLICY DIRECTION WITH ELECTION OF SENATOR OBAMA

The Sikh Federation (UK) joined other Sikh groups in welcoming the historic election of Barack Obama as the next President of the US. Many Sikhs in America have enthusiastically supported and backed the campaign of Senator Barack Obama.

Speaking after the US Presidential results Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) said: 'We are confident the election of Senator Obama will result in a dramatic change in the US position on the international stage. Recent contacts with those close to the US administration suggest the US stance on religious extremism may take a new twist.'



As far as India is concerned the growth of Hindu extremists in targeting minorities is expected to be high on the new President's agenda and could spell trouble for India as it has failed to curb violence against minorities, such as, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. Instead the state has been shown to have sponsored or supported the killings.

For many years the Sikh Federation (UK) has maintained close ties with leading organisations and figures in the 500,000 strong Sikh community in America and encouraged greater political participation. Bhai Amrik Singh said: 'This is an opportunity for leading Sikh organisations in the US to come together under a common 'political agenda' for Sikhs. Sikhs across the globe are looking to Sikhs in the US to take this once in a life opportunity to make a difference for Sikhs on the international stage.'

'Sikhs in America have a duty to ensure Senator Obama is able to live up to the title 'the leader of the free world', but only if he remembers the importance of protecting minorities throughout the world. The title will need to be earned and there is no better place to start than to force India to accept attacks against minorities amounts to state terrorism and is totally unacceptable.'

The Sikh community also welcomes his commitment to religious and personal freedom. We believe there is now a real possibility that the US Administration can join the UK and Canadian Governments, each with Sikhs in excess of 500,000 in promoting the importance and significance of the Sikh identity on the international stage.

## STOP THE BNP IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS - USE YOUR VOTE ON 4 JUNE 2009

In the 2004 European elections the BNP polled over 800,000 votes across Britain. On the 4 June the BNP targeted three regions - Yorkshire & the Humber, the West Midlands and the North West where it was only 0.4%, 0.8% and 1.3% short respectively of getting MEPs elected.

The general public was at that time outraged at politicians from the main political parties in Westminster following the scandal of MPs expenses. There was a real risk that a protest vote in the European elections could result in the BNP getting MEPs in all three of these regions.

The Sikh Federation (UK) urged Sikhs throughout Britain to cast their vote on 4 June in large numbers and if any Sikhs decided to cast a protest vote, especially in the West Midlands, it would be better if candidates of the Green Party were supported. The Green Party is the only major political party that has passed a specific motion in support of Sikh independence.

Sikhs were also urged to vote for candidates from the main political parties if they guaranteed to be a voice in support of the following five-point EU agenda for Sikhs.

- 1) Allowing practising Sikhs to carry the Kirpan into the European Parliament
- 2) Protesting against the French or other governments for introducing laws or practices discriminating against the Sikh identity
- 3) Supporting an exhibition on Sikhs in EU institutions and other awareness raising events
- 4) Linking EU trade with India to India's human rights record
- 5) Preventing those involved in torture and genocide in India from travelling to or entering EU countries



## 4 ਜੂਨ 2009 ਨੂੰ ਯੂਰਪੀਨ ਚੋਣਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਬ੍ਰਿਟਿਸ਼ ਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਪਾਰਟੀ ਨੂੰ ਰੋਕਣ ਲਈ ਦੂਜੀ ਹੋਰ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਪਾਰਟੀ ਨੂੰ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਅਪੀਲ

2004 ਦੀਆਂ ਯੂਰਪੀਅਨ ਚੋਣਾਂ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਬੀ ਐਨ ਪੀ ਨੇ ਬਰਤਾਨੀਆ ਭਰ ਵਿਚ 800,000 ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਹਾਸਲ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ। 4 ਜੂਨ ਨੂੰ ਬੀ ਐਨ ਪੀ ਵਲੋਂ ਯੋਰਕਸ਼ਾਇਰ, ਐਂਡ ਦਾ ਹੰਬਰ, ਵੈਸਟ ਮਿਡਲੈਂਡਜ਼ ਅਤੇ ਨੌਰਥ ਵੈਸਟ ਖਿੱਤਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਿਸ਼ਾਨਾ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ, ਜਿੱਥੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਕ੍ਰਮਵਾਰ ਕੇਵਲ 0.4 ਫੀਸਦੀ, 0.8 ਫੀਸਦੀ ਅਤੇ 1.3 ਫੀਸਦੀ ਘੱਟ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਮਿਲੀਆਂ ਸਨ।

ਆਮ ਜਨਤਾ ਵੈਸਟਮਨਿਸਟਰ ਵਿਚ ਪਾਰਲੀਮੈਂਟ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਖਰਚਿਆਂ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਸਕੈਂਡਲ ਕਰਕੇ ਮੁੱਖ ਸਿਆਸੀ ਪਾਰਟੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਿਆਸਤਦਾਨਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਨਰਾਜ਼ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਇਸਦੇ ਰੋਸ ਵਜੋਂ ਪਾਈਆਂ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਯੂਰਪੀਅਨ ਚੋਣਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਬੀ ਐਨ ਪੀ ਨੂੰ ਅੱਗੇ ਲਿਆ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਬੀ ਐਨ ਪੀ ਨੂੰ ਕੇਵਲ ਤਾਂ ਹੀ ਹਰਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਜੇਕਰ ਫਾਜ਼ੀਵਾਦ ਦਾ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਾਰਿਆਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲਾਮਬੰਦ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕੇ। ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਵੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ (ਯੂ. ਕੇ.) ਬਰਤਾਨੀਆ ਭਰਦੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਪੀਲ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ 4 ਜੂਨ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਰੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵਿਚ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਦਾ ਭੁਗਤਾਨ ਕਰਨ। ਜੇਕਰ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਰੋਸ ਵਜੋਂ ਵੋਟ ਪਾਉਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਚੰਗਾ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ ਜੇਕਰ ਇਹ ਵੋਟ ਗਰੀਨ ਪਾਰਟੀ ਦੇ ਹੱਕ ਵਿਚ ਪਾਈ ਜਾਵੇ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਉਹੀ ਕੇਵਲ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਮੁੱਖ ਸਿਆਸੀ ਪਾਰਟੀ ਹੈ

ਜਿਸਨੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਖੁਦਮੁਖਤਿਆਰੀ ਦੇ ਹੱਕ ਦੇ ਸਮਰਥਨ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਮਤਾ ਪਾਸ ਕੀਤਾ।

ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਮੁੱਖ ਸਿਆਸੀ ਪਾਰਟੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਵੋਟ ਪਾਉਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਯੂਰਪੀਅਨ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪੰਜ ਮੁੱਦਿਆਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਆਵਾਜ਼ ਉਠਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਗਾਰੰਟੀ ਦਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ :

- 1) ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਪਾਰੀ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਯੂਰਪੀਅਨ ਪਾਰਲੀਮੈਂਟ ਵਿਚ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਨ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਇਜਾਜ਼ਤ ਹੋਵੇ।
- 2) ਫਰਾਂਸ ਜਾਂ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਰੋਸ ਜਿਤਾਇਆ ਜਾਵੇ ਜਿਸ ਵਲੋਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਛਾਣ ਦੇ ਖਿਲਾਫ ਵਿਤਕਰੇ ਭਰੇ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਜਾਂ ਨਿਯਮ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ।
- 3) ਯੂਰਪੀਅਨ ਯੂਨੀਅਨ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਦਰਸ਼ਨੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਭਰਪੂਰ ਸਮਾਗਮਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਹਿਯੋਗ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ।
- 4) ਭਾਰਤ ਦੇ ਮਾਨਵੀ ਹੱਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਯੂਰਪੀ ਯੂਨੀਅਨ ਦੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਨਾਲ ਕਾਰੋਬਾਰੀ ਸਬੰਧ ਬਣਾਏ ਜਾਣ।
- 5) ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਚ ਅੱਤਿਆਚਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਕਤਲੇਆਮ ਵਿਚ ਸ਼ਾਮਿਲ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਯੂਰਪੀ ਯੂਨੀਅਨ ਦੇ ਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਆਉਣ ਜਾਂ ਦਾਖਲ ਹੋਣ ਤੋਂ ਵਰਜਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ।



## USE YOUR VOTE ON 4 JUNE 2009

### STOP THE BNP IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

In the 2004 European elections the BNP polled over 800,000 votes across Britain. On the 4 June the BNP will be targeting Yorkshire & the Humber, the West Midlands and the North West regions where it was only 0.4%, 0.8% and 1.3% short respectively.

The general public is outraged at politicians from the main political parties in Westminster following the scandal of MPs expenses. However, the protest vote that will almost certainly result in the European elections could let the BNP in.

The BNP can only be defeated by mobilising all those opposed to fascism. To this end the Sikh Federation (UK) urges Sikhs throughout Britain to cast their vote on 4 June in large numbers. If any Sikhs are to cast a protest vote it is better if candidates of the Green Party are supported, which is the only major political party that has passed a specific motion in support of the Sikhs right to self determination.

Sikhs should also vote for candidates from the main political parties if they guarantee to be a voice in support of the following five-point EU agenda for Sikhs.

- 1) Allowing practising Sikhs to carry the Kirpan into the European Parliament
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[www.sikhfederation.com](http://www.sikhfederation.com)



## UK, EU AND WORLD SIKH LOBBY NETWORK

On the inside of the front cover is an advert for the UK, EU and World Sikh Lobby Network. The Federation has in the last two months established two networks, one across the UK and the other across the 26 other EU countries.

The Federation already has an extensive network of branches and members in many towns and cities in the UK. This however only provides coverage for around 70-80 MPs in certain towns and cities.

A General Election must take place in the next 9 months and there is likely to be a change of government. It is therefore essential that in the run up the Sikh community expands its coverage to 150-200 MPs. A target has been set to achieve this number by 12 October 2009 when Parliament returns after the summer recess. Longer term the Network wants to cover as many of the 650+ constituencies in the UK. To date it is estimated the UK Network has expanded its coverage to around 120-130 MPs.

The UK Network will help:

i) in preparation of a major lobby on the issue of separate monitoring of Sikhs for the Census 2011 – two votes are likely to be taking place in Parliament in the next 9 months.

ii) put the Sikh community in a stronger position to influence standing MPs and prospective MPs on Sikh issues going into the next General Election

iii) put the Sikh community in a stronger position to lobby after the next General Election

In June this year 736 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were elected across the 27 Member States. Our target is to try and get Sikhs to lobby MEPs in as many of the 27 countries as is possible. Traditionally, we have relied on the older more traditional contacts from countries like Belgium, France and Germany. However, our focus is now on the younger generation and we have managed to expand our network into countries where very few Sikhs live. When the booklet went into print the EU Network had members from 20 of the 27 countries.

The Network in part relies on Facebook. Worldwide there are over 300,000 Sikhs on Facebook and probably 40-50,000 in the UK. However, those not on Facebook can also join the Network by contacting members of their local Sikh Federation branch or emailing [info@sikhfederation.com](mailto:info@sikhfederation.com)

Contacts from around 15 other countries are also members. The third stage of developing the Network will be to take up matters via member states at the UN and to provide a worldwide response to relevant issues when required.



## DEFENDING & PROMOTING THE SIKH IDENTITY

### SHAME ON EU PARLIAMENTS' CONTINUED DISCRIMINATION OF SIKHS ON EVE OF 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF END OF GREAT WAR

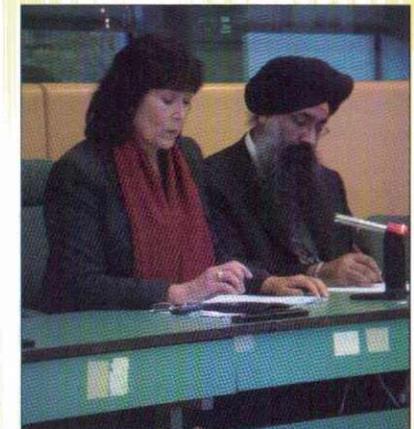
The All Party Interest Group for Sikhs comprising of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) was due to be launched in the main EU Parliament building in Brussels on 10 November on the eve of the 90th anniversary of the end of World War I.



Sikhs with Liz Lynne MEP outside the European Parliament in Brussels

However, those responsible for the administration of the EU Parliament continued to refuse to allow a small group of around 25-30 Sikh delegates from across Europe to attend meetings with MEPs in the main building unless they were prepared to compromise their identity and articles of faith i.e. remove their Kirpans. It was therefore decided prior to the launch there would be press briefing and interviews on the steps of the main EU Parliament building in Brussels.

A meeting followed in the Eastman Building of the EU Parliament where Sikhs were permitted to wear their Kirpans. The All Party Interest Group for Sikhs was formally established at the meeting of MEPs and Sikh delegates from across Europe. The group after consultation with Sikhs appointed 5 co-chairs belonging to the different political groupings. The plan is the group will after the European Elections in June 2009 have a lead MEP for each country where large numbers of Sikhs live.



Liz Lynne MEP and Dabinderjit Singh at the launch of the All Party Sikh Interest Group

It was agreed the issues that the group will take up will be under the broad headings of discrimination and human rights. A 12-point action plan for the group was suggested around the following specific issues:



## Discrimination

1. Practising Sikhs not being allowed to enter the EU Parliament
2. Sikhs being forced to remove the turban at certain EU airports e.g. Brussels
3. Turban ban in schools (i.e. France) and if taking up public jobs (i.e. France)
4. IDs (i.e. passports, driving licences) requiring Sikhs to remove turbans in France
5. Sikhs discriminated against when trying to get jobs because of the turban
6. No voting rights in many EU countries for permanent residents unless nationals

## Human Rights

7. Exclusion of torturers or those that commit crimes against humanity from visiting EU countries
8. Linking trade with India to its human rights record
9. Opposing the death penalty
10. Pressure on India for continued attacks and targeting of minorities
11. Right to self determination as a basic human right

The twelfth action was around raising awareness about Sikhs and the work of the All Party Interest Group i.e. an exhibition in the EU Parliament to coincide with a 'Sikh Week', a half day visit for a cross-country delegation of MEPs to a large Gurdwara in the UK.



Sikhs from different parts of Europe attending the launch

The timing of the launch of the group and the action plan on behalf of an estimated 1 million Sikhs in Europe was important. The launch was on the eve of hundreds of Sikhs joining thousands of others from around the world in Ypres on Armistice Day to commemorate those who fell in World War I including thousands of Sikh soldiers.

Around 80,000 Sikh troops fought in Belgium and France during World War I. More than one quarter of these

soldiers became casualties. In the first battle of Ypres in Flanders in 1914 a platoon of Sikhs died fighting to the last man.

Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) said:

'The people of a free Europe, let alone those in the EU Parliament, should never forget the contribution and bravery of Sikh soldiers during World War I. Sikhs recognise their sacrifices as an important part of their modern history. The Sikh sacrifices for the freedom and liberation of Europe need much greater exposure and proper recognition as part of the existing commemorations of the fallen.'



UK Sikhs in Ypres, Belgium to mark the 90th anniversary of the end of World War I

'During these challenging times the distinct Sikh identity and our tradition as fighters for freedom depicted by those courageous Sikh soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we enjoy today should be promoted and celebrated across Europe. The visible Sikh identity is fundamental to the way of life and very existence of a Sikh and should be protected and given the highest respect in Europe and its institutions.'



Wreaths laid at Menin Gate on 11 November 2008

## GODFREY BLOOM MEP MEETS WITH SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE FEDERATION IN YPRES

Godfrey Bloom met with senior members of the Sikh Federation (UK) in Ypres on Tuesday the 11th November to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the end of World War I and to remember the contribution of the 80,000 Sikhs who fought for the British Army during that war and their losses.

They also took the opportunity to discuss human rights issues particularly on the Indian sub-continent and discrimination against Sikhs mostly on the continent of Europe.

This meeting followed up Godfrey Bloom's trip to Amritsar in the Spring where he led a delegation to the Golden Temple and had a series of meetings with senior members of the Sikh religious and political communities.

Godfrey Bloom said, "the immense sacrifice of the Sikhs particularly at Neuve Chapelle where the Sikh regiment suffered a 80% casualty rate should never be forgotten by the peoples of Europe. We must always remember the difference between those who are our friends and those who merely have the good fortune to be our neighbours."



Rt. Hon. John Denham MP, the new Secretary of State at the Department of Communities and Local Government

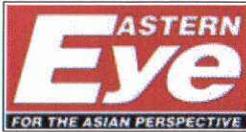


Godfrey Bloom MEP, UKIP joining Sikhs in Ypres

Note: Following his appointment John Denham, the new Secretary of State at the Department of Communities and Local Government, wrote to Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) on 16 July 2009 to confirm the Sikh Federation (UK) would be formally consulted on the guidelines being developed on the wearing of the Kirpan.



## BREAKING THE CODE



Furious Sikh groups have slammed the government over rules being drawn up on where they can wear their religious symbols. The Sikh Federation (UK) and Sikhs in England claim the idea for a code of practice was raised in Parliament in 2005, but the final draft has only just been finished. The groups said they have been left out of discussions on drafting the document, and the guidelines only cover wearing the Kirpan in government buildings.

The Kirpan Draft Document stresses the importance of wearing the small ceremonial dagger, and will be sent to government departments and businesses.

But the groups are concerned that because it does not include other symbols, there could be more controversies like the Sarika Singh case. Singh was expelled from Aberdare Girls School for refusing to remove her kara (bracelet), before winning her race discrimination case in the High Court last summer.

The Sikh Federation (UK) said until the code of practice is published, practising Sikhs may continue to be refused entry to government buildings, tourists attractions like the London Eye and even driving test centres to do their theory test.

The privately-run Forum run by Jasdev Singh Rai, who has been responsible for drafting the guidelines, insist all organisations were consulted and it has now contacted the two groups. It will send the final draft to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on Monday.

Harmander Singh, principal advisor of the Sikhs in England think tank, told Eastern Eye: "I'm disappointed in the procrastinations and the choice of the Forum, which is not renowned for its openness. The code of practice should have been ready by August last year.

"We've been attempting to find out about the consultation but I got a text message saying it was for members only. The government picks on people who are its mates, it's a tried and failed method. It should cover all the five 'k's and all places, including Wembley Arena and the London Eye." The Kirpan is worn in a holster across the chest. It is

among five articles of faith that baptised Sikhs should wear at all times.

Under the Offensive Weapons Act, the Kirpan is not classed as a weapon and British Sikhs are allowed to carry it. The Race Relations Act, affords protection to Sikhs if they are asked to remove the Kirpan as this would constitute discrimination under the Act.

Jagtar Singh, of the Sikh Federation (UK), said: "Why has it taken so long? Some people have been consulted, we have not been consulted by the Department although we started the campaign in Parliament.

"The document produced is far too long and yet only deals with the Kirpan in government buildings. It has unnecessarily gone into areas and opened a debate they don't need to, like guidance to schools and airports which already exists. For example, it should not need Sikhs to go to individual schools and argue their case."

Jasdev Singh Rai, general secretary of the Forum, said he will delay handing in the draft until Monday so the Sikh Federation (UK) and Sikhs in England see the document.

He said: "We've had meetings across the country, almost all the Gurdwaras have been contacted. What we want is a consensus from the whole community. We don't have the resources to finish a consultation in a short space of time.

"I have sent documents to representatives of those two groups, and they have been invited to the meetings, it is not a secret. We were asked by the government for specific guidelines on the Kirpan."

Parmjit Dhanda was responsible for drafting up the code of practice before being replaced by Sadiq Khan as minister for cohesion. The MP for Gloucester will launch the Sikh Friends of Labour group in Parliament on April 30.

Dhanda said: "In an ideal world all the various Sikh groups would be able to work together on this, that is unlikely to happen.

"I hope the regulations are light-touch and not too high-profile. The last thing Sikhs need is front page headlines about the right to wear ceremonial knives, which will misrepresent our faith to people who don't understand the significance of wearing the Kirpan."

## EUROPEAN COURT SAYS NO TO SIKH TURBAN ON DRIVING LICENCE IN FRANCE

The European Court of Human Rights dismissed a legal challenge by Shingara Singh Mann to the French law banning the wearing of the turban on ID document photos, filed by United Sikhs. The decision shocked the Sikh community. The Court, without requiring France to respond to Shingara Singh's legal arguments, has justified denying religious freedom on the basis of public security and protection of public order.

French regulations require motorists to appear "bareheaded and facing forward" in their driver's licence photographs. Shingara Singh is a 53 year old Sikh from the northern Paris suburbs, whose replacement driver's licence was refused by the French authorities in 2005 and again in 2006. Sikhs are required to wear the dastaar (Sikh turban) at all times.

Three compelling arguments were put before the European Court of Human Rights: Firstly, that European Commission regulations do not require a bare head as a minimum requirement for other ID docs e.g. a passport because of the advent of biometrics; secondly, that a Sikh wears a dastaar (Sikh turban) at all times and hence is only identifiable with his turban and thirdly, that there is no evidence that the Sikh turban poses a security threat as evidenced by the fact that France allows Sikhs of other nationalities to travel through France with ID photographs displaying the turban on their driver's licences and passports."

Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) speaking from Southampton said: 'Whilst the decision by the European Court of Human Rights is hugely disappointing Sikhs will continue to challenge this discrimination. We will continue to exert political pressure so the Sikh identity is properly protected throughout Europe. The new pan-European credit card-style driving licence will begin in 2013 and we have in the past been given assurances by certain Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) that photographs of Sikhs whilst wearing their turbans will be allowed for the new driving licence. In light of the Court's decision we will have to maintain pressure on the MEPs on this issue.'

## SUBMISSION OF SEVERAL DASTAAR CASES CONCERNING SIKHS IN FRANCE BEFORE THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE, NEW YORK

In December the Sikh Federation (UK) were represented at three events in New York linked to the filing of several dastaar cases concerning Sikhs in France before the UN Human Rights Committee. The Committee has traditionally been much more receptive to cases of religious discrimination than the European Court of Human Rights.



Shingara Singh Mann continuing to defy the French authorities





Sikh Federation (UK) represented in event in New York

The main purpose of the visit to the US was the formal submission of the cases to the UN. The likes of Avtar Singh Makaan and Daljit Singh of the Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee also attended. The SGPC President was given a hostile reception with several speakers, such as Dr Amarjit Singh (Khalistan Affairs Centre) and Yadwinder Singh (AGPC president) posing challenging questions.

The two key messages delivered on behalf of the Sikh Federation (UK) by Dabinderjit Singh were:

i) The legal approach will not succeed on its own. What the case of Shingara Singh Mann concerning the driving licence showed in the European Court of Human Rights is those pursuing matters legally could not simply submit a case and wait for the result. You must get to know judges, raise their awareness and exert political pressure through lobbying. This was also emphasised by non-Sikh groups familiar with the workings of the European Court of Human Rights.

ii) There is a need for direct action by Sikhs in India to keep up pressure on the French and Manmohan Singh. A large protest outside the French Embassy, involving tens of thousands of Sikhs was suggested to coincide with Indo-French meetings.

The visit was also important as it provided an opportunity to meet and network with professional Sikh groups, the Sikh Youth of America leadership, the AGPC and groups like Sikhs for Justice.

## CAMPAIGN UPDATE ON THE SEPARATE MONITORING OF SIKHS

The Federation stands alone in regularly keeping the Sangat informed of progress on key campaigns. This more or less happens face to face on a monthly basis. For example, in January 2009 Bhai Amrik Singh speaking at a Federation programme at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Willenhall brought the Sangat up to date on the issue of the separate monitoring of Sikhs.

The White Paper on the Census 2011 was published on 11 December 2008. It has been proposed to include two new ethnic groups – Gypsies/Irish Travellers and Arab. A separate box for Sikhs has not been included despite huge demand from the Sikh community.

A Parliamentary Question answered on 24 November 2008 showed that when the Office for National Statistics consulted there were 154 responses from 'Sikh' organisations to the consultation, which included



responses from 'Gurdwaras' and other Sikh organisations. All supported the inclusion of a specific 'Sikh' response category in the question.

It is now on record in parliament that no Sikh organisation responding to the consultation opposed the inclusion of a Sikh tick box in the ethnic group question. This directly contradicts and exposed what ex-Minister Paramjit Singh Dhanda stated in Parliament on 1 July 2008, when he claimed Sikh organisations were opposed to the separate Sikh tick box.

The Sikhs have been preparing for a straight battle with the current UK Government. The Opposition – Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have pledged their support and many Labour MPs, including Ministers are backing the Sikhs.

The Sikh Federation (UK) with the help of other Sikh organisations and activists will be organising a major lobby of UK MPs on the Census 2011 in the latter part of 2009 and early 2010 when the Census 2011 is discussed in Parliament. This highlights the critical importance of the UK Sikh Lobby Network that the Federation are setting up with members from across the UK.

## EU PARLIAMENT - FREEDOM OF SPEECH, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On February 18 2009, Tom Wise MEP hosted a private dinner, in Brussels, attended by a number of senior diplomats. Also present were representatives of industry, journalists and human rights campaigners. On the following evening, he hosted the main event of the week "Freedom of speech, Freedom of expression" in the European Parliament.



Tom Wise MEP meeting Sikhs in Brussels

Tom Wise introducing the evenings events said:

'Having briefly reviewed the astonishing speech earlier in the day from Vaclav Havel, I am delighted to introduce Dabinderjit Singh an adviser to the Sikh Federation (UK).'



Dabinderjit Singh addressing senior diplomats, journalists and human rights campaigners in the European Parliament



Relevant extracts from the speech delivered by Dabinderjit Singh are reproduced below:

Thank you for the introduction.

It is a great privilege for not only me, but Sikhs throughout Europe to be addressing you today in this illustrious institution, the European Parliament.

Some of you may be sitting there having heard the introduction, still wondering who is this chap and what is it, that I am going to say?

I was born in the UK, am a European citizen and have represented the UK at the European level, in Hong Kong before the handover to China and at the United Nations. I would argue I am as British and as European as you can get.

But do people think that when they see me? I suspect not, what they see first and foremost is that I am a Sikh. I think that is great, but do they confuse me with another faith; do they know what I and all Sikhs stand for; and do they know why I look the way I look?

If I was a betting man I think many here today may struggle to answer these questions despite Manmohan Singh, being the first Sikh Prime Minister of India and slightly closer to home Monty Panesar being the first visible Sikh to play that strange game of cricket for England.

So a few simple facts that I hope you will all take away with you and the next time you see a Sikh they will immediately come to find.

- Sikhism is the world's fifth largest faith and less than 600 years old.
- Sikhs by definition are defenders of human rights.
- I look the way I look as a decision was made over 300 years ago that I should not be able to hide away in a crowd. If you see a Sikh you should feel reassured and secure.
- If I see injustice I must speak out – you should expect me to speak out.

A question I often get is do the Sikh Nation not have a state?

A sovereign Sikh state was established some 200 years ago in 1799 and was recognised by all the world powers. The Sikhs lost their kingdom 50 years later, when the Sikh homeland came under British rule in 1849. However, in giving up power Sikhs were party to several Treaties with the British that have been forgotten, but are valid and relevant today.

And this brings me on to my final point for you to take away.

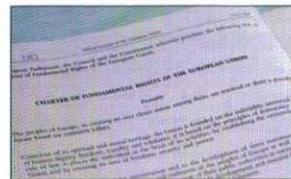
The long Anglo-Sikh relations meant that Sikhs are world renown as soldiers. Over 80,000 Sikh troops fought in

Belgium and France during the First World War. More than one quarter of these soldiers became casualties. In the two world wars 83,005 turban wearing Sikh soldiers sacrificed their lives and a further 109,045 were wounded for Europe's freedom. The visible Sikh identity is fundamental to the way of life and very existence of a Sikh and should be protected and given the highest respect by European governments and institutions.

I arrived earlier today and it's been interesting reading the Parliaments literature. Supposedly this Parliament represents and works for the benefit of Europe's citizens. I quote this place is about 'making people's lives easier' and 'promoting equal opportunities'.

The EU Parliament is the guardian of liberties and democracy. We have the wonderful Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

- Article 10 – Freedom of thought, conscious and religion
- Article 11 – Freedom of expression and information
- Article 14 – Right to education
- Article 15 – Freedom to choose an occupation and right to engage in work
- Article 21 – Non-discrimination
- Article 22 – Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity



'Parliament is particularly sensitive to the issue of tolerance, and fights determinedly against all forms of discrimination.' The EU Parliament 'Defends human rights'. Parliament acts 'to uphold human rights, freedoms and democracy' not just 'in Europe' but 'around the world'.

I have also brought the French version of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union as the authorities there have not only forgotten the Sikh sacrifices in the last 90 years for the freedoms they enjoy but they seem to have forgotten the fundamental rights that the people of Europe should be able to enjoy.

I am very clear the Sikhs are a Nation, but stateless, but I have the freedoms in Europe to express my views. But the same freedoms are denied to my brothers and sisters by the world's so-called largest democracy - India and the Indian political class.

## SCHOOL THAT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST A SIKH SCHOOL GIRL FACE £200,000 LEGAL BILL - BRITISH LAW PROVIDES PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE SIKH IDENTITY

It was revealed in April 2009 that the school that discriminated against a 14-year old school girl for wearing her Kara faces a £200,000 legal bill.

After a three-day hearing last June, the High Court in London declared her exclusion was "unlawful".

The Sikh Federation (UK) was approached by the family and led the high profile campaign for the right of the 14-year old girl to wear her Kara in school.

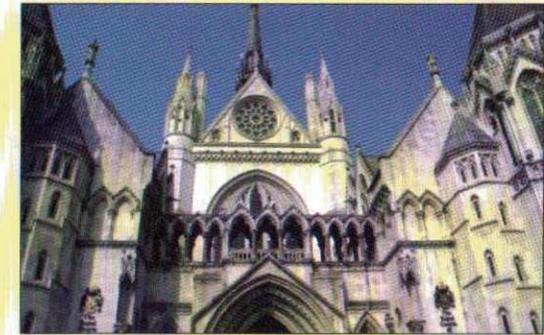
The legal bill includes an invoice from human rights group Liberty, who brought the case against the school and was introduced to the family by the Sikh Federation (UK). The school's own legal fees topped £76,000 and it has already paid £60,000 to Liberty, but disputes an extra bill of £80,000.

In a statement the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK), Bhai Amrik Singh said:

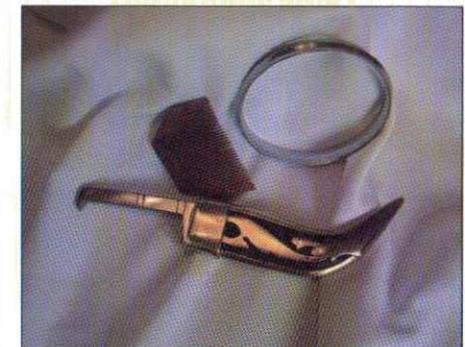
"The school should never have been allowed to take the battle to the High Court. Children at the school should not suffer. Instead the head teacher and school governors should be made to foot the bill for their poor decision making."

"The announcement this week that the South Wales school faces a £200,000 legal bill sends a warning to other public bodies not to discriminate against the Sikh identity as it is protected under the law."

We are pleased a five figure sum will be paid in damages to compensate Sarika for her suffering.



Sikh articles of faith



Dabinderjit Singh was followed by Chenjerai Hove, the poet and political exile, who spoke of his own opposition to the dictatorship in Zimbabwe.

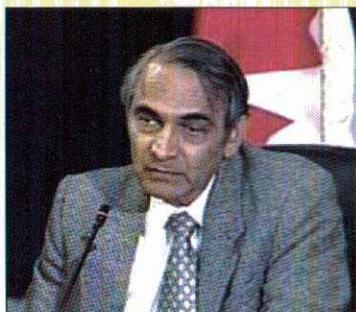


# SIKH FEDERATION (UK) ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

## CANADIAN POLICE, VICTIMS FAMILIES AND SIKHS ACROSS THE GLOBE OUTRAGED WITH FABRICATED ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ISYF

In December 2008 reports appeared in the mainstream Canadian press based on a so-called open letter from Ajit Singh Bains, chairman of the Punjab Human Rights Organisation (PHRO) to victims' families of the Air India disaster.

The PHRO last year testified before Canada's public commission into the Air India disaster, unveiling some of the information that is in the letter to victims' families. It was based on a secret recording supposedly made by retired Punjab Police DSP Harmail Singh Chandi who interrogated and tortured Shaheed Bhai Talwinder Singh Parmar between 9 -14 October 1992 before he was killed in an 'encounter' on 15 October. Commission chairman John Major indicated at that time he was taking the PHRO information with a grain of salt.



Bal Gupta, the co-ordinator of the victims' families association

In the letter the organisation is said to have identified 12 people who were involved in the disaster. However, the new revelations have received a cold reception from a spokesman for the victims' families, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Sikhs across the globe.

Bal Gupta, the co-ordinator of the victims' families association, said he was aware of the open letter but did not believe any of the assertions. He said it was "an attempt to distract the real investigation"

or "at worst, it may be an attempt to hide the identity of the real culprits."

RCMP spokesman Sergeant Tim Shields called the PHRO letter "nothing more than an opinion paper that lacks any credible information that can be utilised to advance the Air India Investigation." He continued and said: 'the statement by the PHRO was false and misleading' and described it as outrageous.



RCMP spokesman Sergeant Tim Shields

It has been reported that the PHRO refused to give its report or supporting "evidence" to the RCMP, despite attempts by Canadian investigators to meet with the organisation in India last month. Then the PHRO said it would release the report publicly, but back-tracked before finally e-mailing an abridged version to The Vancouver Sun and other news outlets. The route chosen to release the open letter says a lot about the motives of the PHRO.

The PHRO has been shown to lack professionalism and Ajit Singh Bains when contacted immediately denied making any allegations against the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF). He has been exposed as doing nothing more than the dirty work of the Indian Government in blaming Sikhs for the Air India disaster.

The primary target of the PHRO is the nephew of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwale, Bhai Lakhbir Singh. But the RCMP told the Air India inquiry that he was ruled out as a suspect after considerable investigation, including logs of wiretap conversations in the weeks before and after the disaster.

The PHRO allegations refer to the presence of Bhai Lakhbir Singh at a test-bombing on 4 June 1985 in the woods outside Duncan. But agents from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) were watching at the time and never identified Bhai Lakhbir Singh, despite his identity being widely known by law enforcement agencies. Earlier a PHRO spokesman, Sarbjit Singh Verka, confirmed that its "investigators" had not even reviewed the mountains of evidence filed at the Air India trial and the inquiry in Ottawa.

The most outrageous claim by the PHRO is the ISYF was set up by the Indian Government to disrupt the Sikh separatist movement around the world. Sikhs across the globe in the Punjab, UK, Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Greece that were once members of the ISYF have been quick to condemn this baseless allegation. Ajit Singh Bains is now denying he has made this assertion.

## SIKH FEDERATION (UK) STATEMENT RELATING TO AJIT SINGH BAINS AND THE PHRO

**THE VANCOUVER SUN**

In the middle of December Ajit Singh Bains issued a statement (published in the Punjab Times) in which he denied issuing a report implicating Sikhs and the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) in the Air India case.

The Sikh Federation (UK) issued a statement a couple of weeks later informing the Sangat that they had now obtained the original report and email sent to the Canadian media by Sarabjit Singh Verka of the Punjab Human Rights Organisation (PHRO). He sent the email and report on 4 December 2008 and the report has the name of Ajit Singh Bains at the end.

This demonstrated either Ajit Singh Bains was misleading Sikhs or his son and Sarabjit Singh Verka were issuing reports in his name without his knowledge. Either way the Sangat and Panthic organisations were urged to be careful when dealing with the PHRO.

Immediately following the statement by the Sikh Federation (UK) the Sangat in Toronto stopped a PHRO representative from speaking at Mississauga Gurdwara as he was unable to defend the PHRO position on the Air India case.



Note: Ajit Singh Bains when visiting the UK in July 2009 was directly challenged by a Sikh Federation (UK) representative regarding the above. He was unable to defend the PHRO position and simply blamed inaccurate reporting by the Canadian press. However, when he was told the Federation had the original email and report sent on 4 December 2008 by Sarabjit Singh Verka of the PHRO to Kim Bolan at the Vancouver Sun and that the report was in Ajit Singh Bains name he went silent.

## WORKING WITH SIKHS IN CANADA - CANADIAN MINISTERS VISITING INDIA

The Sikh Federation (UK) is increasingly working closely with like-minded Sikhs in Canada and the USA. In January 2009 the Federation contacted Sikh associates in Canada to alert them that several of their Ministers would be visiting India.



Minister Jason Kenney with Ed Fast, Member of Parliament for Abbotsford and Tim Uppal, Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Sherwood

Canadian Minister for Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney would begin his Indian visit on 11 January.

He would be accompanied by newly elected Sikh MP Tim Uppal – an Amritdhari who is understood to sympathise with the Khalistan issue. The Sikh Federation (UK) had contact with him in March 2008 before he was elected. Canadian Sikhs were informed they would be visiting the Harmander Sahib and meeting political and community leaders in Punjab.



Kamal Nath, Minister for Commerce directly responsible for killing innocent Sikhs in November 1984

As soon as the Federation became aware of the visit contact was made with Sikh activists in Canada so they could meet with Tim Uppal before his visit to Punjab to ensure relevant issues could be raised.

We also alerted Sikh contacts of Canadian International Trade Minister Stockwell Day's visit on 17 January. The

Federation became aware he would be meeting Kamal Nath, the Minister for Commerce, responsible for the killing of Sikhs in November 1984. Sikhs in Canada were asked to exert pressure on Stockwell Day so he is aware who he is meeting. The Federation also alerted senior advocate Harvinder Singh Phoolka in Delhi so pressure could be created during the visit.



Senior advocate Harvinder Singh Phoolka addressing the Sangat at Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester during his week long visit to the UK

## SIKHS IN THE USA AND CANADA LOOK TO SIKH FEDERATION (UK) TO GIVE DIRECTION ON POLITICAL LOBBYING

Following a visit by Dabinderjit Singh to the USA and Canada in December 2008/January 2009 it was made clear that all major Sikh organisations in the USA and Canada admire the work of the Sikh Federation (UK) and would like to collaborate on projects and campaigns where possible.



Capital Hill, Washington DC

It is well known the Indian Government is becoming increasingly concerned with the way in which Sikhs in Canada and now the USA want to create more powerful political lobbies on Sikh issues, following the UK example.

A few months earlier an unprecedented 8 Sikh MPs were elected in Canada and Sikhs in Canada for the first time with the help of the Federation from the UK put more and more politicians on the 'spot' when they came calling for votes.

The visit to Canada was important as it was Dabinderjit Singh's first visit since March 2008 when media reports in the Canadian national press showed the Indian Government met with the Canadian Government to ask why he was being allowed to visit Canada and being allowed to strengthen political lobbying, including on the Khalistan issue. No less than the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, instigated the approach to the Canadian Government about the visit.

Dabinderjit Singh immediately responded and wrote a nine-page letter to Canadian Ministers, including the Canadian Prime Minister setting out the inaccuracies in media reporting, how law-abiding Sikhs were being demonised, the importance of Canada defending the right to freedom of speech and the need for the Canadian Government to promote the importance of Canadian Sikhs getting more involved in lobbying and the democratic process.

The fact that Dabinderjit Singh had no difficulty visiting Canada showed the Canadian Government was not relying on fabricated media reports or Indian hysteria in deciding who should or should not be allowed to visit Canada.



Canadian Parliament, Ottawa

## SUBMISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON 26 JANUARY 2009

The Federation produced the letter below for submission to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva

What India calls Republic Day marks the day in 1950 when India adopted its Constitution, but for minorities of South Asia it is "Betrayal Day". In 1930 political leaders declared 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.



Partition in 1947 resulted in 40 per cent of all Sikhs becoming refugees and an estimated 500,000 lost their lives. The Sikh homeland - Panjab: the land of the five rivers - was divided and changed from a settled and prosperous area to a violent and overcrowded frontier zone.

By the 1960s many Sikhs began to feel their collective voice was not being heard in India as a whole. Problems in the 1970s included diversion of Panjab's water and hydro-electric power, underdevelopment of Panjab and discrimination against Sikhs. 1973 saw the development of a Sikh movement for greater autonomy that was supported by other minorities. Discussion surrounding greater autonomy for individual states was abruptly halted by the imposition of a state of emergency in 1975.

A campaign of baptisms accompanied by non-violent protest developed in the early 1980s. The "righteous protest" launched in August 1982 resulted in the arrest of tens of thousands of Sikhs at a time, overflowing the capacity of the Panjab criminal and judicial system. Riots were triggered in September of that year when police fired on a largely unarmed Sikh crowd gathered outside the Parliament buildings in New Delhi.

The treatment of Sikhs including many eminent figures when they sought to attend the Asian Games and the fact that this was largely ignored in the main stream media, added dramatically to tensions. The Indian authorities systematically discriminated against the Sikhs and suppressed all demands for greater rights and autonomy.

In June 1984 the Indian army attacked the Golden Temple Complex, the Sikhs' holiest shrine, where sacred buildings and historic artefacts were 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, which resulted in thousands of innocent Sikhs being killed in cold blood, many with their hands and feet bound, including women and children. Scores of other historical Sikh Gurdwaras were stormed by the Indian army throughout Panjab and thousands of Sikhs were arrested, tortured, and killed, including children.

The massacre was designed to crush the Sikh mass movement for greater autonomy and to "teach the Sikhs a lesson". The timing was cynical in that it was premeditated to secure right wing Hindu support in an election year. The actions by the Indian authorities continue to this day to have an immeasurable impact on Sikhs throughout the world.

In November 1984 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. Sikhs became the target of organised violence with murderous gangs swarming into Sikh houses, hacking the occupants to pieces, chopping off the heads of children, raping women, tying Sikh men to tyres set aflame with kerosene and pulling Sikh passengers from public transport to be lynched or burned alive.

Eyewitnesses charged that government officials and politicians of the ruling political bloc were involved in widespread attacks on Sikhs in Indian states ruled by the Indian government of the time. Inquiries have been held, but their reports promptly buried. In the meantime many a government has come and gone in India. Every government has promised the Sikhs justice. Almost 25 years later, Sikhs are still waiting. Widows of some of those killed have tried to prosecute prominent politicians that were directly involved in the pogroms, but it has been shown they are above the law.

Amnesty International in a memorandum to the Government of India, complained that far from



being spontaneous expressions of popular grief and anger as made out by the authorities, the killings were the outcome of a well organised plan marked by acts of both deliberate commission and omission by important politicians of the Congress and by authorities in the administration. Successive governments in India have failed to take any actions against those responsible for the anti-Sikh pogroms of November 1984.

For the last 30 years all calls for freedom and independence have been suppressed by the Indian authorities, who have unleashed a rein of terror through the gross violation of human rights. The murder and disappearances of over tens of thousands of Sikhs since 1984 and the illegal detention and torture of Sikhs are well documented by independent human rights organisations. Virtually none of those responsible for human rights violations - including torture, deaths in custody, extra-judicial executions and "disappearances" of Sikhs have been brought to justice. An atmosphere has been created where Indian government officials believe that they can violate people's fundamental rights with total impunity. Sikhs are not the only minority being targeted, over tens of thousands of Christians and Kashmiri Muslims have been killed since 1947.

How far are Indian politicians prepared to go in sacrificing innocents in their maintenance or pursuit of political power for Hindustan, which is how they refer to India? The tactics used by successive governments in India to kill innocents from minority communities for the popular vote shows no sign of abating. Targeting minorities is seen by Indian politicians as the norm and will inevitably lead to the break up of the Indian Union. The Congress Party took advantage of the November 1984 pogrom of Sikhs, in Gujarat Hindu fundamentalists took electoral advantage of the killing of innocent Muslims and more recently the killing of Christians and the killing of innocents in Mumbai on the eve of elections have again been used to win votes.

Informed commentators believe the growth of Hindu extremism is one of the biggest dangers that threaten not only the Indian sub-continent, but also stability in the entire world. Western governments are urged to respond to the calls for freedom and self-determination by the people of Kashmir, Sikhs and other minorities that have suffered over the last 60 years and to counter the blackmail tactics used by the Indian government to pressurise foreign governments to forget such calls for freedom.

The Sikhs have the right to self-determination as enshrined in International Covenants on Economic, Social, Cultural, Civil and Political Rights and the experiences, particularly over the last 30 years, indicate the only solution to safeguard Sikh interests is the establishment of a separate Sikh homeland, Khalistan. The concept of a Sikh homeland is nothing new; a Sikh Kingdom existed before the British annexed it in 1849.

The experiment of Indian independence has failed to deliver. Long term stability in the world is only possible when weapons of mass destruction and the nuclear threat are reduced in the Indian sub-continent. A nuclear free state of Khalistan would provide much needed stability that would be guaranteed by the hard working and resourceful Sikh people.

## SIKHS DISCUSS REPORTS CONCERNING THE UK, FRANCE AND INDIA AT THE UN

On 16 March Sikh representatives from across Europe met with staff of the UN Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief in Geneva. This concerned three reports concerning the UK, France and India debated earlier that week and where the Federation had arranged for Sikhs to meet with the Rapporteur on her visits. The relevant extracts from the report are shown below:



## UNITED KINGDOM

The Special Rapporteur spoke with Sikhs' representatives who voiced their concerns about an increase in attacks on Sikhs and Sikh properties following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005. Furthermore, wearing the turban and carrying a Kirpan has been treated as a problem on health and safety grounds by some employers and organizations. Sikhs also claim to be underrepresented in the Houses of Parliament and that there has been little progress to increase the number and profile of public appointments for Sikhs.

They further criticized the selection and appointment of the King or Queen, who has to be a Protestant Christian and takes an oath to "maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law". While the Government provides State funding for Christian schools, Sikhs were concerned that there has been little funding for schools to be operated by other religious groups.

## FRANCE

Indirect or de facto discrimination based on religion or belief has been encountered in the context of legislation regulating the wearing of religious symbols in education institutions. During a country visit the Special Rapporteur examined a law that prohibits symbols or clothing by which students conspicuously show a religious identity in public elementary schools, middle schools and secondary schools.

Although the scope of the law applied equally to all religious symbols, it turned out to disproportionately affect young Muslim women wearing the headscarf, thereby constituting a form of indirect discrimination. It also seriously affected members of the Sikh community, who reported that displaying religious symbols was an essential part of their faith. The implementation of this law led to the exclusion of children from the school public system and consequently hindered the right of some children to have access to educational institutions.

On a similar issue, the Special Rapporteur recently dealt with university rules, which reportedly prohibit students from taking examinations if their heads are covered.

## INDIA

Several Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists expressed concerns that they were not treated as distinct religious communities but rather as belonging to Hindu religion. Article 25 of the Constitution contains an explanation that "reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly".

Jurisprudence confirms that since the Constitution was framed, Sikhs and Jains have been treated as part of the wider Hindu community with its different sects, sub-sects, faiths, modes of worship and religious philosophies. In various codified customary laws, the definition of 'Hindu' includes Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs.

Further problems can arise for members of the Scheduled Castes, especially when they want to convert to a different religion, since government benefits for Scheduled Castes are by law limited to



Asma Jahinger, UN Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief

Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 provided that no person who professes a religion different from the Hindu religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste. This provision was subsequently amended in 1956 and 1990 to also include Sikhs and Buddhists. However, the Special Rapporteur's interlocutors pointed out for example that Sikhism and Buddhism did not recognise the caste-system.

Communal violence after "Operation Blue Star" (1984) - Many of the Special Rapporteur's interlocutors referred to the anti-Sikh riots after the attack by the Indian army on the Golden Temple in Amritsar ("Operation Blue Star") in June 1984 and subsequent to the tragic assassination of Ms. Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984.

During the following four days, nearly 3,000 Sikhs were reported to have been killed. Two commissions and eight committees were set up from 1984 to 2005 in order to identify those responsible for the anti-Sikh riots. However, many families of the victims or survivors voiced their concerns that the main accused were either not charged or were acquitted and that compensation was inadequate.

Furthermore, despite a 2004 court judgement in favour of the return of the Sikh religious scriptures, reference material and artefacts, which had been removed from the Sikh reference library in Amritsar by the Indian army in 1984, had reportedly not been returned yet.

Further concerns refer to the issue of unidentified bodies. Punjab security forces had secretly cremated thousands of bodies that they had labelled as "unidentified/unclaimed". A report by the Central Bureau of Investigation documented more than 2,000 cases of illegal cremations at crematoria in the Amritsar district. Subsequent claims for compensation filed with the National Human Rights Commission have been limited to these cases in the Amritsar district, excluding the other twelve districts of Punjab.



Sikhs preparing for parallel event at the UN Human Rights Council



Meeting with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) an international organisation of Parliaments of sovereign States based in Geneva

Following the meeting Sikh representatives attended a parallel event where they showed a number of video clips and spoke about the Sikhs plight since 1947. There was a particular focus on the events of June and November 1984. The day concluded with a meeting with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) - international organisation of Parliaments of sovereign States based in Geneva.

## ALL PARTY SIKH INTEREST GROUP MEETING IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

A Federation representative met on 15th April 2009 with three of the co-Chairs of the All Party Sikh Interest Group in the European Parliament - Liz Lynne MEP (Liberal Democrat), Jean Lambert MEP (Greens), Tom Wise MEP (UKIP). Glyn Ford MEP (Labour) also sent his personal adviser to the meeting. Timothy Kirkhope MEP (Conservative) sent his apologies.



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The meeting was organised to agree on actions prior to and after the EU elections taking place between 4-7 June 2009 across Europe.

Specific actions agreed prior to the elections were:

- to maintain pressure to ensure the new EU-wide Driving Licence has no requirement on Sikhs to remove the turban for photographs. This would resolve the on going difficulty in France regarding driving licenses.
- recognise the Congress Party has responded to pressure from the Sikh community and withdrawn the candidacy of Jagdish Tytler and Sajan Kumar in the forthcoming elections in India
- put down a Written Declaration in the EU Parliament condemning the Indian Government on its actions on the 25th anniversary of the June 1984 Indian army attack on the Darbar Sahib
- encourage Sikhs to vote in large numbers in the forthcoming EU elections to elect candidates that best represent their interests
- produce a Memorandum of Understanding between the Sikh community and all prospective MEPs (similar to the one produced by the Sikh Federation (UK) for the last UK General Election)

A draft programme of activities for the All Party Sikh Interest Group was also put forward by the Federation that could be taken up in the autumn after the EU elections.



Timothy Kirkhope MEP, leader of the Conservatives in the European Parliament and co-chair of the All Party Sikh Interest Group

## SIKH FEDERATION (UK) STATEMENT ON THE VIENNA INCIDENT AND ATTACKS AGAINST THE SIKHS IN PUNJAB

We are deeply saddened and shocked over the recent incident that took place in Vienna, Austria and the subsequent rioting in Punjab. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Sikh families and friends of those affected by this incident. Any loss of life is regrettable whether in Vienna or Punjab.



Amritdhari Sikh being medically treated following violent pre-planned attack against him and other Sikhs in Vienna



All concerned need to ensure that incidents, like the one in Vienna and the violent reaction against Sikhs in Punjab that followed are not allowed to occur again. This will only happen if we take a hard look at the facts that have still to emerge about why the situation arose in Vienna in the first place and what was done by the authorities in Punjab to maintain calm and prevent attacks against Sikhs.

The incident in Vienna and reaction in Punjab have brought back many memories. Firstly the memory of 13 April 1978 when thirteen innocent Sikhs were killed for peacefully demonstrating against a fake Nirankari baba for showing disrespect towards the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Secondly, the memory of the events from 25 years ago; when innocent Sikhs were deliberately targeted and killed.

Many hearing about the incident in Vienna or unsubstantiated rumours have immediately jumped on the popular bandwagon to condemn the attack that took place on Sunday without establishing the full facts. This includes the possibility that three local Amritdhari Sikhs, simply wearing their Kirpans, may have been shot dead by Indian security agents providing armed protection to the two so-called self-proclaimed gurus visiting Austria. A fourth local Sikh is believed to be in a serious condition in hospital with bullet wounds to the head.

Rumours abound as to why the incident took place in Vienna, including local tensions that existed. For example, there is talk of an incident a week earlier when a local Sikh man was supposedly attacked by thugs at the same location in Vienna for peacefully complaining about disrespect towards the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The local Sikh man is believed to have been left with life threatening injuries and subsequently died in hospital of the wounds inflicted.

The media has largely been silent on the killing of Sikhs in Vienna by Indian security agents with the use of illegal firearms. Ironically the only statement in the media on the killing of three Sikhs has come from the Indian police itself. The media has also failed to report on whether a serious incident took place a week earlier that may have relegated the incident in Vienna to a local dispute that got totally out of hand by the over reaction of Indian security agents.



Orchestrated violence against Sikhs in Punjab, June 2009

There are however a number of hard truths that many of those making statements to the media have avoided to mention. It is well-known that the two so-called self-proclaimed gurus visiting Austria described by one Austrian politician as 'problem gurus' that should not have been allowed to enter the country to preach hate, were partaking in activities disrespectful of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. One possibility is these 'problem gurus' sealed their own fate through their offensive actions and continued disrespect towards the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The likes of the SGPC and those that promote and protect these 'problem gurus' must shoulder the blame for what has happened due to their inaction.

There has been extensive misreporting about the Sikh faith by the media following the incident in Vienna. The repeated mistake made by the media is the failure to recognise Sikhs do not have a living human Guru. Instead the Sikhs eternal Guru is the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, which includes the teachings of Bhagat Ravi Dass and this has been the case for over 300 years.

The tenth and last human Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji was unequivocal when he stated: "Sab Sikhan



ko hokam hai Guru Manyo Granth” meaning “All Sikhs are commanded to take the Granth as Guru”. Sikhs throughout the world last year celebrated the 300th anniversary of the ending of the concept of the human Guru and the gurudom passing to the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Nonetheless these ‘problem gurus’ have been encouraged to continue to stir up matters and have been provided armed Indian government protection while in India and abroad.

The media also continue to provoke the situation by portraying the Vienna incident as an issue linked to caste. However, by definition a Sikh is one who believes in one God, the teachings of the ten Sikh Gurus and their utterances contained in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji; and believes it is necessary to take Amrit by Khanda-ki-Pahul bequeathed by the tenth Guru. Those that understand the Sikh faith know those who take Amrit and become part of the Khalsa are deemed to be equal and the Sikh Gurus finished the caste system, which continues to be linked to the Hindu faith and way of life.

#### 4-DAY TOUR OF EUROPE ORGANISED BY THE FEDERATION

The Federation arranged a short educational tour of Europe to raise awareness regarding Sikh sacrifices for the freedom of Europe combined with a protest in Luxembourg to coincide with Indian Independence day and a visit to the Sikh community in Paris.

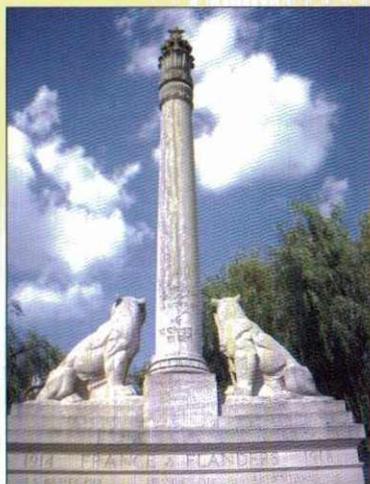
The tour began with a short visit to the Neuve-Chappelle Memorial in France.

Sikh Regiments lost eighty per cent of their men here from 10-13 March 1915. 80,000 Sikhs fought for France’s freedom wearing their turbans on the front line during the World Wars. There are Sikhs in 151 cemeteries in France who died fighting for France’s freedom, liberty and honour.

In March 1915 the Allies attacked Neuve Chapelle and broke through the German front line. On the first day of the battle, British and Indian troops captured the town. Then the Germans counter-attacked with 16,000 reinforcements.

In three days’ fighting, the British and Indian troops suffered 13,000 casualties. The Allies’ ammunition ran out, and the troops had to retreat. 5,021 Indian soldiers - about 20 per cent of the Indian contingent - were killed in heavy fighting.

On October 7, 1927 the Memorial at Neuve Chapelle was unveiled in France in memory of soldiers who fell on the Western Front in the Great War of 1914-1918. It marked the gratitude of the French nation which was defended from German invasion by the supreme sacrifices of



Neuve-Chappelle Memorial in France



UK Sikhs at the Neuve-Chappelle Memorial in France

the British Indian Army (with a disproportionate number of Sikhs) in France.

This was followed by two short stops at the Monument in the village of Hollebeke and Bedford House Cemetery, both close to Ypres. In Hollebeke a little monument was unveiled by Sikhs in 1999 that commemorates the first deployment of soldiers of the British Indian Army in October 1914. Bedford House Cemetery is a Commonwealth War Graves Commission burial ground for the dead of World War I. It is one of the largest cemeteries.



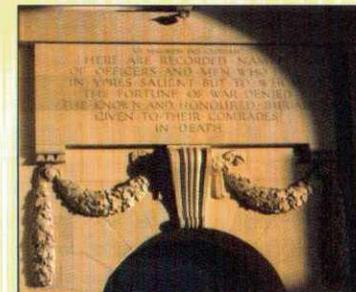
Monument in the village of Hollebeke, Belgium to commemorate the first deployment of soldiers of the British Indian Army in October 1914

The cemetery grounds were assigned to the United Kingdom and comprise five distinct enclosures. In total there are 3,951 UK, 353 South African, 201 Australian, 30 New Zealand, 20 Indian, 6 British West Indies, 3 Guernsey, 1 Russian and 501 unknown burials.

The first day concluded with the Last Post ceremony at 8pm at the Menin Gate in Ypres. Those visiting Menin Gate for the first time were surprised to find the considerable number of Sikhs names on the monument recognising the sacrifices made by Sikh soldiers.

We had a banner and postcards relating to Sikh sacrifices fighting for the freedom of Europe. Given it was on the eve of 15 August we also distributed a pamphlet regarding sacrifices by Sikhs at the time of Indian Independence and the betrayal of Sikhs by the Indian establishment.

The Menin Gate Memorial is perhaps the most visited Great War Memorial on the Western Front. It contains, huge panels into which are carved the names of 54,896 officers and men of the commonwealth forces who died in the Ypres Salient area and who have no known graves. This figure, however, does not represent all of the missing from this area. Menin Gate was not large enough to hold the names of all the missing. The names recorded on the gate's panels are those of men who died in the area between the outbreak of the war in 1914 and 15th August, 1917. The names of a further 34,984 of the missing - those who died between 16th August, 1917 and the end of the war, are recorded on carved panels at Tyne Cot Cemetery.



Inscription on the Menin Gate Memorial

Every night of the year, without exception, policemen close the road to traffic at 8.00 p.m. and then stand at the salute while buglers from the Ypres Fire Brigade play "The Last Post". This happens whatever the weather and there is always someone there to watch. The people living near the Menin Gate often open their doors and stand on their doorsteps to join in this daily act of Remembrance in honour of the young and brave who came from all over the world to die in defence of their town.

When we visited there were around 500 visitors attending the ceremony. The ceremony was moving and has taken place almost continuously since 1927. During the Second World War, when the Germans occupied Ypres, the ceremony was banned. The bugles were kept safe, however, and when the Germans left Ypres in 1945, the Last Post rang out under the Menin Gate that same evening.





Last Post salute by buglers from the Ypres Fire Brigade at 8pm each day



Hundreds of visitors from across the globe for the Last Post salute

The second day commenced with a visit to the Caves of Han-sur-Lesse in Belgium. A 100-year-old tram from the village took us to explore the caves that were discovered around 200 years ago and extend for some eight kilometres. A one and a half hour tour of the Caves followed and included a sound and light show in one of the largest chambers of the cave and ended with a cannon shot to demonstrate the cave's acoustic properties. Many were amazed with the limestone galleries carved out by the River Lesse millions of years ago. The caves have a constant temperature of 13°C (55°F) and a high level of humidity.

In the afternoon we reached Luxembourg one of the smallest countries in Europe, and ranked 175th in size of all the 194 independent countries of the world. Luxembourg measures 82 km (51 miles) long and 57 km (35 miles) wide. We had warned the authorities that there would be the first ever protest outside the Indian High Commission in Luxembourg to coincide with Indian Independence Day. When we reached the premises of the Indian High Commission and put up our banner there appeared to be no sign of its existence. Following further enquiries we learnt that around two weeks earlier the Indian authorities decided to withdraw its presence from Luxembourg.



Sikhs outside the Caves of Han-sur-Lesse in Belgium

On the third day apart from seeing the main attractions in Paris we visited and spoke at the Gurdwara in Bobigny. We also arranged to visit the Shere Punjab Complex where the new Sikh school will open in September. In the evening we finished the day with a River Seine cruise followed by going up the Eiffel Tower. We were told we may not be able to enter the Eiffel Tower as the security screening would pick up our Kirpans. We decided we would refuse to remove our Kirpans if asked, but our group were not challenged. Before we returned on the fourth day we visited the impressive Gardens of Versailles in Paris.

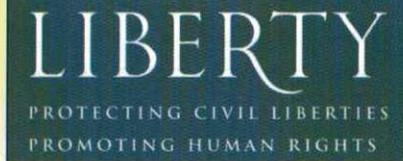


Indian High Commission in Luxembourg, permanently closed two weeks before our planned protest

# RAISING AWARENESS & CAMPAIGNING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## LIBERTY JOIN REDRESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH TO SUPPORT FEDERATION CAMPAIGN TO SECURE JUSTICE FOR SIKH VICTIMS OF TORTURE

Since 1988 UK law has allowed those who have tortured outside the UK to be prosecuted when they visit the UK. Jean Lambert MEP addressing the Annual International Sikh Convention in September 2008 pledged that Liberty would work with the Federation to do all it could to bring torturers to justice.



Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation, welcomed the commitment from Jean Lambert MEP, who is on the Council for Liberty. He said: 'The Federation working with UK politicians, REDRESS, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and now Liberty are determined to obtain justice for Sikh victims of torture.'

UK politicians and Ministers have been approached to ensure there is the political will to arrest, detain and prosecute those from India involved in the torture of Sikhs. An alternative which has been suggested is excluding those involved in torture from entering the UK.

Discussions are ongoing with police in Scotland Yard to determine the information required from victims of torture and their families, how their confidentiality will be protected and how the information will be corroborated by the police.

To hold the Indian Government and individuals who perpetrate torture accountable, Sikh victims of torture and their families living in the UK will need to come forward and supply relevant information. Anything from statements, photographs, videos, letters, voice recordings, paper articles, pictures etc. The police will then corroborate this evidence and if and when the torturer enters the UK he can be arrested, questioned, detained and prosecuted.

REDRESS, a London based human rights organisation that helps torture survivors obtain justice and reparation has agreed to provide legal assistance to individuals and the Sikh community.

The plan is to extend the UK practice across the 27 EU countries that should have similar national laws and working with like-minded Sikhs in Canada, USA and Australia to ensure they have a similar system in place so the policy of exclusion or prosecution spreads around the globe.



## SIKH FEDERATION (UK) SETS OUT PROPOSALS FOR 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF JUNE 1984

The Federation used the opportunity of the Annual International Sikh Convention in September 2008 to set out some of its proposals for the preparations and events for the 25th anniversary of June 1984.

Events in relation to the 25th anniversary will kick off with a major event in the UK Parliament towards the end of October, with several related lectures in Gurdwaras and talk/discussion shows on radio.

Another project to raise awareness and be a lasting memory to Sikh martyrs is the production and distribution of plaques to pay tribute to Sikh martyrs from Guru Arjan Dev Ji through to the martyrs of 1984 and over last 25 years. The plaques will be provided to Gurdwaras upon request and the plan is they will be officially unveiled in Gurdwaras during 2009. Important dignitaries, such as the local MP, local MEP, Mayor etc. will be asked to perform the unveiling in the presence of the local media – press, radio and TV.

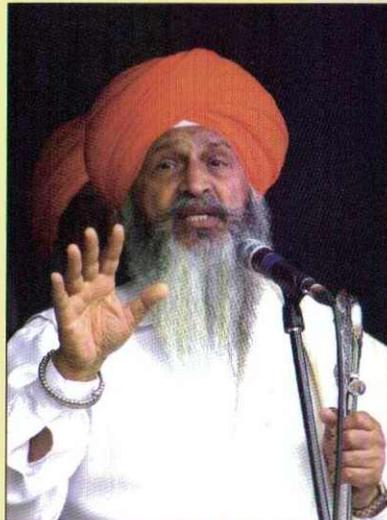
An event in the UK Parliament is also planned for the start of June 2009. A dialogue was also taking place with the BBC and other media to explore the possibility of awareness raising programmes to coincide with the 25th anniversaries of June 1984 and November 1984.

The Federation also stated it was 100% committed as an organisation to hold a Freedom Rally in Trafalgar Square on Sunday 7 June 2009 working with Gurdwaras and other Sikh organisations.

## FEDERATION ANNOUNCE LAUNCH OF AN INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN CONCERNING THE SIKH REFERENCE LIBRARY ON THE 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI

Bhai Narinderjit Singh, General Secretary of the Sikh Federation (UK), announced at the Annual International Sikh Convention in September 2008 that an international campaign concerning the Sikh Reference Library would be launched on the 300th anniversary of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

During the 1984 Indian army assault on the Darbar Sahib Complex the army plundered the Bhai Santokh Singh Sikh Reference Library. The Sikh Reference Library contained some of the most important manuscripts relevant to Sikh history. These included rare books, priceless hukamnamas, some bearing the signatures of the Gurus themselves.



Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair Sikh Federation (UK) speaking in Trafalgar Square in June 2009



Bhai Narinderjit Singh, General Secretary Sikh Federation (UK)

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There were about 150 important copies of the Sikh scriptures. One copy made by Bhai Hardas, a copyist in the office of Guru Gobind Singh in 1696, was historically important and theologically indispensable. Some manuscripts had been preserved by collectors for over three centuries. These manuscripts, in several languages, were collected by hundreds of scholars during the last two centuries. In all, around 16,000 items were present in the library.



Sikh Reference Library, ransacked and burnt after the Indian army attack in June 1984

The Army version has been that the library had caught fire during exchange of fire. The contrary view is that the armed forces had deliberately put the 'empty library' on fire after taking the rare and invaluable material away. There are some very reliable witnesses to oppose the Indian army's view, which are set out below.

Devinder Singh Duggal was working as Head Librarian and was trapped within the library premises when the sudden attack took place, without a warning. He remained there throughout the period of the attack. According to him, the library remained intact during the worst bombing and fighting.

Ranjit Singh Nanda, a former Punjab police inspector who worked with the CBI during 1984, was a part of the five-member team that scrutinised each and every book and manuscript taken from the Sikh Reference Library. According to him, the CBI had taken the material of the Sikh Reference Library to its make-shift office at Amritsar's Youth Club and thereafter packed them into 165 gunny bags. Each bag was numbered and almost after a month, the entire material was taken away from Amritsar.

Shabdal Singh, a former Superintendent of Punjab police, then working with five member CBI team that scrutinised the manuscripts also substantiated the claims of Ranjit Singh Nanda.

In 1991, a deputation of various organisations met the then Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar. It was suggested to him that the books, manuscripts and artefacts looted from the Sikh Reference Library be returned. He readily agreed and then rang up his office to enquire where the material was lying. He was told that it was preserved in the Sikh Regimental Centre at Merut. He agreed to return it and asked the persons comprising the deputation to meet the Governor of Punjab on this and some other issues. A joint Press Note was issued promising return of the material at the earliest.



George Fernandes, the then defence minister, on May, 2000, had said that the material of the Sikh Reference Library is with the CBI. On behalf of Union Home Ministry, the under secretary, V. K. Gupta has officially admitted that a total of 68 big bags and 119 small bags of the documents seized from Sikh Reference Library were handed over to the CBI. He admitted that 98 paintings, 14 photos and some manuscripts were also handed over to some other state departments.



George Fernandes, the then defence minister

Even the CBI officially admitted that 4,000 documents were taken over by the agency. Some of the records taken away by the Army during the attack were returned to SGPC by the CBI. All these items were intact, and in good condition. None of them looked damaged by fire or smoke.

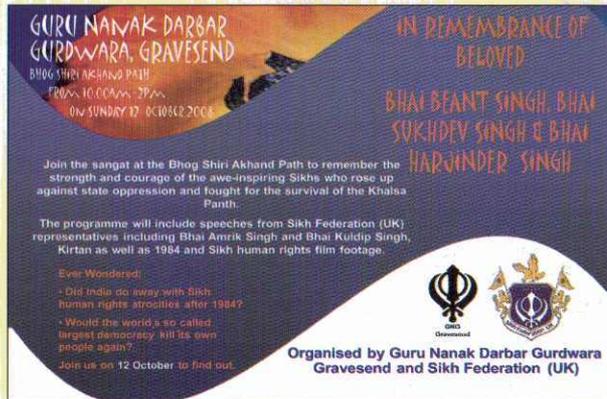
By considering the above witnesses, it is clear that Sikh Reference Library was not burnt during the army attack; rather it was taken away by the Indian army.

## SIKH FEDERATION (UK) NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES IN GURDWARAS

The Federation continues to organise and attend religious programmes throughout the year in Gurdwaras across the country e.g. Gravesend, Southall, Coventry, Willenhall, Bristol and Leicester. Often these programmes coincide with important dates in the calendar.

Many have become accustomed to the Federation organising these programmes that consist of an Akhand Path followed by Kirtan and speeches usually linked to Sikh history and current issues in the UK and Punjab. These programmes have rarely featured in the highlights booklet, but are important as they aim to raise awareness and keep the Sangat informed on progress of our work on their behalf.

The Federation is also heavily involved with other religious events, such as Nagar Kirtans and Gurmat Camps in different towns and cities. At major national events the Federation has put on human rights exhibitions e.g. Loughborough and stalls e.g. Guru Nanak School, Hayes.



Flyer for Sikh Federation (UK) event in Gravesend

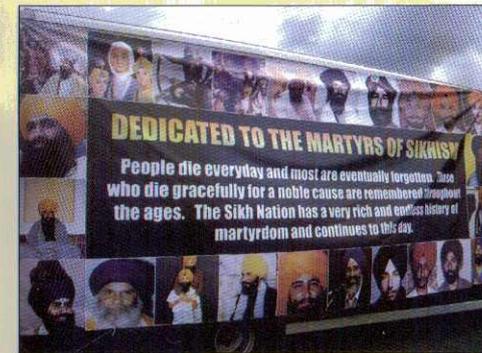


Kirtan being performed at Sikh Federation (UK) event

This year the Federation made an effort to raise awareness about shaheeds and 1984 at Nagar Kirtans in Southall, Gravesend, Slough, Birmingham and Leicester. A lorry with pictures of shaheeds took part in each of the processions and especially designed t-shirts were distributed free of charge. In addition, the Federation produced and distributed a 25th anniversary of June 1984 poster.



Human rights exhibition at Loughborough event



Lorry with pictures of shaheeds used in various Nagar Kirtans and other events



T-shirt and literature stall at Guru Nanak School, Hayes

## NO PLACE TO HIDE FOR THOSE THAT COMMIT CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

- Harvinder Singh Phoolka addresses MPs in the UK Parliament concerning the 24th anniversary of the November 1984 carnage of Sikhs
- Coalition to campaign for a worldwide travel ban/boycott of Jagdish Tytler, Sajan Kumar and Kamal Nath

Despite being aware of the situation foreign governments and leaders did not take the issue seriously. They did not exert sufficient pressure on the Government of India and no actions were therefore forthcoming regarding the genocide of Sikhs. If this would have been nipped in the bud at that time and the guilty of 1984 had been punished, then the current situation of killing Christians with impunity would not have arisen.



Harvinder Singh Phoolka speaking in the UK Parliament

In the last few days the USA, UK and Australian Governments have expressed their concerns to India over the continued anti-Christian violence. The French President on behalf of the 27 EU countries and civil society groups in the 53-nation Commonwealth also raised his disquiet.

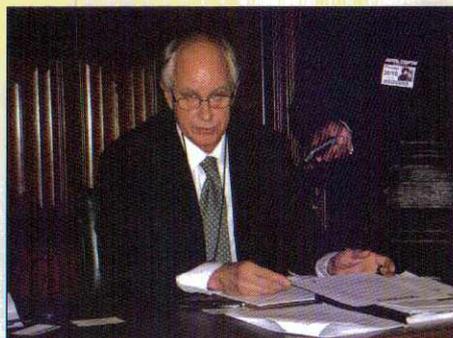


Harvinder Singh Phoolka in a visit on the 24th anniversary of November 1984 addressing MPs from each of the three main political parties urged them to get the UK Government and nations across the globe to recognise that the violence against minority communities is in an act of state terrorism. MPs were told the Government of India must be forced by the international community to appreciate that communal violence targeting minorities is totally unacceptable.

At the Parliamentary event organised by the Sikh Federation (UK) and hosted by Rob Marris MP, the Chair All Party Parliamentary Group for UK Sikhs it was revealed that a coalition to campaign for a worldwide travel ban/boycott of those from India involved in torture, genocide and crimes against humanity had now been put in place. It is a powerful coalition comprising Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Liberty and the Redress Trust.

It was universally accepted that on the 24th anniversary of the November 1984 genocide of Sikhs that three of the key targets for the worldwide travel ban/boycott should be Jagdish Tytler, Sajan Kumar and Kamal Nath had been put in place.

Kevin Laue a Zimbabwean human rights lawyer representing the Redress Trust explained the practical steps that needed to be taken and that work had already started to ensure their was the political will and liaison with the police to establish the level of proof required to implement the worldwide travel ban/boycott.



Kevin Laue a Zimbabwean human rights lawyer representing the Redress Trust

## BRITISH SIKHS: STRIDE TOWARDS JUSTICE

On 2 May, over 300 Sikhs, spanning three generations marked the 25th anniversary of the attack on the Darbar Sahib to remember the 250,000 massacred Sikhs, whose families are still awaiting perpetrators to be brought to justice. The event was delivered in partnership with Guru Nanak Gurdwara (GNG) Sikh Forum and Sikh Federation (UK). The audience's journey through pre 1984 Punjab to the current day impact of the attack on Sikh identity and current movement was guided by means of influential speakers, key eye-witness accounts and emotive film footage. Amongst the distinguished speakers were an entrepreneur, an OBE holder, a Councillor and former Mayor and young professionals and students, all of whom are committed Sikh activists.

Surinder Singh's photographic exhibition focusing on past Remembrance Rallies aptly set the scene for spectators before they had even entered the auditorium. The audience's spirits were lifted by Sewa Singh as he sang the Sikh National Anthem and settled the audience for their 3 hour journey. Amrik Singh, Chairman of the Federation, opened the event by highlighting the event's importance and the collective duty of the Sangat to work for justice, whilst giving thanks to the young Sikhs who collaborated with the Federation to deliver the programme. The Sangat then held a one minute silence in remembrance of the loss of Sikh lives. GNG Sikh Forum member Gurneet Kaur introduced the programme and its motives drawing parallels between civil liberties in that of Britain contrasted with those in India and stressed the importance of remembering with a purpose. The first guest speaker Harjinder Singh, marked the first summit of the audience's journey by describing the discrimination against Sikhs pre-1984 and how this led to an uprising of Sikhs demanding fair and

just rights in their own land. The journey progressed further when Harjinder Singh 'Amritsar Wala' took over the reins and described what happened to Sikhs in the Darbar Sahib and how the Indian Government continued the onslaught of the Sikhs, whilst carefully reminding them of previous Sikh victories and the need for Sikhs to take courage from the tenth Guru's display of non-attachment and stride for justice. The sheer scale of human sacrifice was brought to life through readings of eye-witness testimonies by three young Sikhs, Mandeep Kaur, Aisling Kaur and Amanjot Kaur.

The audience set off on the last league of their journey with Dabinderjit Singh (OBE), who helped them, understand the current day legacy of the attack and the effect it had on different generations. He encouraged the audience to continue attending such events and urged young Sikhs, in particular, to invite friends of different cultures and backgrounds to participate. Such action would help the wider community to understand the Sikh identity, something which will ensure that the Sikh movement does not become insular, but expands outwards for the benefit of the panth. The importance of youth involvement was addressed by Manchandan Kaur, who succinctly outlined some of the work GNG Sikh Forum has accomplished to date, and will continue to achieve through upcoming activities. The audience were left on another high point with a finale by the gifted Baba Fateh Singh Gatka Akhara.

Narinderjit Singh, the Federation's General Secretary, then closed the event by emphasising how contributing towards the movement is a necessity for the progression of the Sikh Nation; the Sangat agreed in unison and demonstrated this by an echoing Jakara. The audience were reminded of the 7 June 2009 Remembrance March and Freedom Rally and encouraged to make their voice heard by joining the walk through the streets of London to stride towards justice.

**British Sikhs: Stride Towards Justice**

Saturday 2 May 2009, 2pm-6.30pm,  
Woodville Halls, Gravesend

*"The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then you have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was."*

**Let us never forget 1984**

Come and join us and mark the 25th anniversary of the 1984 attack on Siri Harmandir Sahib, this landmark event will feature: Photographic Exhibition, Sikh martial arts, inspirational speakers and emotive film footage.

Book your ticket for this free event by calling or texting Gurneet Kaur on 07817 773 660 or email [gravesendsikhs@live.co.uk](mailto:gravesendsikhs@live.co.uk) and give the following details:

- Your name
- No. of tickets
- Postal address

This event is brought to you by Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara Gravesend and Sikh Federation UK

British Sikhs: Stride towards justice flyer for event at Woodville Hall, Gravesend



## FEDERATION ASSISTS BBC PRODUCE A WELL BALANCED SPECIAL REPORT REGARDING 25 YEARS AFTER OPERATION BLUE STAR



BBC Special Report - a 27-minute documentary regarding 25 years after Operation Blue Star  
fronted by Pops from Tigerstyle

On 1 June 2009 the BBC Asian Network released a Special Report - a 27-minute documentary regarding 25 years after Operation Blue Star looking at the effect the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar had on British Sikhs. The Federation worked closely with the producer Perminder Khatkar over a number of months to ensure a well balanced report resulted.

The programme was fronted by Pops from Tigerstyle and can be listened using the following link:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/asiannetwork/documentaries/bluestar25years.shtml>

## 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JUNE 1984 MASSACRE AT THE GOLDEN TEMPLE COMPLEX

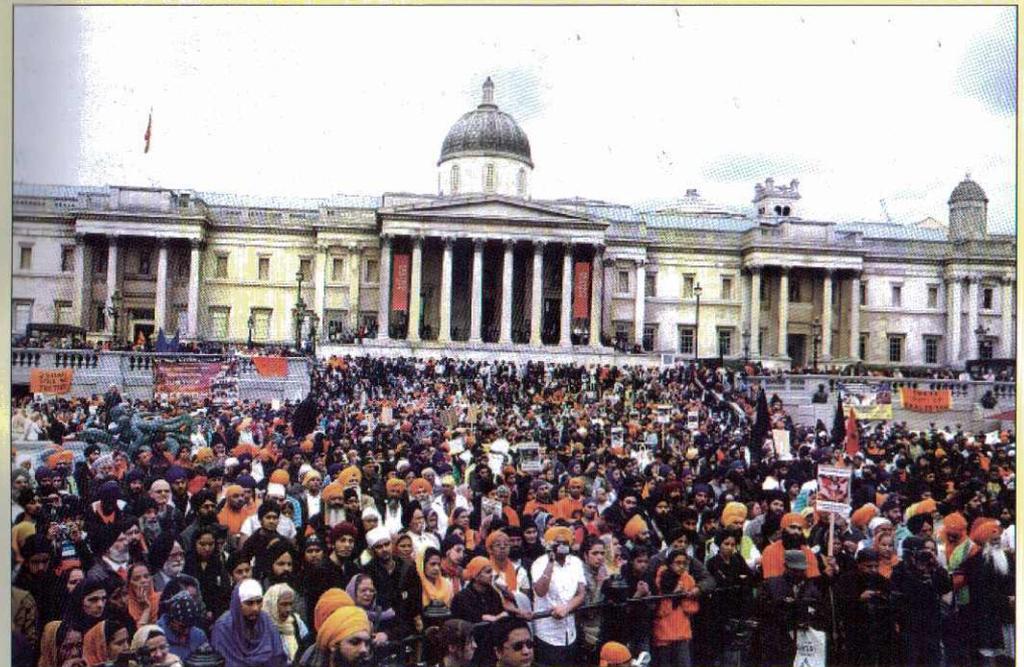
Around 15,000 Sikhs from across the UK took part in the Remembrance March and Freedom Rally to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the June 1984 Indian army assault on the Golden Temple Complex. It was largest gathering outside Punjab.

Sikhs throughout the world were outraged by the attack on their holiest Sikh shrine, where the Akaal Takht, Sikh Reference Library and historic artefacts were destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

To maximise casualties the unprecedented action ordered by Indira Gandhi using artillery and tanks was deliberately timed to coincide with the anniversary of the martyrdom of the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Not surprisingly there were huge numbers of pilgrims in attendance, which it is believed resulted in thousands of innocent Sikhs being killed in cold blood, many with their hands and feet bound, including women and children.

Joyce Pettigrew described the attack 'not to eliminate a political figure or a political movement but to suppress the culture of a people, to attack their heart, to strike a blow at their spirit and self-confidence. The army . . . went berserk and killed every Sikh man, woman and child who could be found inside the temple complex'.

Over 125 other Gurdwaras, including forty historic Gurdwaras throughout Punjab were simultaneously attacked using massive fire power. Thousands of Sikhs were arrested, tortured, and killed, including children.



Sikhs gathered in Trafalgar Square, June 2009



Sikhs in the highly visible remembrance march through the streets in central London

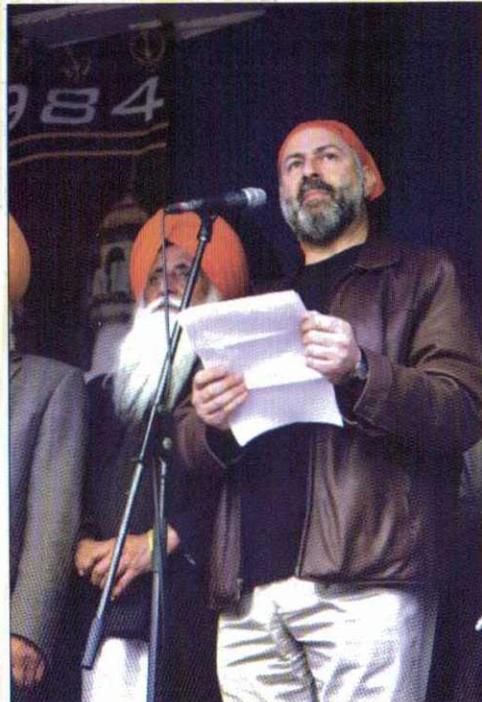


Sikhs gathered in Hyde Park from 11am and left for Trafalgar Square at 1.30pm on a highly visible remembrance march through central London that end in Trafalgar Square at around 2.45pm. The march was a sea of orange and black with young Sikhs carrying coffins and wearing orange and black t-shirts signifying both remembrance and freedom and thousands of placards and banners to raise awareness on the plight of the Sikhs and the lack of justice over the last 25 years.



Sikhs in Trafalgar Square, June 2009

Thousands also joined in a floral tribute in Trafalgar Square as a mark of respect and remembrance. There were a number of impressive Sikh and non-Sikh speakers at the Freedom Rally in Trafalgar Square. Politicians included Labour MPs Fabian Hamilton and John Spellar, and Green MEP Jean Lambert.



Fabian Hamilton MP for Leeds North East and active member of the Foreign Affairs Committee



Floral tribute in Trafalgar Square as a mark of respect and remembrance



The Sikh Federation (UK) is a non-governmental organisation, that is a pressure group that is often referred to as the first ever Sikh political party in the United Kingdom. The Federation is based on the "miri-piri" principle, the Sikh principle that temporal and spiritual goals are indivisible.

The organisation was established in September 2003 with the aim of giving Sikhs a stronger political voice by taking an increasing interest in mainstream politics in the UK.

#### Aims and Objective

To work closely with each of the main political parties in the UK to promote relevant issues set out in the Sikh Agenda for the UK Government.

The main areas of work for the Sikh Federation (UK) are:

- ① Promote the Sikh religion, philosophy and way of life - working within the Sikh community and with local and national government;
- ① Promote sporting and educational activities as well as relevant cultural issues directly associated with the Sikh way of life;
- ① Campaign for human rights issues impacting on Sikhs in the UK and abroad - working with human rights groups, non-governmental organisations and politicians;
- ① Argue the case for the Sikhs right to self-determination and lobbying politicians, the UK Government, official representatives of foreign governments in the UK, the European Parliament and at the United Nations for the establishment of an independent sovereign Sikh State of Khalistan.

Young Sikhs (UK) was established by the Federation in September 2004 in recognition of the need to do more for the younger generation, encourage younger Sikhs to become more actively involved in the full range of activities carried out by the Federation.

In recognition of the need to fully utilise the skills offered by the younger generation, around half the members of the National Executive Council (NEC) of the Sikh Federation (UK) has since 2004 been those born and educated in the UK.



website: [www.sikhfederation.com](http://www.sikhfederation.com) email: [info@sikhfederation.com](mailto:info@sikhfederation.com)