



# Sikh Federation (UK)

*Never flinch from performing righteous deeds*

## SIKHS TAKE UP ISSUES WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

London – 31 January 2025

Last week the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in Davos she would go to India for her first trip of her new term.

This provided us an opportunity to right to Vice Presidents in the Commission responsible for Human Rights, Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law. We shared with them the [memorandum submitted by Sikhs across the EU](#) to Ursula von der Leyen last January regarding transnational repression by the Indian government.



European Commission President  
Ursula von der Leyen

Vice Presidents: Sophie Wilmes, Nicolae Stefanuta and Martin Hojsik responsible for Human Rights, Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law



We also used the opportunity to make them aware that five independent experts, or [UN Special Rapporteurs collectively wrote to the Indian government on 19 November 2024](#) regarding the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar on 18 June 2023 and credible threats to life, intimidation and harassment against other Sikhs activists outside India. We told them this was an issue that is directly impacting on Sikhs in different EU countries, but had not been highlighted in the media.

We also shared the [formal response from the Indian government](#) on 3 January 2025 that shockingly accused the independent Special Rapporteurs of bias and a strong preconceived hostility towards India, its sovereignty and its integrity and supporting a Sikh separatist agenda.

We also wrote along similar lines last week to MEPs belonging to the Human Rights Subcommittee and the India Delegation who thanked us for the information provided.

This week a delegation of Sikhs from Austria, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain and UK met in Brussels. On 28 January we had an internal meeting to discuss some of the challenges faced by Sikhs in Europe around recognition and registration at the national level of the Sikh religion and way of life, restrictions on Sikh articles of faith and how to work better together across Europe.



Later the same evening there was a press conference at the Press Club where the Sikhs and media representatives gathered were addressed by Vice President, Antonella Sberna. She is responsible for the implementation of Article 17 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) through dialogue. Before she spoke at the press conference Bhai Dabinderjit Singh did the scene setting in terms of the Sikh religion, Sikh way of life and identity and the challenges faced by Sikhs in Europe.





On 29 January Sikh representatives met Vice President, Antonella Sberna for a dialogue in the European Parliament. This focused on relevant issues in the EU around official recognition of the Sikh religion and the Sikh way of life in different EU countries, religious freedoms and the challenges to the Sikh identity.

The Vice President in response explained the limitation of her powers, but she was told she and other MEPs from different EU countries could use their soft power and influence to assist Sikhs in different EU countries to get Sikhs official recognition and overcome some of the unnecessary hurdles. A practical way to progress matters was agreed.

Bhai Dabinderjit Singh then spoke about Anti-Sikh hate crimes across the globe following 9/11 and transnational repression by the Indian government targeting Sikh activists in different countries, including EU countries. This was topical and of particular interest to the EU officials present.



This meeting, the press conference and meeting with the Vice President were facilitated by the EU Sikh organisation. Given the interest in the latter issues and those relating to religious freedoms in India, Sikh political prisoners and impunity for human rights violations against Sikhs the plan is to hold a much larger follow up event in a couple of months focusing on these areas of interest.

## **ENDS**

Jaspal Singh

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