



OVERVIEW

A Message from the Chairman

The Sikh Federation (UK) has been in existence for 10 years. We have succeeded in giving Sikhs a much stronger political voice through getting Sikhs to engage significantly more with mainstream politics in the UK.

Around 150 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations are either affiliated or support our work and we are widely recognised and acknowledged within the Sikh community as the leading Sikh pressure group that is able to command the support of Sikhs in large numbers on a range of campaigns.



Over the last 10 years we have worked with all the major political parties in the UK. We have also joined hands with leading non-Sikh organisations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Liberty and Redress on specific campaigns or projects.

Our work has not only been reported in the Sikh and Punjabi media in the UK and across the globe, but also the mainstream media in the UK. The BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Daily Telegraph, Guardian, Independent, The Times etc. have all covered our work.

We have also expanded our work across Europe and set up sister organisations and built extensive links with Sikh organisations across the globe e.g. Canada and USA. Our aim has been to help Sikhs in the Diaspora link up and provide political direction.

On the 10th anniversary we have launched a Global Network of Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations. We had hoped the Network would initially connect around 500 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations and would expand to around 1,000 within the first 12 months. We have however been overwhelmed with those wishing to link up. The Network within two weeks of the launch has reached over 700 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations from 25 different countries.

In the last 10 years we have had meetings with the party leaders of the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, UKIP, Greens, Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru. In the last 12 months alone private meetings have taken place with three of these party leaders, alliances established and joint activities agreed in the run up to the next General Election in 2015. To strengthen our links with the three main political parties we have established on the 10th anniversary three dedicated volunteers who will work with us and each of the parties.

In the past decade we have had meetings with half the current Cabinet including the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. David Cameron; Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg; and Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. Theresa May. This gives an indication of the depth of political relationships we have developed over the years.

Bhai Amrik Singh
Chair Sikh Federation (UK)



Never flinch from performing righteous deeds
The first and only Sikh Political Party in the UK



SIKH FEDERATION (UK) ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013

10th Anniversary Edition

HIGHLIGHTS

- International Sikh Convention
- Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister
- Meeting with Leader of the Labour Party
- Annual June Remembrance March and Freedom Rally
- UK Parliament Sikh Lobby - November 1984 Genocide
- Sikhs win right to wear Kirpan in European Parliament in Brussels
- Sikhs oppose invitation to Modi to visit UK
- Caucus set up in US Congress to represent Sikh interests
- United Nations urged to probe killing of Sikhs by Punjab police
- Lobbying of UK Prime Minister before his historic visit to Darbar Sahib
- Campaign following false arrest of Kulbir Singh Barapind and Daljit Singh Bittu
- Debates in UK Parliament about the Death Penalty in India and the British Sikh community
- European-wide delegation meet European Commission on policy for search of Dastaar at airports
- Conference in the European Parliament on the Death Penalty in India and Human Rights Violations
- Lobbying of Canadian PM results in announcement in trip to India of defence of Sikhs right to campaign for Sikh homeland



Sikh Federation (UK)

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WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND FREEDOM



ABOUT US

The Sikh Federation (UK) is a non-governmental organisation, that is a pressure group and often referred to as the first ever Sikh political party in the United Kingdom. The Sikh Federation (UK) 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 OBJECTIVES

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:

Promote the Sikh religion, philosophy and way of life - working within the Sikh community and with local and national government;

Promote sporting and educational activities as well as relevant cultural issues directly associated with the Sikh way of life;

Campaign for human rights issues impacting on Sikhs in the UK and abroad - working with human rights groups, non-governmental organisations and politicians; and

Argue the case for the right to self-determination for the Sikhs 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)




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) have since 2004 been those born and educated in the UK




SIKH FEDERATION (UK) ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013

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Conference on Human Rights Abuses & Death Penalty in India
European Parliament Brussels on Tuesday 25th June 2013

- The conference is taking place in Room 4Q1 in the József Antall (JAN) building
- Attendance at the conference from 12 noon to 3pm



Room 4Q1 - József Antall (JAN) building - 12 noon to 3pm
Open to all. Free of charge. For more information contact: info@sikhfederation.org.uk or [+442072531234](tel:+442072531234)

Sikh Federation (UK)
10 Years on...



10 Years on...
The Sikh Federation (UK) has celebrated its 10th anniversary since its formation in September 2003. Over the past decade, the Federation has grown from a small group of enthusiasts to a well-established organisation with a membership of over 10,000 Sikhs across the UK. It has successfully campaigned for the recognition of the Sikh religion as a distinct faith, secured the right to wear the Sikh turban in schools and workplaces, and established the Sikh Agenda for the UK Government. The Federation has also been instrumental in the formation of the Young Sikhs (UK) and the Sikh Human Rights Foundation.

6 ਜੂਨ 1984 ਨੂੰ ਦਰਬਾਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਹੋਰੀ ਹਮਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਖੂਨੀ ਘੋਰਾਵਾਰ ਦੀ 29ਵੀਂ ਵਰਗਵਾਰ ਮੌਕੇ ਸਮੱਚੀ ਕੌਮ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਆਵਰਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਕਾਨਵੈਨਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਦੇ ਬੈਨਰ ਹੇਠ

ਤਾਰੀ ਰੋਹ ਮੁਜ਼ਾਹਰਾ

9 ਜੂਨ ਸੋਮਵਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਚਾਰਵਾਰ 11-00 ਵਜੇ ਟਾਊਨ ਹਾਲ ਵਿਖੇ, ਲਿਵਿੰਗੀ ਰੋਲਿੰਗਜ਼, ਪੁਨ ਲਿਵਿੰਗੀ ਸਟਰੀਟ, ਲੰਡਨ ਵਿਖੇ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ।



ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਲਏ ਗਏ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਗੀਤਕ ਪੇਸ਼ਕਾਰੀ। ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਗੀਤਕ ਪੇਸ਼ਕਾਰੀ। ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਗੀਤਕ ਪੇਸ਼ਕਾਰੀ।

ਸਲਾਨਾ ਇੰਟਰਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਖਾਲਿਸਤਾਨ ਕਨਵੈਨਸ਼ਨ
Din Dehlan (UK)
Sunday 22nd September 2013

Annual International Khalistan Convention
Restructuring in the UK and expanding across the globe

ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਰਤ ਦੇ ਸੁਕੀ ਦੀ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਆਰਥਿਕਤਾ ਤੇ ਸਭਿਅਕ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਲਈ ਵੱਡੇ ਆਰਥਿਕ ਸੇਵਾ ਸੰਗਠਨਾਂ, ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਫ਼ਾਇਕ, ਕੁਲਦਰਦੀਲਕ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੇ ਭਾਈ ਦੇ

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NICK CLEGG

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS HEADQUARTERS | 8-10 GREAT GEORGE STREET | LONDON | SW1P 3AE

Amrik Singh
Sikh Federation (UK)
Tanglewood House
Pine Walk
Southampton
SO16 7HQ



23rd September 2013

Dear Mr Singh,

I would like to congratulate the Sikh Federation (UK) on its 10th anniversary and on the work you have done to encourage Sikhs to take an increasing interest in mainstream politics.

The Sikh community makes a substantial contribution to British life, and I am delighted to see the Sikh Federation (UK) representing the community's needs. It is only through better Sikh representation in politics that we will find solutions for the issues that concern the Sikh community.

Parliament needs to better reflect the rich diversity of British society. All the main political parties are not as diverse as they should be and I recognise the need, in local, national and European elections and when nominating members of the House of Lords, to include more individuals from underrepresented backgrounds - including Sikhs. The Liberal Democrats have taken steps towards better representing the diversity of Britain, at local level and in Parliament, but there is clearly still work to be done in this area.

The Sikhs have through their positive work ethic integrated into British society, while maintaining their faith and identity. This is a true success story. I am proud of the British Sikhs and their contribution to UK society and look forward to a closer cooperation between the Liberal Democrats and the Sikh Federation (UK) in the years to come.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Clegg

Nick Clegg MP
Leader of the Liberal Democrats

BUILDING A STRONGER POLITICAL VOICE IN THE UK AND ABROAD

INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONVENTION

In September 2012 the Sikh Federation (UK) organised a successful Convention at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Sedgley Street, Wolverhampton. A number of specific announcements were made.



Regional teams established - focused and leading on specific areas of work

In September 2011 the Federation introduced the idea of five Managing Directors, plus a National Management Team of 25 to take forward the work of the Federation. In October 2011 a planning event was organised for members of this team and around a dozen leading Sikh organisations across the UK. These included the British Sikh Federation, Khalsa Aid, Satkaar campaign, Sikh Council UK, Sikh Organisation for Prisoner Welfare, Sikh Womens' Alliance, Sikh Youth Project, Sikhs in England and United Sikhs.

An announcement was made at the 2012 Convention to establish five regional teams each with a key focus and linked to the five Managing Directors.

North team - Focused on the re-launch of the human rights wing Khalsa Human Rights

East Midlands team - Focused on all lobbying work with MEPs, lobbying at the European Parliament and meetings with the European Commission

West Midlands team - Focused on all contacts with the United Nations, meetings with Special rapporteurs and independent experts, feeding relevant information through to their staff in Geneva to try and make sure these are reflected in reports

South team - Focused on the lobby of MPs and Lords in the UK, setting up meetings with different government departments, including Ministers, on relevant issues

International liaison team - Focused on our work as part of the International Coalition for a Sikh Homeland

Sikhs across Europe visit Wolverhampton for 10,000-strong conference

More than 10,000 Sikhs from across Europe attended the three-day conference in Wolverhampton.

BBC
NEWS

The Sikh Federation (UK) was set up to "give Sikhs a stronger political voice", said Amrik Singh, chair of the federation. The three-day convention has seen Sikhs travelling from across Europe to take part in the celebrations.

Mr Singh described the event, which drew to a close on Sunday, as "a huge success". He added: "We are working with all three main political parties at the highest levels and they are genuinely listening to our specific concerns. "We have briefed them on the issues that matter to young British Sikhs as well as the wider Sikh community."



Re-launch of Khalsa Human Rights

This will be led by the team in the North, but will draw on people from across the UK

Main projects include:

- collect credible evidence in relation to November 1984 from survivors in the UK (mainland Europe, Canada, USA etc. through others) and victims of human rights violations in the same countries
- use the above information and working with others (Redress, Human Rights Watch etc.) to exert pressure on authorities to arrest, prosecute, but more likely exclude those responsible for genocide and human rights violations
- use existing material to re-package and use other ways of sharing with Sikhs and non-Sikhs i.e. death penalty exhibition from a Sikh perspective
- documentation of on-going human rights issues to lobby and supply information to key contacts at the UNHRC



Clarification of involvement with the Sikh Council UK



degree the work of the Federation itself had suffered.

The Sikh Federation (UK) clarified it had put in much time and resources to establish and get the Sikh Council UK up and running in the last two and a half years. Some key sevadars had devoted considerable time to get the Sikh Council UK to where it is now and to some

The Federation will continue to fully support the Sikh Council UK, but will be slightly withdrawing key individuals to focus on the work of the Federation especially the issue of moving forward on establishing the Sikh homeland, which in the Federation's view is the only long term solution for promoting Sikhi, the Sikh identity and protecting Sikh rights across the globe.

SIKH FEDERATION WELCOME END TO £280m A YEAR FINANCIAL AID TO INDIA

The Sikh Federation (UK) has been campaigning for many years for the UK Government to end financial aid to India. In November the UK Government announced that aid to India will come to an end. Although all existing financial grants will be honoured, the UK will not sign off any new programmes from now on.

Last year the UK gave India about £250m in bilateral aid as well as £29m in technical co-operation. Until last year, when it was overtaken by Ethiopia, India was the biggest recipient of bilateral aid from the UK. India is now the third largest investor in the UK and the largest market for British goods outside the EU.

But the UK's support for India and no support whatsoever for Punjab has been a cause of concern for British Sikh taxpayers



International Development Secretary, Justine Greening

for many years, which the Sikh Federation (UK) has been discussing with the Department for International Development. A spokesman for the Federation said:

'Today's announcement by the International Development Secretary, Justine Greening, that the existing development aid to India will be stopped is an excellent first step. We have campaigned for this for many years and last communicated with the Minister on this issue only a matter of weeks ago. We made a further written request at the start of this week.'

'Our concern is that Punjab needs direct development aid from foreign governments, like the UK, as it is neglected by those in Delhi, to tackle a host of acute problems linked to the environment, neglect of rural areas, drug abuse and political change.'



David Cameron announces cuts in UK aid to India

'This financial aid should not be given to the Indian State or the Punjab State government, but to non-governmental organisations working in Punjab. However, the existing aid from the UK was being pumped into five other Indian states for many years and money was not reaching those most in need.'

Aid to India has only been picked up as an issue by the wider UK public, as well as many MPs in the last couple of years with the economic downturn. Many believed that the UK should not be giving money to a country which has a multi-

million pound space programme.

Ministers have defended the level of financial help in the past on the basis of the extreme poverty that remains in rural areas and historical colonial ties between the two countries.

Save the Children said "We agree that in the longer term, aid to India should be phased out", but the UK should support non-government organisations.

Labour MP Keith Vaz, was unhappy on hearing the announcement and wants the UK Government to reassure its Indian counterpart that their bilateral relationship was still a priority.

War on Want, which campaigns to end global poverty, said financial support needed to be "smarter" and geared towards supporting "progressive movements" capable of bringing about political change and tackling growing inequality.

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) WELCOMES IOC DECISION TO SUSPEND INDIA DUE TO INDIAN GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE

The IOC had repeatedly told the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to adhere to its own constitution and the Olympic Charter and not follow the Indian Government's sports code for its election on 5 December. After months of warnings, the IOC executive board met in Lausanne, Switzerland and imposed the sanction when the IOA failed to comply with the world body's demands for holding independent elections.

Suspension means the Indian body will stop receiving IOC funding and its officials will be banned from attending Olympic meetings and events. India's athletes will be barred from competing in Olympic or similar multi-nation events like the



Asian Games, being held in South Korea in 2014, under the Indian tricolour, although the IOC could allow them to do so under the Olympic flag.

Indian athletes have said the decision brings disgrace to India. Top Indian shooter Mansher Singh said that the decision would mean that Indian players would not be playing anymore for India and there would be no Indian tricolour flying at these events.

The IOC had also recently threatened to suspend Kuwait's Olympic committee, but the Gulf nation amended its sports law last week and was not hit with an IOC sanction.

The Indians have been mired in wrangling over the elections to replace Suresh Kalmadi, who was jailed for nine months on corruption charges related to the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. The Indian vote, originally scheduled for last month, has been postponed following the resignation of election commission chairman S Y Quraishi. Last week the IOA announced the appointment of some officials to posts which were not contested in the elections. Appointed as secretary general was Lalit Bhanot, who is also facing corruption charges relating to the Commonwealth Games. Bhanot is out on bail after being held in custody for 11 months last year.

The IOC Ethics Committee had in October warned the Indian body against fielding either Bhanot or former IOA chief Suresh Kalmadi. Haryana state politician Abhey Chautala who is set to take over as President of the IOA has blamed Indian IOC member Randhir Singh for the suspension claiming he has used his contacts to have the IOA suspended.

A Sikh Federation (UK) spokesman said: "The IOC decision to suspend India and prevent athletes from competing under the Indian flag is highly embarrassing for India. The IOA is run by corrupt Indian politicians, some have been convicted and are criminals and others such as, Jagdish Tytler, who is the current Vice President, have been implicated in instigating mass murder of innocent Sikhs so we welcome the tough stance taken by the IOC to suspend India with immediate effect. We have written to the IOC welcoming the decision to suspend India and exploring the possibility of Sikh athletes from across the globe competing in future events under the Sikh flag.

INDIA UPSET BY SIKH ACTIVISM IN THE UK AND DEBATE IN THE UK PARLIAMENT ON ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY



Reporting in the India media suggests India is increasingly concerned with growing Sikh political activism in the UK.

On 28 February 2013 a two and a half hour debate was held in the UK Parliament on the Abolition of the Death Penalty in India. On 13 March 2013 another debate on the British Sikh community that shows the Sikh community is increasing its political activities and getting increasing recognition.

The Sikh Federation (UK) has become aware through MPs that the Indian High Commission in London went to extreme lengths to pressure certain

BUILD-UP TO THE SHAME

May 2010 The government frames National Sports Bill and asks IOA and all the national sports federations to adopt it in their constitution	<i>days to go for the elections. Lalit Bhanot files his nomination for post of secretary general of the IOA. Chairman of three-member election commission S.Y. Quraishi resigns as elections are postponed for December 5</i>	<i>their nomination for the post of IOA president, leaving Abhay Singh Chautala as the only candidate for the top job</i>
May 2011 Then sports minister Ajay Maken drafts the government-backed National Sports Development Bill, but the IOA rejects it. The IOC backs the IOA's rejection	Nov 23 IOC chief Jacques Rogge writes to the IOA acting president Vijay Khatwara asking him to clear the position over the sports code in the election, else face suspension	Nov 28 IOC says it will move the suspension motion against the IOA in its two-day executive board meeting in Lausanne
Sept 2012 IOA announces elections on Nov 25	Nov 25 Randhir Singh and Raj Chopra withdraw	Nov 29 IOA files a reply to the IOC and decides to send a two-member delegation to Lausanne
Nov 16 With less than 10		Dec 4 IOC executive board suspends IOA

MPs to find excuses not to attend the debate on the Abolition of the Death Penalty in India. For this reason some MPs no doubt stayed away from the debate in the main Chamber of the House of Commons in the UK Parliament on Thursday 28 February 2013.

The debate was co-sponsored by John McDonnell MP (Hayes and Harlington) and Fabian Hamilton MP (Leeds North East). The two and a half hour debate started with an opening speech from John McDonnell. In total 22 MPs from four political parties spoke and a further 10 or so MPs attended for part of the debate, but did not speak. The number of MPs taking part in the debate was consistent with the numbers predicted by the Federation that has been involved in around half a dozen similar debates over the last decade.

Many who watched the debate on television have commented that the main Chamber looked fairly empty. However, the only time many see the main chamber on television is when Prime Minister's Questions is on or when there is some other major debate when the chamber is packed out. At many other times, especially for backbench business, very few MPs are in the main chamber of the House of Commons. However, numbers were lower due to Indian High Commission pressure, the Eastleigh by election on the same day and the debate being on a Thursday.

Virtually all MPs that spoke in the debate used it to pay tribute to the Sikh community and its senior leadership and at the same time criticise India for retaining the death penalty, a corrupt judicial system and other human rights abuses.

Signs of pressure from the Indian government during the debate

There were signs of pressure from the Indian Government via the Indian High Commission. To counter the inevitable criticism from the Indian Government several MPs went out of their way to justify the debate, the importance of the constituent MP relationship and why they were personally taking part. It was hardly surprising that virtually all MPs emphasised they were friends of India and many mentioned India was the largest democracy in the world, although some used this to be all the more critical.



John McDonnell MP - Hayes and Harlington

One of the things those observing proceedings at the House and at home were very surprised to witness was that Deputy Speaker allowed the Minister to 'respond' 39 minutes into the two and a half hour debate and not hear the views and proposals of all MPs before responding at the end of the debate. This appears to be very unusual and a departure from normal practice. For example, the Minister spoke at the end of the debate that immediately followed on the Kurdish Genocide 25 years ago. Many see this as a sign the Indian Government has managed to interfere with the proceedings in the UK Parliament, described during the debate as the mother of all Parliaments".

MPs remain silent on widespread criminalization of politics in India



During the debate in the UK Parliament on 28 February UK MPs did not go as far as to mention the widespread criminalisation of politics in India despite the briefing provided by the Sikh Federation (UK). This combined with the way votes are secured in India seriously undermines the concept of India as a democracy, let alone the largest democracy.

MPs were supplied Andrew North's report produced in February 2013 for BBC Newsnight that one third of India's 4,835 elected representatives have declared criminal charges against them – many of them face serious cases like murder, rape and kidnapping.



'What will however worry India is that many politicians in the UK, across other parts of Europe and no doubt other parts of the developed world have increasingly been talking about this in private when the subject is brought up. It is only a matter of time before this is no longer a taboo subject and some openly challenge India and question if it is a properly functioning democracy' the article states.'

During the debate David Ward, Liberal Democrat MP for Bradford East speaking about the 'big elephant in the chamber' – trade links with India – said: 'It would be immoral, in my view, if growing trade links were used as an excuse for holding back on deserved criticism.' it reads further.

UK MPs state India's judicial system is corrupt and justice has ground to a halt

It was pleasing that a number of MPs used the section of the Sikh Federation (UK) briefing titled: India's judicial system that has failed the Sikhs to criticise India's judicial system during the debate on 28 February.

This included Simon Hughes, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Fabian Hamilton MP, David Ward MP, Richard Fuller, Conservative MP for Bedford and Virendra Sharma Labour MP for Ealing, Southall.

'A real problem for . . . the Government of India, is that justice has often ground to a halt there. That is not just my view. The other day a bench of the Supreme Court in India spoke of how slow the processes are, and in January last year a Supreme Court bench said that peoples faith in the judiciary was dwindling at an alarming rate, posing a grave threat to constitutional and democratic governance of the country. It acknowledged serious problems such as the large number of vacancies in trial courts, the unwillingness of lawyers to become judges, and an inability to fill the highest posts.' - Simon Hughes MP, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats



'I am concerned that there is corruption in the Indian legal system. According to Transparency International, judicial corruption is attributable to factors in India such as delays in the disposal of cases, shortage of judges and complex procedures, all of which are exacerbated by a preponderance of new laws. However, no case of judicial corruption has ever been put on trial in India; under the Indian system, it is almost impossible to charge or impeach a judge.'

'Another factor at work in India is the low ratio of judges per million of the population; there are as few as 12 or 13 judges per 1 million of population in India, as against figures of 107 in the United States (no surprise there) 75 in Canada and 51 in the United Kingdom. The high work load in India encourages delays and adjournments on frivolous grounds. The judicial system, including judges and lawyers, has developed a vested interest

in delays, as well as corruption; it promotes a collusive relationship between the different players.' - Fabian Hamilton MP (Lab) Leeds North East

'I have touched on the necessity for India to uphold the basic human rights that are espoused in the United Nations convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This is an important issue for my constituents, especially those in the Sikh community, who have long borne the brunt of judicial and societal discrimination in parts of India.' - David Ward MP (LD) Bradford East

'There are issues relating to the Indian judicial system that exacerbate concerns about the existence of the death penalty. I have mentioned the implications for the mental health and well-being of people on death row. With the case load in Indian courts so backed up, what is it that says that a certain case should move forward or not? How are those decisions made? What is the due process in a system that finds itself not fully capable of dealing with its work load?' - Richard Fuller MP (Con) Bedford

Indian democracy is based upon corruption



'We cannot always assume that the judicial system is faultless. Therefore, using death, an irrevocable act, as a punishment for a crime, puts the system at risk of punishing the innocent irreversibly.' - Virendra Sharma MP (Lab) Ealing, Southall

SIKH REPRESENTATIVES MEET UK DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

The Sikh Federation (UK) organised and led a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg On 26 March. Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) said:

'We first met the Leader (Nick Clegg) and Deputy Leader (Simon Hughes) of the Liberal Democrats in April 2011 at Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester before the Leicester South by election in May 2011. The meeting today with Rt.



Rt Hon. Nick Clegg meeting Bhai Amrik Singh and SFUK representatives from Leicester Gurdwara

Hon. Nick Clegg was in his role as the Deputy Prime Minister.'

'The fact the meeting is taking place with the Deputy Prime Minister is in itself an achievement. Nick Clegg responded positively to the range of issues we raised.'

The Sikh Federation (UK) put together an impressive Sikh delegation comprising leading figures in the Sikh Federation (UK), prominent representatives of the Sikh Council UK, politically active young Sikhs and important media representatives.



Sikh Federation (UK) meet with Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg in parliament

Last week the Rt. Hon. David Cameron during Prime Minister Questions spoke about the immense contribution the British Sikh community makes to the UK and his appreciation for this and the respect that should be shown to Sikhs.

Bhai Amrik Singh added: 'It appears all the leading political parties and their leaders are going out of their way to be seen to support the British Sikh community. This is very welcome however the community will judge them for their actions on difficult issues as opposed to their gratifying words.'

MEETING WITH THE LABOUR PARTY LEADER

In June an important meeting was held with the Labour Party Leader, the Rt. Hon. Ed Miliband. Following discussions a number of specific proposals on a wide range of issues were put to him. He was very enthusiastic and agreed to put them into action over the next 24 months beginning with certain undertakings later this year. Several meetings have taken place since then and the Sikh Federation (UK) was specifically invited to a reception at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton before Ed Miliband's speech



Sikh Federation (UK) meet with Labour Party Leader Ed Miliband

CASTE DISCRIMINATION SET TO BECOME UNLAWFUL IN THE UK AND CAUSE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES FOR HINDU ORGANISATIONS

On 23 April the UK became the first European country to pass legislation on caste discrimination. Many including all Sikh organisations agree caste discrimination is 'unacceptable and must not be tolerated' as stated by the Government Minister.



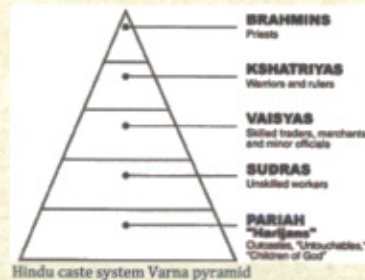
The Sikh Federation (UK) which relied on the Sikh Council UK to represent a sensible Sikh view decided to directly get involved in influencing politicians at the eleventh hour due to inaccurate comments about Sikhs by politicians in the House of Commons last week and the House of Lords yesterday evening.

The Sikh Federation (UK) was also concerned that another Sikh organisation, for some unexplained reasons, was disturbingly working with certain right wing Hindu nationalist organisations in opposing legislation against caste discrimination. Politicians were therefore unnecessarily linking and dangerously grouping Sikhs with Hindus.

As Lord Singh made clear in the House of Lords yesterday Sikhism totally condemns the whole system of caste and ritual purity, is opposed to discrimination based on caste and by definition one cannot be a Sikh and have a caste. However, an opportunity was missed by Lord Singh in not pointing out that existing definition of caste in the explanatory note to the Equality Act was not acceptable to Sikhs. Lord Singh did however point out 'the concept of caste is a hierarchical division of Hindu society'.

Lord Parekh who was not in favour of legislation and spoke against it yesterday in the House of Lords stated 'you cannot be a Hindu without belonging to a particular caste, full stop,' which is why the legislation on caste discrimination is likely to prove to be highly divisive for Hindus.

The caste issue has already exposed a huge divide among Hindu groups based in the UK. The Alliance of Hindu Organisations UK (AHO) has called for a boycott of any such legislation as it would label the entire Hindu community as being 'institutionally discriminatory'. Some Hindu organisations have threatened to encourage Hindus to vote against Labour and other politicians who voted for legislation to outlaw caste discrimination.



Lord Avebury in the debate in the House of Lords yesterday indicated that the Hindu Forum that speaks for a number of Hindu organisations astonishingly fails to acknowledge the existence of caste discrimination in the UK. Baroness Flather said: 'The Hindus have come together for the first time ever, to my knowledge, to shout about the caste amendment because they feel that this dishonours them in some way. They dishonour themselves: caste is a fact.'

Given the defeat of the Government in the House of Lords yesterday evening it was inevitable that an agreement would be reached between the main political parties in the House of Commons and legislation would be approved. It was therefore important to ensure that a sensible way forward could be found.

The Sikh Federation (UK) in its short briefing sent to Ministers and the Shadow Ministers speaking in the House of Commons today categorically stated it opposed caste and caste discrimination and reminded them that many of the Hindu groups opposing the legislation refuse to condemn caste and wrongly believe cast discrimination does not exist. This important difference between Sikhs and Hindus will be crucial to build upon in the next one to two years in consultations with Government.

The Federation also stated whilst it supported the underlying spirit of the legislation to eliminate caste discrimination it did not believe legislation was the best way forward as it will enshrine caste in UK law and does not take proper account of evolving socio-economic trends in future generations. The Sikh Council UK expressed a similar view and the Government and Opposition listened and agreed to what is usually referred to as a sunset clause that will result in a review after it has been on the statute book for five years and periodically thereafter.

The Federation like other Sikh organisations, such as the Sikh Council UK, stated in its briefing for Ministers and Shadow Ministers it expected the definition of caste in the explanatory note to the Equality Act to be changed before implementation of any new law as the definition is inaccurate and offensive and there should be no reference to Sikhs. Sufficient references were made in the debate in the House of Commons to suggest politicians understand the Sikh position.

The Shadow Minister stated: 'The definition must recognise that caste is not specific to any religion but is a social and cultural practice extending across different parts of communities. It can be subscribed to by, and affect, members of any or no religion, and the definition must reflect that.' The Minister responded by saying: 'We will consider carefully how to define 'caste'.

Although MPs agreed in the House of Commons to introduce legislation on caste discrimination the Minister also indicated the Government and Opposition had agreed that it would not be implemented in the general ballpark of one to two years to allow proper consultation on matters such as the definition of caste.

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) WELCOMES CREATION OF CAUCUS IN US CONGRESS TO REPRESENT SIKH INTERESTS



Sikh Federation (UK) attend launch of Caucus in US Congress

In April a bipartisan group of 28 influential lawmakers in the US House of Representatives established the first Sikh-American Congressional Caucus to have the interests of the American Sikh community represented in the US Congress.

The Sikh Federation (UK) given its leading role in lobbying in the UK and setting up of the All Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs in the UK in 2005 was specifically invited to the formal launch at Capitol Hill in Washington yesterday, of the first-ever Sikh-American Congressional Caucus.

It was announced at a press conference that the caucus is to be co-chaired by Congresswoman Judy Chu from the Democratic Party and David G. Valadao from the Republican Party. The caucus will focus not only on representing American Sikhs, but also on educating legislators and the general public about the issues facing Sikhs.

The launch was attended by eminent Sikh-American leaders and organisations from across the USA, the lawmakers also hosted a reception at Capitol Hill in the evening.

'Sikhs are suffering because many people do not understand or are simply unfamiliar with their religion. The Sikh-American community continues to be disproportionately affected by school bullying and hate crimes. Events like the devastating tragedy in Oak Creek, Wisconsin should never have taken place,' Republican Congresswoman from Florida, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, said in her remarks at a Capitol Hill news conference to announce the launch of the Sikh-American Caucus.

The immediate past Chairwoman of the powerful House Committee on Foreign Relations, Ros-Lehtinen, said the Sikh-American Caucus will raise awareness on the Sikh religion, while advocating for solutions to end bullying and racial profiling, and to protect religious freedom in the workplace. 'It is time that we embraced our Sikh brothers and sisters as peaceful and productive members of the American society,' she said.

California-based Congresswoman Judy Chu said: 'This caucus will be the voice for American Sikhs in the House of Representatives, working across the aisle to address the unique challenges that this



community faces. Together, we will preserve religious freedom, protect the safety of all people, and celebrate America's diversity'

A Sikh Federation (UK) spokesman said: 'It is important that the caucus represents Sikh-Americans interests in the US, but also the treatment and human rights concerns relating to Sikhs across the globe, whether it be religious freedoms in European countries, such as France and Belgium, or gross human rights violations by the Indian authorities against the minority Sikh community.'

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) WARNS INDIAN POLITICIANS OF DIRE CONSEQUENCES IF THEY MISJUDGE THE MOOD OF SIKHS

The Sikh Federation issued a strongly worded statement warning politicians in Punjab and the centre to recognise the sentiment of Sikhs not only in the Diaspora, but also those in Punjab, Delhi and other parts of India.

The statement from Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) reads:

'Politicians need to take heed of the mood of Sikhs. If they misjudge this mood they will be responsible for the consequences and the angry reaction that may result. Politicians must realise Sikhs are genuinely disappointed and outraged. International media reporting and access to different forms of media is very different now than a few years ago, let alone 20 or 30 years ago. Therefore, the decisions made by politicians are more closely scrutinised and contested.'



Sadda Haq movie initially banned in Panjab

'In recent weeks we have seen the inappropriate banning of the film Sadda Haq by state governments in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. The only reason for banning the film was that it exposes police brutality and tactics used to discredit the armed struggle in Punjab following the massacre of Sikhs in June and November 1984. There is now even more interest in the film since the Supreme Court lifted the ban. Many ordinary Sikhs and non-Sikhs are expected in increasing numbers to watch the film and sympathise after seeing the unfair treatment of Sikhs.'

'We have also seen the disgraceful Supreme Court decision against Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar on 12 April and the huge outcry not only by Sikhs, but also by many senior past and present members of the Indian judiciary who recognise the continued miscarriage of justice. The treatment of Professor Bhullar has also been exposed by leading human rights groups, like Amnesty International. Governments around the globe, not least the German, Canadian and UK governments are carefully watching to see if the Indian Home Minister and Indian President will see sense and not only lift the threat of the death penalty, but also release Professor Bhullar given how long he has already been in prison and the state of his health.'

'If this was not enough, this week we have seen objections by non-Sikh politicians to the inclusion of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's name on the entrance of the newly built memorial for the martyrs in June 1984. This in turn has resulted in disquiet from the Punjab government that is exerting pressure on the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Jathedar of the Akaal Takht. They would be best advised not to insist on any changes to the memorial as emotions are running very high following yesterday's acquittal of Sajjan Kumar, or they may be an unexpected backlash.'



'Sikhs waited 29 years for a memorial, but are still waiting for justice. Yesterday's acquittal of Sajjan Kumar is a clear signal to Sikhs that they will never get justice in India and that the Indian judicial system is fundamentally flawed. Sikhs are naturally comparing Sajjan Kumar's acquittal to the treatment of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar over the last 18 years and will not take kindly to any interference in what is or is not written on its memorial to the martyrs of June 1984.'

OVER 250 GURDWARAS AND SIKH ORGANISATIONS ACROSS THE GLOBE SIGN UP TO THE RESOLUTION AGREED IN THE UK ON SUNDAY 5 MAY AT GURU NANAK GURDWARA, SMETHWICK REGARDING THE MEMORIAL FOR JUNE 1984 IN AMRITSAR

The Sikh Federation (UK) had a fantastic response from Gurdwaras and Sikh organisation across the UK and abroad. Over 120 UK Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations signed up to the two-page resolution in the first 24 hours.

The Sikh Federation (UK) has also obtained support for the resolution and has the authority to mention:

- over 35 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations from Canada
- over 30 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations from USA
- over 25 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations from Italy
- over 50 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations from Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.

The resolution was sent to the SGPC President, Avtar Singh Makkar and to the Jathedar of the Akal Takht and copied to the Damdami Taksal.



Entrance to the 1984 Shaheedi Memorial built next to the Sri Akal Takhat, Darbar Sahib Complex, Amritsar

DEFENDING AND PROMOTING THE SIKH IDENTITY

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) LEAD EUROPEAN-WIDE DELEGATION TO MEET EUROPEAN COMMISSION STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY ON SEARCH OF SIKH TURBANS AT AIRPORTS



In January the Sikh Federation (UK) led a 12-member European-wide delegation of Sikhs to meet European Commission staff responsible for policy on airport security to clarify the position on search of Sikh turbans at airports.

On 17 December 2012 the Department for Transport in the UK wrote to Sikh organisations, including the Sikh Federation (UK), to confirm the new Regulation on Aviation security was expected to be published before 31 December 2012 and implemented in early 2013.



The new Regulation on Aviation Security allows the option of Sikh turbans to be searched using the UK method that gives due respect to the Sikh turban. In the UK hand held metal detectors and Explosive Test Devise (ETD) technology (swab testing for chemicals) are used to check for anything inappropriate that may be in a turban. This means the turban does not need to be removed, searched by hand or even touched by hand. This gives due respect to the Sikh turban and provides a better security solution than hand searches.

The European-wide delegation met with Margus Rahuoja, Senior Advisor (Aviation Policy and Security) to Siim Kallas, Vice-President and European Commissioner for Transport. He commended the Sikh Federation (UK) for taking a robust, but sensible and pragmatic approach in dealing with the Department for Transport in the UK, in securing both respect for the Sikh turban and appropriate security.



Mr Rahuoja pointed out the new Regulation had now been finalised and would be published in February 2013. He suggested Sikhs living in different EU countries in mainland Europe, in particular countries like Italy, where there have been difficulties, to immediately engage with their respective government departments responsible for airport security. They should target airports from where large numbers of Sikhs travel to ensure these airports have the suitable equipment in place that allows the UK method of searching turbans and that security staff are given appropriate training.

Sikh representatives also discussed with European Commission staff what they should do if airport staff were deliberately offensive and discriminatory towards Sikhs with turbans. The meeting took place in the main European Commission Berlaymont Building in Brussels. The 12-member delegation of Sikhs included Sikhs from the UK, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.

SIKHS WIN AND EXERCISE RIGHT TO WEAR THE KIRPAN WHEN ENTERING THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN BRUSSELS TO MEET MEPs

The Sikh Federation (UK) started to organise mass lobbying of MEPs by visiting them at the European Parliament in Brussels around eight years ago.

Around 250 Sikhs from across Europe attended the first ever lobby and after initially agreeing to allow Amritdhari Sikhs to wear the Kirpan when entering the main European Parliament building this decision was reversed on the morning of the first lobby.

UK MEPs informed Sikhs taking part in the lobby this restriction was as a direct result of pressure on the Secretary General responsible for administration from the Indian Ambassador to the EU, who suggested that a ban on the Kirpan was appropriate.

The Indian authorities did not want Sikhs lobbying about human rights abuses in India e.g. the case of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar, or about issues related to the Sikh identity and were prepared to go to extreme lengths to try and stop Sikhs lobbying by asking for the Kirpan to be banned.

Given the opposition from India the Sikh Federation (UK) encouraged Sikhs to take a stand by organising an annual lobby at the European Parliament in Brussels. Initially the Sikh Federation (UK) organised venues adjacent to the Parliament building so MEPs were encouraged to meet Sikhs from across Europe. In addition smaller groups of Sikhs, including Amritdharis wearing the Kirpan, successfully entered the European Parliament following pressure from MEPs, establishing a precedent.

UK MEPs continued to exert pressure and this resulted in a large conference room holding around 300 being made available each year in the Eastman Building of the European Parliament complex where Sikhs were allowed to wear the Kirpan. However, very few MEPs other than those from the UK were

prepared to leave the main European Parliament building to speak in the inconveniently located Eastman Building.

Larger numbers of Amritdhari Sikhs could still not freely enter the main European Parliament building to meet MEPs for pre-arranged meetings, so Sikhs have been protesting each year. One year Sikh men, women and children protested with MEPs by holding a peaceful sit down protest blocking two of the three entrances to the main European Parliament building. This attracted considerable media attention and highlighted the issue and created pressure for change.



Amritdhari Sikhs attend European Parliament in large numbers

The two-day lobby organised by the Sikh Federation (UK) in January 2013 was therefore the first test of the working of this set up.

The Sikh Federation (UK) appealed to its contacts in Italy, Germany, France, Belgium etc. to keep numbers to around five representatives from each country. This was deliberate as the Federation wanted a much more focused lobby with around a dozen meetings over the two days and to test whether Sikhs could exercise the right to enter the European Parliament (and European Commission) in relatively large numbers while wearing their Kirpans.

The Sikh Federation (UK) was able to announce in January that Sikhs having taken a robust stand on the wearing of the Kirpan when entering the European Parliament and European Commission buildings have in effect had the restriction on the Kirpan removed for pre-arranged meetings when it is known who will be in attendance. Behind the scenes work in the last 12 months involving MEPs meant that all turban wearing Sikhs, including Amritdharis were fully respected and had all security waived when entering the European Parliament and at the two European Commission meetings.

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) ACTIVE ON RAISING CONCERNS ON EVE OF FRENCH PRESIDENT'S FIRST VISIT TO DELHI

French President urged to raise opposition to death penalty with India when in Delhi

Sikhs urge Indian Prime Minister to raise religious discrimination against the minority Sikh community in France

President Francois Hollande visited New Delhi on February 14-15 on his first trip to India since being elected in May 2012.

The Sikh Federation (UK) contacted Sikhs in France to urge them to raise French opposition to India carrying out the death penalty.

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

'India has now challenged the civilised world and in particular the 27 EU countries by carrying out two hangings in the last three months. The Indian media and politicians have now said that Balwant Singh Rajoana and Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar should be next.'



'We have requested Sikh representatives in France to contact President Francois Hollande as a matter of urgency so he takes up this issue on their behalf.'

Similarly, the Federation urged Sikhs in Punjab and those in Delhi to raise the issue of religious discrimination against the minority Sikh community in France when President Francois Hollande visits.

Bhai Amrik Singh said:

'The United Nations has in the last 12 months taken two decisions in support of the Sikh right to freely wear their turbans. Since President Francois Hollande is making his first visit to India since being elected in May 2012 this is an opportunity for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to directly raise the issue with the French President.'

'The French have always given the signal that the French law introduced in 2004 has had unintended consequences for Sikh children in schools. But given the UN rulings the French have an opportunity to find a way of allowing Sikh children to freely wear their turbans and also not having to force Sikhs to remove their turbans for the purposes of ID photographs. Where there is a will, there is way.'



MPs TURN OUT IN LARGE NUMBERS FOR DEBATE IN UK PARLIAMENT TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR BRITISH SIKH COMMUNITY



On 13 March a one and a half hour debate titled 'The British Sikh Community' took place in the UK Parliament organised by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs. The APPG for British Sikhs has a much broader appeal than similar groups in Parliament and was set up by the Sikh Federation (UK) in 2005 to focus on Sikh issues in the UK, Europe and elsewhere.

The debate was led by Gareth Johnson Conservative MP for Dartford. At the start of the debate he paid tribute to Fabian Hamilton the Labour MP for Leeds North East and the Chair of the APPG for British Sikhs: 'I pay tribute to the inspiration behind the debate, which was that of the honourable Member for Leeds North East (Fabian Hamilton) who runs the all-party group for British Sikhs, and to the excellent work of that

group in Parliament and the way in which it has helped to recognise the contribution of the Sikh community to our country.'

The debate that took place yesterday was described by many politicians as excellent and very successful in terms of the turnout. The Sikh Federation (UK) learnt of the debate a few days earlier, but managed through its network to ensure that over 50 MPs took part with around half that number having the opportunity to speak during the debate.

Contribution of the Sikhs

As expected many MPs used this as an opportunity to highlight the importance and significant contribution of the British Sikh community in all walks of life – business, industry, commerce, in the professions, education, medical science, medical ethics etc. Below is just a selection of the comments made during the debate by politicians about the contribution of Sikhs:



David Cameron PM meets Sikhs from Armed Forces

'Sikhs . . . are fantastic, enterprising and educationally aspiration, with values of faith, family and community.' **Pat McFadden (Lab) – Wolverhampton South East**

Sikhs have a deserved reputation for having a strong work ethic. Their belief in hard work and the importance of the family has been the reason for their success in the United Kingdom. **Gareth Johnson (Con) - Dartford**

The Sikhs punch above their weight, frankly. We should acknowledge that.' **Jim Cunningham (Lab) – Coventry South**

I have always been impressed by how important public service is to the identity of Sikhs and how serving others is woven into their way of life. Sikhs are always seeking to do more and finding new ways of contributing.' **Chris White (Con) – Warwick and Leamington**

I want to make some quick points about the tremendous contribution that the Sikh community has made to the success of the United Kingdom both in terms of business success, to our public services. . national health service as doctors, nurses and the like—and in terms of celebrating and vastly broadening our culture in the UK.' **Anas Sarwar (Lab) – Glasgow Central**



Chris Williamson MP Derby

'It is worth reiterating the fact that within Sikhism, there is a recognition of the equality of women and of all people and a commitment to hard work, to sharing with others and to standing up for people and protecting them. All communities could learn a significant lesson from the way in which the Sikh community conducts itself.'

The Sikhs have made a huge economic contribution to the nation, creating many jobs and wealth for Great Britain. I also want to mention here cohesion and integration, which is a topic that I am currently working on. The Sikh community is a model of cohesion and integration and we could learn many lessons on the way in which it has conducted itself in the UK.' **Chris Williamson (Lab) – Derby North**

It has been absolutely clear that the speakers in the debate, from all parties, have gone out of their way to celebrate the enormous contribution that members of the British Sikh community make to this country. I am delighted to be able to join them by making a similar expression of praise, thanks and congratulations to the Sikh community for its contribution.'

I am delighted to be able to sum up this debate, which has shown how much cross-party support there is for the huge contribution that is made by the Sikh community in this country. British Sikhs are among some of our greatest business men and professionals, and they are a peaceful, high-achieving community from whom we all



Don Foster MP Minister for Communities and Local Government



have much to learn. This has been an excellent debate.' **Don Foster, Minister for Communities and Local Government**

The briefing produced by the Federation also made reference to the Battle of Saraghari in 1897 and Sikh sacrifices in the two World Wars when 83,005 turban wearing Sikh soldiers were killed and 109,045 were wounded.

The objective was to try and get the new revamped teaching of British history in schools to celebrate Sikh contributions and that these should also be recognised as part of the WWI Centenary activities. Both issues were raised by MPs. Jonathan Ashworth Labour MP for Leicester South said 'Sikh contributions to the first and second world wars should be given greater prominence in our national debate as we look towards the commemorations of the first world war'. Fiona Mactaggart Labour MP for Slough said the UK Government should: 'Ensure that the history curriculum properly reflects the contribution of many Sikh soldiers to the freedom of Britain.'

Don Foster, the Minister in his response said: 'I want to make it absolutely clear that we certainly hope that we will see that contribution reflected in the commemoration of the anniversary of world war one which will be happening shortly.' However, he did not comment on the history curriculum.

Given the discussion around Sikh contributions several MPs commented on Sikh representation in politics: Gavin Barwell Conservative MP for Croydon Central said: 'It would be great to see more Sikhs represented on our local councils and here in this House, taking a wider role in public service.'

Anwar Sarwar the Labour MP from Glasgow Central added: 'We must recognise the tremendous contribution of the Sikh community and ensure that our Parliaments and council chambers reflect society. All political parties must work together to ensure that we have representation of Sikhs in council chambers, the Scottish Parliament and at Westminster.'

Issues raised by MPs during the debate

MPs were briefed by the Federation on specific areas where the Sikh community has concerns: UK Government interface with the British Sikh community, Sikh identity issues and human rights concerns.

UK Government interface with the British Sikh community

MPs were urged to put pressure on the UK Government to engage with organisations that represent the grassroots of a community rather than two or three so-called community leaders that civil servants have known for many years if not decades and who have no real grassroots support or community engagement.



Fabian Hamilton MP Leeds NE, Chair APPG for UK Sikhs

MPs were made aware at the national level you have grassroots organisations like the Sikh Council UK (established in December 2010) and the Sikh Federation (UK) – established in September 2003, which is a pressure group that specialises in political lobbying. It has existed for almost a decade and is well known to politicians of all parties through events they have participated in and who have been regularly quoted in the mainstream media on various Sikh identity and human rights issues.

Below is just a selection of the comments made by politicians about the UK Government interface with the British Sikh community during the debate:

'The Sikh Federation UK has supported our group (APPG for British Sikhs) so well, and I want to pay tribute to it for its work, together with that of the Sikh Council UK. Those two organisations ensure that British Sikhs are well represented.' **Fabian Hamilton (Lab) – Leeds North East**



'The Government should take the opportunity to work with organisations such as the Sikh Council UK, which seeks to act as a national advocate for British Sikhs. We should recognise the potential of working with democratically elected bodies such as the council, so that Sikhs feel that their voice is being heard. I would welcome the Prime Minister and Communities Secretary to have regular meetings with the council and other Sikh organisations in our country, so that we can explain Government policy and take on board the points made by the British Sikh community.' **Chris White (Con) – Warwick and Leamington**

'The Sikh Council UK has also asked that the Government formally consult with it on Government policy relating to a range of issues. I wonder whether the Minister might be able to comment on that request.' **Chris Williamson, Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government**

Don Foster, the Minister in his opening remarks at the end of the debate said: 'I am more than happy to have a meeting with the Sikh Council UK.' This in itself was one of the objectives the Federation was hoping to achieve from the debate.

Sikh identity issues

This was the second area the Federation wanted aired in the debate. As expected many MPs commented on the visible Sikh identity from a historical context. Others such as Chris White the Conservative MP for Warwick and Leamington added: 'I believe that British Sikhs have a strong sense of their identity, both as Sikhs and as British citizens, and it is right that Parliament takes the time to recognise that. We should build on that and ensure that British Sikhs feel that their work is appreciated.'

Respect for the Sikh turban at airports across Europe

Many MPs talked about the success of the UK Government working with grassroots Sikh organisations like the Federation in securing a solution for the respect for the Sikh turban at airports not only in the UK, but across Europe. Pat McFadden the Labour MP for Wolverhampton South East who was specifically briefed by the Federation to mention this in the debate stated:

'We have heard about searches of turbans—the Dastaar—at airports, about which a great many Members on both sides of the House campaigned, as did Sikh organisations. I acknowledge the good efforts of the Department for Transport in working with the European Union and other Governments to reach a successful conclusion.'



Chris Williamson, the Labour MP for Derby North and Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government, commenting on the latest situation in terms of the new EU Regulation challenged the Minister to do more at the European level: 'Could the Minister give us any information about whether the Government will continue to monitor this situation? It is good news that the regulations have been updated, but it is important that we continue to monitor the situation to ensure that those more enlightened regulations are actually being implemented on the ground.'

Don Foster, the Minister in his response said: 'we are now working very closely with our European colleagues to persuade them to adopt the same system.'

Challenges regarding the wearing of the Dastaar at work



Sikh wins right to wear Turban at work as bus driver

During the debate many MPs however recognised that Sikhs in the UK continue to experience difficulties as regards the Sikh identity, especially the Dastaar and Kirpan, in work and in public life. Several MPs mentioned concerns over discrimination at work against Sikhs with turbans. For example, Lilian Greenwood Labour MP for Nottingham



South, said: 'more needs to be done to tackle discrimination against Sikhs in the workplace. Particularly, the Government could do more to ensure that employers understand the special protections for wearers of the Sikh turban.'

Chris Williamson Labour MP for Derby North concluding on the Labour benches said: 'Hon. Members have touched on issues that persist to this day about employment, whereby Sikhs are still discriminated against and find problems in the workplace in relation to the turban. As a former construction worker myself, I know that this is something that has been addressed on construction sites, but there are still a number of ongoing cases.'

I think that one relates to a lorry driver who is in danger of losing his job, and there have been a number of other incidents as well. I wonder whether the Minister could say a little about dealing with those employment rights issues for the Sikh community.'

Don Foster, the Minister in his response said: 'The issue of hard hats was also raised and I assure hon. Members that my Department is now working with all the other agencies involved with that particular issue to see if we can make progress and enable Sikh turban-wearers not to have to wear hard hats in certain places of work.'

Challenges against the wearing of the Kirpan at work and in public life

With respect to the Kirpan John McDonnell the Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington mentioned Amritdhari Sikhs 'who have been turned away at the London Eye, from concerts at Wembley and so on. Madame Tussauds was another example. We tried to ensure that at least some standard guidelines were issued, and to a certain extent, when it comes to public service, we have achieved that. The problem occurs when the individual private contractors are not taking note. More work needs to be done on that.'



What did however come as a surprise to many present in the debate were the examples quoted by Anas Sarwar the Labour MP for Glasgow Central who said: 'I want to raise a couple of concerns that have been mentioned to me. One is about equality in relation to the turban and the Kirpan. Recently, a high street operator refused to employ someone because they wore the Kirpan, and in court, someone was expelled from a jury for wearing one. Such things are protected by the equality legislation introduced by the last Government, and we must ensure that education takes place, so that such situations do not occur again.'

Don Foster, the Minister in his response said: 'Freedom of worship is core to the British way of life. Public displays of religious belief, such as the wearing of faith symbols and clothing or the maintenance of dietary codes, are all vital aspects of religious freedom and we are keen to do all we can to support that freedom. The previous Government did excellent work in this field, but we recognise that there have been problems.'

'We are also looking at a number of the other issues that have been raised today. For example, I was interested to hear the concern raised about a member of the Sikh community not being allowed to serve on a jury because he was wearing the Kirpan. If the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Anas Sarwar), who raised that particular case, can provide me with details about it, I would like to take it up.'

Human rights concerns

Although this debate was much broader than many debates in the UK Parliament, it only lasted one and a half hours. Despite the debate less than two weeks earlier about the abolition of the death penalty in India the Federation briefed MPs to again raise human rights issues. Most MPs on the Conservative side avoided raising the issue of human rights. However, John McDonnell, the Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington, summed up why it was important to again raise human rights issues by stating:

'One of the fundamental issues that has been raised time and time again with us is human rights, and we cannot avoid the issue. We had discussion after discussion about what happened during the atrocities in the 1980s and the injustices that took place, many of which have never been addressed. I believe that any discussion about the Sikhs should involve a discussion of the need that there still is to bring to book the people who committed those atrocities during that period, because we have never found out the ultimate truth and many of them have never been brought to justice.'

Pat McFadden the Labour MP for Wolverhampton South East continued:

'The community is a success in the UK, but it sometimes has a strange relationship with India. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) said, that in large part stems from the events of 1984, when many Sikhs lost their lives. The pain of that experience and the lasting sense of injustice among the Sikh community are very real. There is a lasting desire for greater transparency and honesty in the story of what happened. If the community's relationship with India is strained, its relationship with the UK has been a good one. That is a tribute to the Sikh community and its efforts.'

Five MPs specifically mentioned the death penalty in India during the debate to keep up pressure on the UK Government. The cases of Balwant Singh Rajoana and Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar were specifically mentioned again with a particular mention of Professor Bhullar by Chris Williamson and John McDonnell.

Chris White, the Conservative MP for Warwick and Leamington, said he hoped 'that the Government will listen to those concerns and ensure that they communicate with British Sikhs about our country's foreign policy.'

Anwar Sarwar the Labour MP from Glasgow Central added: 'One of the largest letter-writing campaigns that I have ever experienced as a Member of Parliament has been about the death penalty in India.' Fiona Mactaggart joined John McDonnell to remind the House about the unanimity across the Chamber in urging India to abolish the death penalty.

RAISING AWARENESS & CAMPAIGNING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) TAKES UP CASE OF FALSE ARRESTS OF BHAI KULBIR SINGH BARAPIND AND BHAI DALJIT SINGH BITTU



Khalsa Human Rights, the human rights arm of the Sikh Federation (UK), issued an urgent appeal regarding the false arrests and treatment of Bhai Kulbir Singh Barapind and Bhai Daljit Singh Bittu.

The Sikh Federation (UK) now have a number of teams that are each taking this forward. One team runs Khalsa Human Rights and has issued the urgent action appeal and is taking the matter up with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Another team is taking the matter up with UK MPs and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Other teams are taking up the matter with Members of the European Parliament and with European Commission contacts that deal with India and are sharing concerns with staff at the UN Human Rights Council who work for UN Special Rapporteurs.

The urgent appeal was also being sent to Sikh Federation contacts across Europe to take up with their respective governments. A team in Switzerland took up the matter directly with NGOs in Geneva and at the UN Human Rights Council.



The urgent action appeal was also shared more widely with human rights contacts and Sikh organisations in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA WILL FAIL TO CAPITALISE ON MINOR ATTACK ON BRAR IN LONDON TO SILENCE GROWING SUPPORT FOR AN INDEPENDENT SIKH HOMELAND

Many Sikh organisations in the UK deliberately did not issue any official statements as they wanted the Metropolitan Police to fully investigate the assault on Lt Gen (Retd.) Brar on Sunday 30 September 2012 in London. The Sikh community is law abiding and recognises its wider public responsibilities.

With four arrests in the West Midlands last Thursday, a further 11 arrests in London on Friday and one additional arrest in London on Sunday, the Federation waited until two men aged 33 and 34 were charged with 'wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm' and the last person being held was released, before issuing a statement.

There has been constant irresponsible and sensational media reporting in India and premature statements from Indian politicians since the minor assault on Brar. The assault left him with what appear to be superficial scratches covered by sticky plasters, following an altercation that probably lasted no more than a couple of minutes. Although Brar was roughed up and left with a few scratches, the 78-year old miraculously received no visible bruising let alone any life threatening injuries, as he claimed and as was reported in the Indian media, although four men were supposedly involved in the assault. In fact he was well enough to be discharged from hospital within a few hours and return to India less than 48 hours after the so-called life threatening knife attack.



On Monday 1 October Brar's wife told NDTV 'We cannot say if they were Sikh' and yet Brar within 24 hours was claiming they were not only Sikhs, but those sympathetic towards an independent Sikh homeland. Former Indian army Lt Gen (Retd.) P.N. Hoon contradicted Brar the following day by saying the attackers would have achieved their target if it had been a well-planned attempt. 'I don't think this is too planned an attack because if it was too planned an attack then I would have been very sad because they would have really achieved their target'.

Brar in several interviews has criticised the large annual Remembrance March and Freedom Rally organised by Sikhs in central London and tried to make a link between this peaceful protest and the minor assault on him in London. The Federation is one of the main organisers of this event, which attracts tens of thousands each year and has been growing in strength in recent years. It is this growing support for the Remembrance March and Freedom Rally more than 28 years after the June 1984 Indian army assault on the Golden Temple Complex that is causing most bother to the Indian authorities. The Metropolitan Police, Royal Parks Agency, Greater London Authority and Westminster Council have all praised the impeccable behaviour of Sikhs, but the Indian regime will try all sorts of tactics to try and marginalise Sikhs. Last year the Indian media reported that the Indian Foreign Minister KM Krishna claimed the UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague had agreed to curb Sikhs from organising such protests, but this was publicly denied by the UK Foreign Office.

Many in the Sikh community were of the view that Indian government interference and pressure on the authorities in the UK led to the unnecessary arrest and questioning of many innocent Sikhs in London who were not associated in any way with the minor attack on Brar. There was an overreaction by the Metropolitan Police in making these arrests in London and the police acted disproportionately given the scale of arrests for a minor assault. The arrests could be politically motivated, with the police being forced to act in this way to appease a foreign government.

What is clear is that Brar should never have been given entry to the UK. Recently the UK Foreign Office Minister responsible for human rights confirmed that the UK policy is 'that accreditation shall be refused to any individual who may present a safety or security risk, where their presence in the United Kingdom would not be conducive to the public good'. Sikhs across the globe remain deeply offended by the Indian army assault on the Golden Temple Complex in June 1984 led by Brar and the killing of hundreds if not thousands of innocent pilgrims including men, women and children, some with their hands tied behind their backs.

If Brar wanted to take the risk of visiting the UK to see his daughter the Indian authorities should have ensured he had the appropriate security, if they believed he represented a safety or security risk. The lesson for the British authorities is that the presence of the likes of Brar, who the Sikh community view as a war criminal responsible for the killing of hundreds if not thousands of innocent Sikh pilgrims, is that his presence in the UK is 'not conducive to the public good'. He and others like him should be refused entry to the UK as a preventative measure.

SIKH LOBBY TO MARK NOVEMBER 1984 GENOCIDE OF SIKHS



Sikhs and their elected representatives gathered on Tuesday 30 October from 6-8pm in the Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House, Westminster where the National Sikh Youth Federation (NSYF) launched the exhibition - 'A Candle in the Dark - An Exhibition of Sikh History'.

This exhibition showcased how, in the context of Sikh history, Guru Nanak's mission to build a truly utopian society encountered violent opposition. The exhibition takes you on a journey through the challenges Sikhs have faced from the beginnings of the Sikh Way of Life, right up to the shocking events of the Genocide of November 1984.

The exhibition was launched to commemorate the atrocities of the genocide in November 1984. An estimated 30,000 Sikhs were killed in an orchestrated and premeditated attack aiming to vanquish enduring proponents of Guru Nanak's ideology; who did not succumb to the atrocities of the attack on Amritsar (Operation Blue Star) and the purge of Sikh youth in Operation Woodrose.

This was a national exhibition, which toured the United Kingdom for 6-8 weeks with venues currently booked in London, Midlands (Derby), Leeds, Glasgow and Cardiff.

The exhibition and lobby raised awareness about the November 1984 genocide with several eye witness accounts from survivors and about the continued human rights abuses in Punjab with a special focus on the cases of Kulbir Singh Barapind and Daljit Singh Bittu.



NSYF Exhibition in Derby with C. Williamson MP

CANADIAN PM WHILST IN INDIA DEFENDS RIGHT OF SIKHS TO CAMPAIGN FOR A SIKH HOMELAND



Canadian PM Stephen Harper in Amritsar

The Sikh Federation (UK) congratulated Stephen Harper, the Canadian Prime Minister, for taking a strong stand against India and defending the right of Sikhs to campaign for a Sikh homeland.

The Federation disclosed what almost certainly led Stephen Harper to come out in support of Sikhs right to campaign for a Sikh homeland when pushed in Bangalore on the last day of his 6-day visit to India.

Congress leaders - Dr Manmohan Singh and Preneet Kaur - raised in public the



issue of curbing Sikh separatists living in Canada with Stephen Harper during his visit. Initially Preneet Kaur, Minister of State of External Affairs said in a meeting with Stephen Harper that the "revival of anti-India rhetoric" in Canada was of "great concern" and linked this to possible unrest in Punjab. Stephen Harper then met Manmohan Singh on 6 November where similar concerns were expressed.

In September India raised the issue with Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird during his visit to India. Baird had to clarify his position on return to Canada and issue a public apology to the Sikh community.

Harper first responded to Preneet Kaur by saying that Canada is a supporter of a united India and this view was widely shared among our Indo-Canadian community. But the Indian government's pressure on the issue was very poorly received in Canada and by Sikhs elsewhere. Stephen Harper therefore did not want a repeat of what happen to Baird in September.

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

'We have been liaising with and advising leading Sikh organisations in Canada prior to the visit and during the last seven days. This pressure from several quarters has had an impact.'

'As soon as the first media reports started to appear of Indian government pressure we responded with direct contact from the UK with Conservative Sikh MPs – Tim Uppal, Parm Gill, Nina Grewal and Bal Gosal who were with the Canadian Prime Minister in India.'

'We also contacted over 40 MPs from the federal opposition in Canada to get them to exert pressure on the Canadian Prime Minister and who have been supportive of Sikhs in relation to the November 1984 genocide of Sikhs.'

'The combination of these two things, especially the personal contacts we have developed with some of the Conservative Sikh MPs over several years, even before some were elected, have resulted in Stephen Harper coming out in strong defence of Sikhs having the right to peacefully promote the creation of a Sikh homeland.' Stephen Harper is now on record as having said:

"Violence and terrorism can't be confused with the right of Canadians to bold and promote their political views".



Canadian PM Stephen Harper

His government "does not consider it a crime to argue for or to promote a Sikh homeland and believes other political parties in Canada agree with him" and declared that "he won't be moved on this matter."

"It may be a political position that both the government of Canada and the government of India disagree with," but "we can't interfere with the right of political freedom of expression."

A Federation spokesman said: "Hopefully, the Indian authorities will now think twice raising such matters on curbing the activities of Sikhs campaigning for a Sikh homeland with true democracies like Canada and the UK who will defend the right to freedom of speech, expression and political lobbying."

INDIA CONDEMNED FOR BREAKING MORATORIUM AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY AND DEFYING UNITED NATIONS

Khalsa Human Rights, the human rights wing of the Sikh Federation (UK), joined Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other human rights organisations in strongly condemning India in defying the United National General Assembly Resolution passed on 20 November.

On Tuesday 110 nations voted in favour of a resolution that expressed its 'deep concern about the continued application of the death penalty' and called on states to 'establish a moratorium on

executions, with a view to abolishing the practice'. Although not legally binding the UN General Assembly resolutions carry considerable moral and political weight.

The Assembly's Third Committee which passed the resolution this week deals with social and humanitarian issues, as well as human rights. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has welcomed the record vote in the Third Committee and called on UN member states to support next month's General Assembly Plenary for a final decision on the resolution.

However, within 24 hours of the UN resolution by the Third Committee India had carried out its first execution for over eight years. Ajmal Kesab, a death row convict, was hanged in Pune's Yerwada jail. India executed Auto Shanker in April 1995 and Dhananjoy Chatterjee in August 2004.

A Khalsa Human Rights spokesman said:

'A day after India opposed the resolution at the United Nations on a moratorium against the death penalty it has had the audacity to carry out its first execution in over eight years.'

'In the last 17 years there had been only two executions in India and many nations around the world and leading human rights groups had pointed to there being a de-facto or unofficial moratorium in India for the last eight years and took considerable comfort from this. The execution yesterday means India has reached new lows in terms of its human rights standing on the world stage.'

'By this act of a premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the Indian state it has violated the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.'

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

'It had recently been suggested by senior politicians in the UK and other parts of Europe that the new Indian President, Pranab Kumar Mukherjee, who took up his position in July 2012 had been approached and they were confident that these diplomatic advances may eventually lead to the abolition of the death penalty in India.'



United Nations General Assembly

'These politicians and the 110 nations that passed the UN General Assembly Resolution this week, especially EU Member States who collectively oppose the death penalty, now need to be put India under pressure in response to their open defiance of civilised nations that abhor the death penalty and oppose it in all cases without exception regardless of the nature of the crime or the characteristics of the offender.'

A Khalsa Human Rights spokesman said:

'There are reported to be between 300-400 prisoners on death row in India. Following yesterday's execution some in India have suggested only politically convenient convicts will be executed.'

'In India politicians will decide who to hang – and that too when it is beneficial to them politically.'

The execution yesterday came a day before the winter session of the Indian Parliament and weeks ahead of Gujarat assembly elections in December where the Congress will be taking on the BJP, the centre's key opposition.

The likes of Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, implicated for the mass murder of the Muslim minority population in Gujarat in 2002 and the Indian media are now openly calling for the execution of Afzal Guru, which must be a distinct possibility.



Some in the Indian media have also mentioned Balwant Singh Rajaona and the three assassins of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. However, others have suggested that as long as there is pressure on India from within and from abroad as regards the likes of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar and Balwant Singh Rajaona India will avoid carrying out these executions.

Human rights activists fear the political trend in India has always been that Indian politicians will do almost anything to secure votes. Some are worryingly suggesting as long as the death penalty has been handed down by the apex court and the President has rejected the mercy petition, a convict should be executed without delay, as the law states that a delay in the judicial procedure is a valid ground for commuting the sentence.

Khalsa Human Rights and the Sikh Federation (UK) are arranging a Europe-wide delegation of Sikhs to meet officials at the European Commission and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in Brussels to get them to urgently take up the matter with India at the highest levels.

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) TWO-DAY EUROPEAN LOBBY FOCUSING ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN INDIA PROVES HUGE SUCCESS



In January a Sikh Federation (UK) team returned from a two-day lobby in Brussels. Two meetings took place with the European Commission and UK representatives had separate meetings with 10 different UK MEPs.

One of the meetings with the European Commission was to discuss respect for the Sikh turban and airport security. At the other meeting the Federation led a 14-member Europe-wide delegation of Sikhs to meet with five key staff working for

Baroness Catherine Ashton, the Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. These key staff members work for the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU's diplomatic service.

This meeting was the third such meeting with the European Commission organised by the Federation in recent years to discuss EU relations with India, the death penalty and human rights abuses in India with those responsible for human rights and for day-to-day dealings with India on behalf of the EU. There was a frank exchange of views on a wide-range of issues and the meeting was appreciated by both sides given the quickly developing situation in India.

Using the example of mass protests by the younger generation in Punjab in support of Balwant Singh Rajaona and more recently against the treatment of women a view was expressed that the events of the last 12 months have shown India is far more unstable than many had previously been prepared to accept.

It was pointed out that in recent weeks the world media has drawn attention to the criminalisation of politics in India, a failing judicial system that allows the rich and powerful to escape justice for serious crimes and problems such as drug addiction in Punjab that the Indian State is deliberately allowing or worse still, promoting.

The fact that one third of the members of the Indian Parliament have either been convicted or arrested and charged with serious criminal offences, such as murder, rape, kidnapping, robbery and extortion was not lost on those the Sikh delegation were meeting.

Staff at the European Commission working for Baroness Catherine Ashton were clearly far more receptive to the idea that there are systemic failings in the workings of the Indian State and unless there

is radical reform issues like the treatment of women, minorities and the huge gap between the rich and poor could result in the break-up of India.

Given the importance of EU trade with India, in the present economic climate, it was suggested the EU may need to look at the distinct possibility of a different scenario that could include the existence of a separate Sikh homeland.

In the meetings that took place with the European Commission and UK MEPs the following specific human rights issues were discussed:

- on-going death row cases of Davinderpal Singh Bhullar and Balwant Singh Rajaona who have been in prison for 18 and 17 years respectively
- false arrest and torture in September 2012 of opposition leaders Kulbir Singh Barapind, an elected member of the SGPC and Daljit Singh Bittu who have both chosen the path of political engagement
- 10-year imprisonment of 93-year old Dr Assa Singh and 11 others, many in their 60s and 70s, in November 2012 for the Ludhiana bank robbery some 25 years ago using circumstantial evidence under the infamous TADA legislation, widely condemned by Amnesty International and the United Nations Human Rights Council and supposedly abolished in 1995

In addition, whilst reference was made to the lack of justice following the genocide of Sikhs in June and



November 1984 and the visit of Kamal Nath to EU countries certain cases were highlighted where Sikhs have been killed in the last two years. The significance of the Sikh media in raising awareness within the Sikh Diaspora, in particular the 1 million Sikhs in Europe and the 1 million Sikhs in Canada and the USA was not lost on officials and politicians listening. The five cases highlighted were:

- Illegal police detention, torture and beating to death of Shaminder Singh Shera in January 2011
- arrest, torture and death in police custody of Sohanjit Singh under mysterious circumstances in March 2011
- apprehension, torture by police and killing of Veer Singh in January 2012
- death due to serious burns of Kulwant Singh in Central Amritsar Jail in February 2012. He had previously been admitted to hospital with life threatening injuries as a result of police torture
- 18-year-old Jaspal Singh was killed by police bullets in an unprovoked firing during a peaceful protest in March 2012

Separate meetings took place with various UK MEPs that explored how each could assist the Sikh community in exposing the human rights abuses highlighted. This included two party groupings who can speak in debates to raise issues, members of various delegations, including the India delegation and South Asia delegation and members of sub committees such as the one for human rights. Some agreed to raise parliamentary questions and others said they could use their various positions to raise matters on behalf of Sikhs.



MEPs that held meetings in alphabetical order were: Stuart Agnew, Phil Bennion, Derek Clark, Roger Helmer, Jean Lambert, Linda McAvan, Edward McMillan-Scott, Bill Newton Dunn, Peter Skinner and Charles Tannock.

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) RAISE OPPOSITION TO DEATH PENALTY WITH PRIME MINISTER, DAVID CAMERON BEFORE HIS VISIT TO INDIA AND LAUNCH MASSIVE INTERNATIONAL LOBBY

The Sikh Federation (UK) wrote to David Cameron ahead of his planned visit to India. The letter and other communications by the Federation with Ministers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office urged David Cameron to raise the UK and EU opposition to the death penalty in India.

The opposition to the death penalty was also raised with French President, Francois Hollande who had also just visited Delhi.

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

'The UK and France are two of the five Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council opposed to the death penalty. They are expected to voice their concerns in person with the Indian authorities about the worrying and backward trend of the reintroduction of hangings with two in the last three months.'

The letter from Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK), to David Cameron stated:

'The British Sikh community along with many others were alarmed to learn about the latest hanging in India on Saturday. That makes it two hangings in three months and there are worrying signs India has permanently moved backwards as regards the abolition of the death penalty.'

'The latest hanging is highly provocative and suggests India is signalling a challenge to over 110 nations, including all EU countries, which have rightly turned their back on the barbaric use of the death penalty.'

'The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has had much correspondence from MPs representing the Sikh community about the plight of Balwant Singh Rajoana and Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar in recent years and we fear the politics in India at the present time will mean they could easily go to the gallows in the next few weeks.'



Baroness Stern Chair APPG for Abolition of Death Penalty

'We understand you will be in India next week and are also likely to visit the Harmandar Sahib (Golden Temple) Complex and sincerely hope you will not shy away from publicly condemning India for carrying out two hangings in the last three months and urge them to immediately reinstate the moratorium against the death penalty.'

In addition, the Federation wrote to Baroness Stern as Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Abolition of the Death Penalty and communicated with Fabian Hamilton MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for UK Sikhs urging them to write to David Cameron.

Khalsa Human Rights, the human rights wing of the Sikh Federation (UK) also issued a letter that could be sent to MPs and MEPs to try and stop the imminent hanging of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar and Balwant Singh Rajoana.

HOW FAR WILL UK PRIME MINISTER GO TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR SIKHS WHILE IN INDIA?



David Cameron PM at Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar

Federation wrote to the Prime Minister and got dozens of UK MPs to urge him to condemn India for the recent hangings.

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

'The Sikh Nation would greatly appreciate a public apology from the British Prime Minister for the 1919 bloody massacre in Amritsar.'

'We also have no doubt David Cameron will raise UK and EU opposition to the death penalty while in India as this is the official policy, but we suspect he will express his concerns in private and not make a public statement during this trip.'

'However, the debate planned in the UK Parliament on 28 February about the Abolition of the Death Penalty in India will almost certainly result in disquiet and the Indian media may force David Cameron's hand to make a public statement condemning India.'

'We also reminded the Prime Minister last week that it is on record that he along with around another 180 UK MPs specifically supported opposition against the death penalty against Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar and called for his release by signing an Early Day Motion before he became leader of the Conservatives.'

Another issue that may come up is India's own massacre in Amritsar in June 1984. An apology for the 1919 Amritsar massacre will make it possible for David Cameron to show public sympathy towards the Sikhs for the events of June 1984 when the Indian Army used tanks and artillery to attack the Harmandar Sahib Complex and kill thousands of innocent Sikh pilgrims.

The Sikh Federation (UK) letter to David Cameron last week referred to June 1984 and asked him to reflect on this when he experiences the peace and tranquillity when he pays his respects at Darbar Sahib. It will not be lost on David Cameron, that when in opposition the Conservatives raised two separate Early Day Motions on the 25th anniversary of the June 1984 and November 1984 massacres.

Another issue that may complicate David Cameron's visit is his unusually strong declaration of support for Pakistan last Tuesday when he told the country's Prime Minister, Raja Pervez Ashraf, at 10 Downing Street that, "your friends are our friends, and your enemies are our enemies".



David Cameron PM at Jallianwala Bagh



UK SIKHS HOPE CAMERON WILL REGRET JALLIANWALA BAGH

Prabhjot Singh/TNS

Chandigarh, February 18. The nearly half a million strong Sikh community in the UK, 56 per cent of which are British born, hopes that Prime Minister David Cameron would regret the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, where hundreds of peacefully protesting Sikhs, including women and children, were done to death by British troops, during his visit to Amritsar on February 20.



Dabinderjit Singh OBE on Channel 4 News show with John Snow

Representatives of the Sikh community in Great Britain have over the weeks submitted memoranda and held meetings with the ruling Conservatives with a hope that the British Prime Minister would also take up the issue of abolition of death penalty as India has witnessed two hangings in the past three months.

The Sikhs also want the British Prime Minister to reflect on the Operation Bluestar and the killing of innocent Sikhs in many parts of India in November

1984 as a fallout of the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. A section of the Sikh community believes that to avoid embarrassment to the hosts, he may take up some of these issues privately with the Indian Prime Minister rather than making any public statements.

All these issues have been raised in a memorandum the Sikh Federation of the UK sent to David Cameron before he left for India on a three-day official tour.

The Conservatives are keen to win over the British Sikh community over to its side.

Traditionally the majority of the UK Sikhs have been supporters of the Labour Party that was voted out of power in the last General Election.

The Sikh Federation has reminded Cameron that when in Opposition, the Conservatives had raised two separate Early Day Motions on the 25th anniversary of both the 1984 Operation Bluestar and the Sikh massacre of November 1984.

Going by reports in the British media, there is a strong feeling that Cameron during his visit to Jallianwala Bagh may convey British regret for what had been described as one of the major massacres of innocent people that took place on the Baisakhi Day of 1919.

Canada regretted the Komagata Maru episode in which a large number of Indians, mostly Sikhs, were killed. The Canadian Government has raised Komagata Maru memorials. Incidentally, both Canada and Great Britain have Conservatives in power.

Both the Canadian and British Governments, recognising the great contribution of Sikh immigrants towards nation building, have been bending backwards to appease the Sikhs and win them over.

Of late while the Sikh community in Canada has won a foothold in federal politics by returning eight to nine Members of Parliament, their counterparts in England are yet to become a strong political identity.

Early this month, a large number of British MPs gathered in the House of Commons to pay tribute to Lord Tarsem Singh King, the first Sikh to be honoured as a Lord in 1999. Sikh Sporting guests included Ravi Bopara who played cricket for England and Sutinder and Kulbir Singh who both played for England and Great Britain teams in major hockey tournaments, including World Cup and Olympics.

Though the first wave of Sikh immigrants to Great Britain were those who fought for the British in the first World War, most of the Sikhs who made Britain their home came from India while the rest moved from Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) and Hong Kong.

Maharaja Duleep Singh still holds the official record of being the first Sikh settler in Great Britain in 1846. His statue on Butten Island is a major attraction for tourists in general and Sikhs in particular. The statue was unveiled in 1999.

The first Sikh Gurdwara in Britain came up at Putney in London in 1911. Now there are hundreds of gurdwaras, including one of the biggest in Southall.

A recent survey conducted by a British newspaper about different ethnicities and communities to have made Britain their home placed the Sikhs at number one, above Jews and Christians. Sikhs have the highest percentage, 82, for owning houses among all communities.

AKAL TAKHT JATHEDAR SHOULD HAVE URGED SIKHS TO BOYCOTT FUNERAL OF SWARAN GHOTNA

The Sikh Federation UK expressed its opinion that Giani Gurbachan Singh, Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht should have asked Sikhs not to attend the last rites of an infamous Punjab cop who reportedly died on February 16, 2013.

"It has been reported that Swaran Ghotna, the police officer who tortured and murdered the former Jathedar of the Akal Takht Gurdev Singh Kaunke by tearing him in half, has perished", reads a statement by the UK based Sikh body.

Given the heinous crimes ordered and committed by Swaran Ghotna on hundreds if not thousands of young Sikhs the Sikh Federation (UK) in a statement has said the current Jathedar of the Akal Takht should have issued a strongly worded statement and urged Sikhs to boycott his funeral in protest to his actions for which he was never brought to account.



Jathedar Gurdev Singh Kaunke

The Sikh Federation (UK) statement also said the Jathedar of the Akal Takht and the SGPC should also have raised the issue of the Indian army assault on the Darbar Sahib Complex in June 1984, the Genocide of Sikhs in November 1984 and the cases of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar and Balwant Singh Rajoana with the British Prime Minister, David Cameron when he visited the Darbar Sahib Complex.



SSP Swaran Ghotna

Instead the SGPC press release and what has been reported in the media is that the only issue for which they requested the assistance of the British Prime Minister was resolving the Dastar issue in France. Anyone that understands the issue and British French relations will understand even if assistance was requested, as soon as this was publicly reported it undermined anything the UK Government could do behind the scenes to assist Sikhs in France.

Gurjeet Singh, the National Press Secretary of the Sikh Federation (UK) said: 'The Jathedar of the Akal Takht must improve the advice he receives and be alert to issues that concern Sikhs and issue statements when expected by the Sikh masses around the globe.'



UK MPs PREPARE FOR HISTORIC DEBATE IN THE UK PARLIAMENT ON THE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN INDIA

The Sikh Federation (UK) produced and distributed a 7,500 word briefing to over 100 UK MPs before the two and a half hour debate in the UK Parliament on the Abolition of the Death Penalty in India. The briefing began by stating:

Punishment by death is against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a "premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state."

To highlight the significance of the issue the Sikh Federation (UK) briefing quotes the Times of India as reporting in February 2013 that 'India is currently imposing a death penalty sentence every third day.'

The briefing provides general background on the Death Penalty in India and extensive details on the case history and current situation of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar that many others misrepresent or are simply unaware of.

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

'We expect at least one hour of the debating time to be focused on Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar alone. There is much that can be taken from his case history to show the fundamental failings of the Indian judicial system. If there is any justice in India the Professor should be released without any further delay.'

MPs are also expected to cover the case of Balwant Singh Rajoana and the worldwide protests by Sikhs to stop his hanging last year. The briefing sets out that Dilawar Singh and Balwant Singh Rajoana witnessed the former Chief Minister of Punjab, Beant Singh, order the mass killing of innocent Sikhs - men, women, and children and goes on to say:

'During Beant Singh's tenure it has been widely reported that the police and paramilitary forces were responsible for the killing of more than twenty-five thousand Sikhs who were either 'disappeared' or killed outright by the police in extrajudicial executions. 'Their bodies were cremated as 'unidentified' without following due legal procedure'.

The briefing also provides specific examples of extra-judicial killings of Sikhs by the police in the last two years to demonstrate that the Indian authorities have returned to eliminating Sikhs and political opponents through extra-judicial killings without having to take cases to court and secure prosecutions.



Extra-judicial killings by Punjabi Police

It is rumoured that many pro-Indian UK politicians are making excuses and will stay away from the debate. Privately they are believed to be furious a debate is taking place that will inevitably result in criticism of India. They are saying it will be a one-sided debate as the UK Government will have no choice but to condemn India for retaining the death penalty and other human rights violations.

The Sikh Federation (UK) briefing concludes by asking UK MPs to raise a number of questions and make proposals that will exert pressure on the UK Government to work with EU Member States and other nations across the globe opposed to the death penalty to take the issue up at the United Nations.



SPECIAL REPORT – UK MPs CALL FOR THE DEATH PENALTY TO BE ABOLISHED IN INDIA

John McDonnell MP and Fabian Hamilton MP the co-sponsors of the debate in the UK Parliament on 28 February in their speeches provided background to the death penalty in India and how India had ended its unofficial eight year moratorium on 21 November 2012.

John McDonnell admitted:

'The eight-year moratorium lulled us into a false sense of security. Naively, many of us thought that although India retained the death penalty on the statute book the continuation of the moratorium was an indication that it would eventually be abolished once and for all. Unfortunately, that was a naive judgment.' - John McDonnell MP (Lab) - Hayes and Harlington

Fabian Hamilton stated: 'Pranab Mukherjee, India's President, has now ordered the death penalty for seven convicts in the past seven months, which is more than any other Indian President in the past 15 years. India is currently imposing a death penalty sentence every third day, according to The Times of India this month.'

'Human rights activists in India are worried that this precedent could affect the 500 or so people now on death row in India, including political prisoners such as Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar and Balwant Singh Rajoana. As of 11 February 2013, 476 convicts were on death row in India.' -Fabian Hamilton MP (Lab) - Leeds North East.

Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar:



Prof Davinderpal Singh Bhullar in poor mental health

As expected the case that received the most attention during the debate was that of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar. The person that spoke with the greatest passion, especially about the Professor was Fabian Hamilton. Using the Sikh Federation (UK) briefing he gave a detailed account of the Professor's case and said: 'his case is a real cause célèbre; he has been tortured and treated inhumanely in prison.'

He set out why he had to flee India for Germany in December 1994 and how he was deported in January 1995. In fact the Indian authorities gave specific assurances to the German authorities that Professor Bhullar had nothing to fear if he was returned to India and that he would not be tortured. Fabian Hamilton stated: 'By deporting someone to a death penalty-prone country, Germany violated the European convention on human rights and remains morally obliged to do all it can now to seek the professor's immediate release.'

He continued: 'Professor Bhullar was examined by a police-assigned medical doctor. Although the professor is a highly educated man, his medical examination document is co-signed by him with a thumbprint. We know that the case against Professor Bhullar is highly dubious; it is based on information that has not been properly corroborated, with the prosecution having offered no corroboration at all. None of its 133 witnesses identified Professor Bhullar. Many witnesses actually claimed he was not the man they had seen. One prosecution witness, a rickshaw worker in Delhi, informed the court that he had no knowledge of the case but had been threatened and forced by the police to provide a false statement. Almost every legal system in the world is based on the idea of proof beyond reasonable doubt and respects procedures in order to obtain safe evidence. The Supreme Court of India seems to have departed from those things in the most important of all cases—that of the death penalty—thus setting an unfortunate new precedent for Indian law.'

Balwant Singh Rajoana



Bhai Balwant Singh Rajoana



The other prominent case that received numerous mentions in the debate was that of Balwant Singh Rajoana. John McDonnell pointed out his case has immense significance around the world and is important for its historical context as it symbolises the suffering of the Sikhs at the hands of the former Chief Minister Beant Singh in that period.

John McDonnell stated: *'We now know that Beant Singh personally commanded the police and security forces in the killing and disappearance of possibly more than 20,000 Sikhs—men, women and children. Faced with the failure of the Indian authorities to take action against the former Chief Minister for his crimes against humanity, Balwant Singh . . . took the law into . . . (his) own hands.'*

In the debate MPs one after the other called for India to abolish the death penalty, including Hugo Swire MP, the Minister representing the Government.

UK FOREIGN SECRETARY RESPONDS ON THE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN INDIA

The Sikh Federation (UK) took the lead in exerting pressure on the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, before he left for India, to raise UK opposition to the death penalty and raise the cases of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar and Balwant Singh Rajoana when he visited India between 18-20 February.

The Sikh Federation (UK) wrote to the UK Prime Minister on 12 February and through its lobbying network across the UK managed to contact over 100 MPs before the PM left for India. Around half of these MPs communicated their concerns before the PM left for India on the evening of 17 February.

The Federation also approached Fabian Hamilton MP, the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs and Baroness Stern, the Chair of the APPG for the Abolition of the Death Penalty to also write to the PM.

Fabian Hamilton wrote to the PM and the Foreign Secretary on 13 February. There was nothing new in the formal response from the Foreign Secretary. However, an official response from the Foreign Secretary, William Hague, in response to the APPG for British Sikhs is significant.

A joint meeting of the APPG for the Abolition of the Death Penalty and the APPG for British Sikhs, along with senior representatives from Amnesty International, Reprieve, Sikh Federation (UK) and Sikh Council UK took place in Parliament to make suggestions for a strategy for further actions to take individually and collectively at the UK, European and international level.

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) URGES SIKHS IN GERMANY TO GET GERMAN GOVERNMENT TO RAISE CASE OF PROFESSOR BHULLAR AND TO IMMEDIATELY STOP CENSORSHIP OF THE FILM SAADA HAQ WHEN MANMOHAN SINGH VISITS LATER THIS WEEK



German Chancellor Angela Merkel with Manmohan Singh Indian PM

The Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Germany in mid-April for a 3-day visit. He held talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin. The main purpose of his visit is to get support for the India-European Union Foreign Trade Agreement (FTA).

The negotiations between the EU and India began 6 years ago in April 2007 and so far twelve rounds of negotiations have been held. The negotiations have been controversial and were mostly

held behind closed doors. Reportedly, one of the main

roadblocks has been the EU's insistence on including non-trade issues (human rights issues and environmental and labour standards) in the FTA, to which India is strictly opposed. The EU continues to insist that India should improve its human rights, labour standards and animal welfare record, amongst other non-trade concerns.

In November 2012 India ended its unofficial eight-year moratorium on the death penalty when it hanged Ajmal Kasab. The Sikh Federation (UK) and its human rights wing Khalsa Human Rights have increased communications with the European Commission in Brussels and exerted greater pressure through MEPs regarding the death penalty in India and other human rights concerns.

In January 2013 the Sikh Federation (UK) led an EU-wide delegation of Sikh representatives in a meeting in Brussels with European Commission officials dealing with human rights and India. Following this meeting Baroness Catherine Ashton, the EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner met the Indian Foreign Minister on 30 January 2013. The planned India-EU Summit in Brussels that Manmohan Singh was to attend in February 2013 to finalise the FTA was then postponed to later in the year.

Since then India has again carried out the death penalty in February 2013 by hanging Afzal Guru. In addition, Pranab Mukherjee, India's President, has broken all records and now ordered the death penalty for fourteen convicts in the last nine months. On 5 April Amnesty International issued a world-wide Urgent Action appeal (UA 85/13: India: Indian prisoners at risk of imminent execution) that includes Balwant Singh Rajoana.

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

'We have contacted Sikh representatives in Germany about Manmohan Singh's visit later this week and were in Frankfurt a week earlier urging Sikhs in Germany to increase political pressure on the German Government regarding Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar's case given that the German authorities illegally deported him in January 1995.'

'This is an excellent opportunity for Sikhs in Germany to join forces with Amnesty International and other international human rights groups to exert maximum pressure on the German Government to take up the issue of the death penalty and human rights abuses with the Indian Prime Minister.'

'In addition, this is an opportunity to work with anti-censorship groups and civil liberty groups in Germany about the controversial decision by state governments to ban the film Saada Haq in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi despite approval by the Censor Board. This is another violation of basic human rights on freedom of expression and cannot be justified.'

'Manmohan Singh needs to get a very clear message from the German Government and those living in Germany, including Sikhs, that its human rights record is getting worse and will not be tolerated by Member States of the European Union.'

ANNUAL JUNE 1984 REMEMBRANCE MARCH & FREEDOM RALLY IN LONDON

Tens of thousands of Sikhs gathered in London on Sunday 9 June to mark the 29th anniversary of the Indian army attack on the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar in June 1984.



Sangat at June 84 Rally - Temple Place



Panj Piare commencing Remembrance March

Sikhs from across Britain assembled in Temple Place and Surrey Street near Temple tube station. The remembrance march led by the Panj Piare (five beloved ones) with swords drawn began in the Strand near the Indian High Commission at around 1pm.



The march headed for Trafalgar Square and then for the first time passed through Whitehall where Sikh representatives stopped at 10 Downing Street and delivered by hand a memorandum for the British Prime Minister, David Cameron.

This year the memorandum was delivered a few months after David Cameron became the first ever sitting British Prime Minister to visit and pay his respects at the Golden Temple. Sikhs were therefore hopeful he now had a much better understanding why Sikhs worldwide remain deeply dismayed and angered by the actions of the Indian authorities in sending troops to the holiest of holy places for the Sikhs and killing hundreds if not thousands of pilgrims - innocent men, women and children.

On the back of David Cameron's visit and his first-hand experience of the Golden Temple Sikhs renewed their call for the support of the British Government as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to tackle the continued injustices Sikhs face within India. This includes asking for an Independent UN led enquiry into the treatment of Sikhs in India from June 1984 onwards.

After calling at 10 Downing Street the march continued past the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, entered Parliament Square, past the Houses of Parliament and ended with a three hour freedom rally on Millbank lining the River Thames. Numbers taking part in the march and rally increased once again. Police estimated an increase of around 15%.

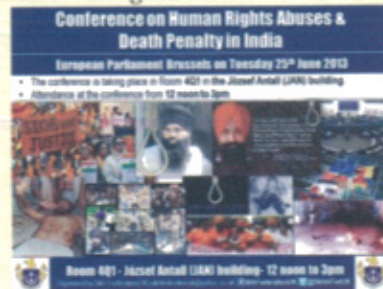
Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) said:

Ultimately, the only solution to conflict in Punjab will lie in the exercise of self-determination by the Sikhs, in accordance with international law, by which means the Sikhs will be able to protect themselves, their natural resources and their "honour, dignity and independence". We are committed to peaceably establishing an independent sovereign Sikh homeland, a state often referred to as Khalistan that will provide lasting stability in the region.

CONFERENCE IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT EXPOSES CONTINUED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN INDIA

Sikhs from across Europe pass resolutions in the European Parliament calling for the:

- 1984 killing of Sikhs to be recognised as Genocide
- Abolition of the Death Penalty in India
- Immediate release of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar
- An end to negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and India due to continued human rights abuses in India
- Right of Sikhs to self-determination and to have their own independent Sikh homeland



Host Bill Newton-Dunn MEP East Midlands

The Sikh Federation (UK) having previously organised numerous lobbies and meetings, organised the first ever Sikh conference at the European Parliament on 25 June. The subject chosen was Human Rights Abuses and the Death Penalty in India.

Bill Newton-Dunn, a Liberal Democrat UK MEP from the East Midlands and a member of the India Delegation hosted the 3-hour conference and welcomed Sikhs from a number of countries across

Europe – UK, Italy, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. The conference was chaired throughout by Gurmel Singh of the Sikh Federation (UK).

The conference was divided into four plenary sessions, but even before proceedings started MEPs such as Nigel Farage the leader of the UK Independence Party came to meet UK Sikhs and to listen to their concerns. Others that met UK Sikhs in advance were Sajjad Karim a Conservative MEP from the North West who joined the Sikhs later in the conference and Glenis Willmott a Labour MEP from the East Midlands. Glenis was crucial in helping secure the right for Amritdhari Sikhs to wear the Kirpan in the European Parliament. This right was first fully exercised en masse in January 2013 and repeated yesterday with even larger numbers of Amritdhari Sikhs.

The first session was about the June 1984 Sikh genocide and mass human rights abuses in Punjab by the Indian authorities and the November 1984 massacre of innocent Sikhs. The speakers for the first session were Jaspal Singh and Jaswinder Singh from the UK. A number of video clips were used throughout the conference to visually highlight different issues covered. Marina Yannakoudakis a Conservative MEP from London expressed a specific interest in learning more about the plight of Sikhs.

The main speaker for the second session was Sukhvinder Singh from the UK. This session was about the death penalty in India, including the case of Professor Davinderpal Singh Bhullar and the reasons for Balwant Singh Rajoana's actions. Several MEPs later spoke about their opposition to the death penalty.

Sajjad Karim a Conservative MEP from the North West spoke about his opposition to the death penalty despite surviving the Taj Hotel attack in Mumbai in November 2008. He also said he was heavily involved in negotiations on behalf of the EU with India being the rapporteur on the free trade agreement between the EU and India and specifically requested evidence against Kamal Nath as he continues to have direct dealings with him.



Sajjad Karim MEP North West with Sikh Federation (UK)

The third session was about on-going human rights abuses of the Sikhs with reference to the illegal arrest and torture of political opponents Kulbir Singh Barapind and Daljit Singh Bittu; the unprovoked police murder of 18-year old Jaspal Singh in March 2012; the torture and police murder of 24-year old Shaminder Singh Shera and 17-year old Veer Singh in January 2011 and January 2012 respectively; and the death in police custody of Sohanjit Singh and Kulwant Singh and in March 2011 and February 2012 respectively. Jaspal Singh from the UK spoke about each of these cases and Dabinderjit Singh reiterated their present significance alongside the death penalty cases. The session was concluded by Maninder Singh from the UK who spoke about the True face of Indian democracy: Indian politicians facing criminal charges and failures in India's judicial system.

Numerous other MEPs contributed during the conference, including Edward McMillan-Scott the Vice President of the European Parliament for Democracy and Human Rights and Liberal Democrat MEP from Yorkshire and the Humber who later tweeted 'Interesting Sikh Federation (UK) meeting in EU Parliament today to discuss rights of Sikhs in India and abolition of the death penalty'.

Other MEPs that spoke included Jean Lambert a Green Party MEP from London and the Chair of the South Asia Delegation; Michael Cashman, a Labour MEP from the West Midlands; David Martin, a Labour MEP from Scotland; and Anthea McIntyre, a Conservative MEP from the West Midlands. Two MEPs from Italy also took part, Francesco De Angelis and Patrizia Toia. Around 15-20 assistants of MEPs attended the conference and Sikhs from the UK also met separately with MEPs such as Richard Howitt a Labour MEP from the Eastern region who was unable to attend the conference.



Dabinderjit Singh from the UK presented the fourth and final session about justice delayed is justice denied and the right to self-determination as Sikhs have entered the 30th year since the June 1984 Indian army attack on the Golden Temple Complex.

The session was concluded by Harjinder Singh speaking about identity discrimination in Belgium and the denial of Sikh human rights and difficulties in different European countries, such as France, Austria and Italy. This was also linked to the issue of Sikh self-determination and how a Sikh homeland would be of benefit to Sikhs throughout the Diaspora.

The conference concluded with the reading of five conference resolutions. Sikhs present then passed these resolutions in the Sikh traditional manner of five loud Jakaaray of 'Jo Bole So Nihal Sat Sri Akal' - 'Who so declares, Truth is Eternal, is blessed!' Meaning - a declaration of allegiance to the Guru, and ultimately aligning oneself with the public struggle for truth and justice.

UNITED NATIONS ASKED TO PROBE KILLINGS OF SIKHS IN PUNJAB



Jaspal Singh Khalra

Khalsa Human Rights, the human rights wing of the Sikh Federation (UK), wrote to Professor Christof Heyn, the UN Special Rapporteur on extra judicial, summary or arbitrary executions following the confession by Sub-Inspector Surjit Singh of the atrocities committed by him and security forces in Punjab in the early 1990s.

Surjit Singh who has gone into hiding since his confession claimed to have killed 83 Sikhs in false encounters on the orders of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Paramjit Singh Gill. He has stated that he did not know if the young men were guilty or innocent, and that they were killed unlawfully:

'The guilty were killed, and innocent [young men] were also brought to me to be killed. I didn't know whether they were guilty or innocent, but I was told to kill them regardless.'

In a subsequent interview he also revealed that senior officials threatened that he would meet the same end as human rights defender Jaswant Singh Khalra, who was illegally detained and murdered by Punjab Police for investigating secret mass cremations. He stated that senior officials told him:

'If you open your mouth, then like Jaswant Singh Khalra who was investigating the 25,000 missing bodies, and went missing himself—the same will happen to you.'

A Khalsa Human Rights spokesman said:

'We understand human rights activist Kirpal Singh Randhawa has said that the Punjab and Haryana High Court would be approached to obtain a CBI investigation into the matter. However, we do not think India can conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the atrocities that will result in the identification and prosecution of responsible police officers. We have therefore written to the UN Special Rapporteur who has recently criticised India to ensure international pressure is exerted on India.'

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

'From what Surjit Singh has described these are clear cases of extrajudicial and arbitrary executions that are illegal and without due regard to the law or legal procedure as defined by the United Nations.'



Human rights violations in Sikhs in Punjab.

SIKHS WILL JOIN OTHERS TO OPPOSE MODI IF HE TRIES TO VISIT THE UK

HindustanTimes

PTI

London, August 29, 2013

British Sikhs have expressed opposition to any proposed visit by Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi to the UK.

The Sikh Federation (UK) has joined Muslim groups like the Council of Indian Muslims UK (CIM-UK) in their boycott following an invitation for Modi to visit Britain by some Indian groups of the country's two main political parties earlier this month.



"We welcome the fact that the UK government has not invited Modi, but oppose the tiny minority of pro-Indian Labour and Conservative MPs led by Barry Gardiner, the Labour MP from Brent North, and Sailesh Vara, the Conservative MP from North West Cambridgeshire, who have recently sent Modi invitations and want him to address UK MPs," said Amrik Singh, chair of the Sikh Federation (UK).

The federation, a non-governmental organisation registered as a political party in the UK, claims that Modi has shown "animosity and hatred" towards minorities in India, including Sikhs, Christians and Muslims.

"Sikhs in the UK will lobby UK MPs who return to Parliament in early September and the UK government to oppose Modi's visit, not only because of his involvement in the violence in Gujarat in 2002 but because of his recent discrimination of Sikh farmers in Kutch district by trying to have them evicted," Singh said.

"It demonstrates his policy to make Gujarat, and eventually India, a Hindu state with no place for minorities," he added.

The move comes after CIM-UK in an open letter addressed to the UK government ministers and political party leaders expressed "utter disgust" over an invitation for the chairman of the BJP's national election committee.

The UK government, like the US, had distanced itself from Modi in the aftermath of the 2002 Gujarat riots until late last year when the British high commissioner to India, James Bevan, made diplomatic overtures towards the Gujarat chief minister.

Around 5,000 Sikhs have cultivated the land in Kutch District for around 50 years and transformed this barren land bordering Pakistan into expensive farmland. Over the last few years they have been systematically targeted by the Gujarat Government and the land mafia. Two years ago, as farmland prices shot up, the State government after confiscating land then barred Sikhs from either selling, or taking loan or subsidy on their land under the Act. It also stopped issuing certified copies of land records. The farmers challenged the order in the Gujarat High Court. After a five-day hearing, a three-Judge Bench ruled in favour of the farmers, stating that there was no mention in the Act that Gujaratis alone could own agricultural land and that the Act only forbade non-farmers from owning land. However, the Gujarat government has filed an appeal in the Supreme Court against the order that is listed for hearing on 27 August.



Protests against the arrival of Modi in UK





The Labour Party

Ed Miliband MP
Leader of the Labour Party

One Brewer's Green, London SW1H 0RH
0845 092 2299 | labour.org.uk/contact

October 2013

Message to the Sikh Federation (UK)

As you celebrate the Sikh Federation (UK)'s 10th anniversary I wanted to send my best wishes. I know the Sikh Federation has been an organisation of growing importance for many Sikhs here in Britain.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Sikh community for the contributions through public service, business and charitable giving that you make to Britain. The values the community holds dear - hard work, strong families and looking after our neighbours are values I also hold dear.

My vision for Labour is a party open to people from all backgrounds and people of every faith and the Sikh community is very much part of that.

Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP
Leader of the Labour Party



Come join us on....



www.sikhfeduk.com

sikhfederationuk@yahoo.co.uk

www.facebook.com/sikhfederationuk

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CONTACT US: The Sikh Federation (UK) is a volunteer based organisation. Our members come from a range of backgrounds. Given the number of wide ranging projects and challenges ahead, we are keen to attract professionals and welcome additional volunteers. Key skills and sector knowledge are needed in local & central government, politics & lobbying, human rights, PR & media and web & social media.

DONATE NOW

For monetary donations to support any of the initiatives please note the following bank details: HSBC: Sikh Federation (UK) Account: 51692992 | Sort: 40-43-03

SIKH FEDERATION (UK)