

Sikh Federation (UK)

Never flinch from performing righteous deeds



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ANNUAL REPORT

2020



WORKING FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE & FREEDOM



OVERVIEW



A message from the Chairman

In the last 6 months major restrictions have been imposed on our daily lives by the COVID-19 pandemic. The extraordinary response to the unprecedented public health crisis has changed the way we interact with each other whether that be in families, at work and as a community. For Sikhs the concept of Sangat, as opposed to isolated religious practice, is essential for our spiritual and moral well-being. For many Sikhs it is only when we are part of the Sangat that we are able to carry out much of our seva.

Global politics are now dominated by the pandemic, which has resulted in unparalleled expansion of government power. Restrictions and the public health crisis will remain until an effective vaccine is available. Most commentators predict we are anything from 6-12 months away from a safe and effective vaccine. The full economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still unfolding but all governments are expected to struggle for many years with some struggling more than others.

The Brexit referendum in 2016 triggered a process of polarisation in society that cut across the traditional British political party landscape. Brexit for many years, dominated UK national politics and was the major issue during the December 2019 General Election that returned a Conservative government with a large majority.

The Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath however has the potential to be a political game-changer in the UK that could completely reshape the British political landscape. In just five months since the full lockdown was imposed by the UK Prime Minister, Scottish independence has become much more likely and the Conservatives have lost a 26-point lead over Labour who now stand neck-and-neck on 40%. Currently only 31 per cent approve of the Government's handling of coronavirus.

At the Convention last year we showcased the Sikh Manifesto 2020-25 that was released four weeks before the December 2019 General Election. Despite Covid-19 two issues within the Sikh Manifesto – the need for a Sikh ethnic tick box in the Census 2021 and the campaign for the release of Jagtar Singh Johal have dominated activities in the last 12 months and are reflected in this booklet.

A year ago, the High Court had just granted a judicial review hearing for November 2019 to consider the Sikh ethnic tick box challenge against the Cabinet Office. A year later we have had success with our campaign in convincing the Scottish Government that has delayed the Census by one year until March 2022. However, we are preparing for a second judicial review hearing against the Cabinet Office in October 2020 who are still planning to go ahead with the Census on 21 March 2021. The stakes are very high for the Sikh community as this could be the last ever census. The Cabinet Office has demonstrated it is prepared to go to extreme lengths not to give proper recognition to Sikhs in the census despite the legal recognition of Sikhs as an ethnic as well as a religious group in the Equality Act (2010).

For the last two years there has been a special section of this booklet dedicated to the campaign associated with Jagtar Singh Johal. The last 12 months has witnessed Jagtar's family and the #FreeJaggiNow campaign regularly make national and international headlines and numerous appearances on TV to highlight Jagtar's plight. A special booklet on the campaign for the release of Jagtar Singh Johal is being planned to coincide with his third year in captivity.

The way in which we campaign – lobbying, protests, meetings etc. have all been disrupted with COVID-19. As a community we have not made full use of the Sikh Manifesto 2020-25 with MPs elected in December 2019. A revised political engagement strategy will be developed over the next 12 months and will then be launched in association with the All Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs while restrictions remain in place for COVID-19.

Bhai Amrik Singh
Chair Sikh Federation (UK)

SIKH FEDERATION (UK)

BUILDING A STRONGER POLITICAL VOICE IN THE UK AND ABROAD

SIKH MANIFESTO SHOWCASED AT CONVENTION IN PREPARATION FOR GENERAL ELECTION

15 September 2019 - The Sikh Convention organised by the Sikh Federation (UK) at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Smethwick in the West Midlands attracted over 10,000 Sikhs over the three-day event.

The Convention took place at a time when there was unprecedented political upheaval in the UK with a General Election potentially around the corner. A refreshed Sikh Manifesto highlighting some of the notable achievements, new challenges and opportunities was showcased at the Convention.



The Sikh Manifesto 2015-20 was first published by the Sikh Network in January 2015 before the May 2015 election and was described as a “gamechanger”. This was a masterstroke in providing a resource to be used by Gurdwaras, Sikh organisations and individuals to take up issues with those hoping to be elected as MPs.

The Sikh Manifesto initiated greater engagement around issues and demonstrated how it could be used as a tool to create influence with individual politicians, political parties and government. The refreshed Sikh Manifesto will be a resource to empower Sikh institutions and the community as a whole.

In the 2017 snap election the Labour Party, in an unprecedented move, adopted one of the ten points in its main manifesto and is expected to adopt several items in the refreshed Sikh Manifesto.

John Spellar the local MP for Warley and former Minister spoke towards the start of the Convention at around 11am. Preet Kaur Gill MP, the first Sikh woman MP and Shadow Minister spoke later.



There have been some notable successes in the last 12 months relating to the Sikh identity with the protections afforded to Sikhs in the Offensive Weapons Act and monuments like the “Lions of the Great War” unveiled in Smethwick.



The Sikh community has also shown remarkable unity with unparalleled support from Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations for the campaign to secure the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box in the Census 2021 that has reached a critical point from a legal and political viewpoint.

The need for a Sikh ethnic tick box in the Census 2021 was a significant point of discussion at the Convention given news of the High Court agreeing to a judicial review hearing in November 2019.

The Sikh Federation (UK) has identified over 150 constituencies that have 1,000 or more Sikh constituents where local Sikhs are expected to

ensure MPs elected from these areas do much more on Sikh issues, including supporting the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs.

A balanced scorecard approach is being developed that will be used to assess the performance on Sikh issues of MPs elected. Some of these MPs will be Ministers, Shadow Ministers or backbenchers and will be able to use their positions in different ways to assist the Sikh community.

The Convention also heard from the brother of Jagtar Singh Johal who is fast approaching two years in prison in India with no sign of release or a fair trial. When Jagtar’s wife met the Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt he admitted Jagtar stood no chance of a fair trial in India.

Last year the Sikh Federation (UK) promoted several younger Sikhs to key leadership positions. The next stage of the process of transformation and transitioning the leadership were announced. The structural changes meant 60% of the 15-member leadership team of the Sikh Federation (UK) were Sikhs born in the UK. In addition, Preet Kaur Gill MP is leading a team of five Sikh women to encourage more women to enter politics.

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

“The Sikh Federation (UK) with the support of Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations is leading on political engagement and campaigning for the Sikh community. With a gradual transition to new leadership we are well placed to deliver historic victories for the Sikh community.”

“The current actions of the extreme right-wing Indian government in targeting minorities, including the people of Kashmir and Assam are a major threat to peace and stability in the region. Our interactions with the international community, including several governments and some of the radical solutions we have offered have been well received and we are confident will bear fruit.”

LABOUR MEMBERS ENCOURAGED TO BACK EXCELLENT LOCAL SIKH CANDIDATE SHORTLISTED IN ILFORD SOUTH

17 September 2019 - The Sikh Manifesto 2020-2025 was showcased at the Sikh Federation (UK) Convention in September 2019.

The revised Sikh Manifesto was finalised by the Sikh Network after taking account of feedback from the community, achievements and progress over the last 5 years and new challenges and opportunities.



Thousands of Sikhs from across the UK that gathered for the Convention were told a constant and central focus would remain on more effective representation in Parliament of Sikh issues - the first item in the Sikh Manifesto.

The Sikh Federation (UK) confirmed it will do all it can to ensure the two exiting Panthic-minded Sikh MPs are selected by Labour and elected again. Labour Party members in Ilford South would also be encouraged to select Jasbir Singh Athwal (Jas Athwal) as the Prospective Parliamentary Candidate (PPC) in three weeks.



Jas is not only another Panthic-minded Sikh, but a person dedicated to serve his constituents where he has lived and worked for his entire life. The Labour PPC in Ilford South would be defending one of Labour's safest seats with a massive majority of nearly 32,000.

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

"Jas Athwal has proved to be an exceptional Council leader in Redbridge and is an excellent local candidate with a proven track record."

"We have every confidence the overwhelming majority of Labour Party members in Ilford South will support Jas Athwal as he is the best candidate."

"Labour needs to be alive to criticism of parachuting someone into a safe Labour seat to oppose Jas Athwal in a constituency that has a massive BAME vote."

Those at the Convention were told several items in the existing Sikh Manifesto could be achieved in the short term i.e. next 12 months, including the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box in the Census 2021, the Code of Practice on the 5 Kakaars and Dastaar that is already in draft and if a Labour Government was to come to power the independent judge-led public inquiry could commence on UK involvement in the 1984 Sikh Genocide and anti-Sikh measures against Sikhs in the UK. However, the focus of some of the items in the revised Sikh Manifesto could change to practical implementation i.e. encouraging the immediate collection by public bodies of monitoring data on Sikhs.

Two or three items were likely to be replaced, significantly amended or incorporated elsewhere, such as securing a site in central London to recognise Sikh sacrifices in the World Wars as sufficient progress had been made on securing a site. In addition, the Lions of the Great War monument had already been established in Smethwick and a Remembrance Garden opened in Bristol. Sites in Leicester and Huddersfield had also been secured for monuments.

New items concerning hate crimes targeting Sikhs and our institutions, campaign to secure the release of Jagtar Singh Johal and an apology from the British Prime Minister for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre would be incorporated.

It was made clear at the Convention that some of the issues in the Sikh Manifesto required international co-ordination and a global approach. For example, securing a UN-led inquiry into the 1984 Sikh Genocide and the Sikhs' right to self-determination required campaigning and lobbying across the globe.

The Sikh Federation (UK) continues to lobby the Labour leadership on the need for greater Labour Sikh representation in Parliament and the unacceptable treatment of Councillor Jas Athwal.

Jas Athwal was informed of a complaint in August 2019 and our understanding is that he replied within days to the Labour Party. He refuted the allegations and made himself available to meet at any time.



We understand Jas Athwal was not interviewed by the investigating officer, but he was suspended on the eve of his selection meeting after the party had the complaint for close to a year.

In correspondence with the General Secretary of the Labour Party we have made clear it was totally unacceptable the way Jas Athwal was treated in the run up to the selection in Ilford South and this had damaged the Labour standing with the Sikh community.

We continue to push for an independent hearing so Jas Athwal can clear his name and be reinstated.

INTERNATIONAL CO-ORDINATION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE GLOBE TO SECURE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR JUSTICE AND A SIKH HOMELAND

ਅੰਤਰਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੋਣ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਪੱਤਰ ਜਨਵਰੀ 2020

'ਚ ਜਾਰੀ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ-ਅਮਰੀਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਗਿੱਲ



ਭਾਈ ਅਮਰੀਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਗਿੱਲ

ਲੰਡਨ, 24 ਸਤੰਬਰ (ਮਨਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੱਧਨੀ ਕਲਾਂ)-ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ. ਕੇ. ਵਲੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਸਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਅੰਤਰਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੋਣ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਪੱਤਰ ਤਿਆਰ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਨੂੰ ਜਨਵਰੀ 2020 'ਚ ਜਾਰੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ। ਇਸ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਿੰਦੇ ਹੋਏ ਪ੍ਰੈਸ ਸਕੱਤਰ ਹਰਨੇਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਦੇਸ਼-ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ 'ਚ ਵਸਦੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਿਲਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਾਹਮਣਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵਸਦੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਸਲਾਹ ਮਸ਼ਵਰਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਕ ਸਾਂਝਾ ਚੋਣ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਪੱਤਰ ਤਿਆਰ ਕੀਤਾ

ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਚੇਅਰਮੈਨ ਭਾਈ ਅਮਰੀਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਗਿੱਲ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ 40 ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਕਾਰਕੁੰਨਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਮਿਲ ਕੇ ਇਨਸਾਫ਼ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੱਕਾਂ ਲਈ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਕਰਨਗੇ ਅਤੇ ਹਰ 6 ਮਹੀਨੇ ਬਾਅਦ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਚਰਚਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਰੇਗੀ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੋਣ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਪੱਤਰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ, ਫਰੈਂਚ, ਸਪੈਨਿਸ਼, ਕਰਮਨੀ ਅਤੇ ਇਟਾਲੀਅਨ ਤੋਂ ਇਲਾਵਾ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ 'ਚ ਵੀ ਉਪਲੱਬਧ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਇਸ ਚੋਣ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਪੱਤਰ ਵਿੱਚ 1984 ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਨਸਲਕੁਸ਼ੀ ਦੀ ਯੂ ਐਨ ਓ ਤੋਂ ਜਾਂਚ, ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਘਰ ਲਈ ਮੁਹਿੰਮ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ ਭਰ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਰਕਾਰਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਲਈ ਉੱਚ ਪੱਧਰੀ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਅਪਣਾਉਣ ਸਮੇਤ ਵੱਧ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਮੁੱਦਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ।

23 September 2019 - At the 2019 Sikh Federation (UK) Convention it was pointed out that some of the issues in the Sikh Manifesto were longer term and required international coordination and a global approach to be successfully delivered. For example, securing international support for a UN-led inquiry into the 1984 Sikh Genocide and the Sikhs' right to self-determination required campaigning and lobbying of politicians and governments across the globe.

At an international event held at Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Bobigny in Paris on Sunday 22 September speakers from the Sikh Federation (UK) provided further details. Those present were told a framework would be developed that will be used to co-ordinate political activities in different countries to secure international support for justice and a Sikh homeland.

The framework would provide important historic context, including the previous existence of a sovereign Sikh state that was recognised by all the world powers. It will also set out the historic and current contribution of Sikhs on the global stage and the potential benefits to all those living in a Sikh homeland as well as those in the Sikh Diaspora.

The final text of the framework will be developed and agreed by Sikh activists from several countries and will be a high-level document that will be released in several languages, including English, French, Spanish, German and Italian. It will provide a tool or resource for individual Sikh activists from Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations to campaign systematically with individual politicians, political parties and governments in different countries.

An international network of Sikh activists from around 40 different countries are eventually expected to come together to campaign for justice and a Sikh homeland using the framework.

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



“Sikhs can each work on highlighting injustice and call for freedom for the Sikhs, but the framework that is being developed will allow coordinated efforts from like-minded people across the globe.”

“Over many years we have developed extensive contacts with Sikh activists in Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations in different countries that we wish to build upon.”

“We call upon those we have worked with and others to register for the international network, so they can be connected with others in their own country and abroad to coordinate efforts.”

SIKHS MARK 550TH GURU NANAK DEV JI GURPURB EVENT IN CITY HALL

20 November 2019 - The 550th Gurburb, birth anniversary, of the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak Dev Ji was marked with great accolade at City Hall overlooking the spectacular London skyline on 19 November 2019.



Opening and welcome speeches were delivered by a distinguished panel of speakers including Preet Kaur Gill MP, whom Sadiq Khan described as a true role model to many Sikh and non Sikh women. Preet was followed by the host for the evening Dr Onkar Sahota, who gave the floor to Deputy Mayor, Debbie Weekes-Bernard. In introducing Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, Debbie congratulated the diverse audience congregated within the City Hall, Living Room on the Gurburb of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.



Sadiq Khan acknowledged the diversity of the audience gathered by saying it was the most diverse audience he had ever seen in his time at City Hall.



Satpal Singh, founder of Nanak Naam, keynote speaker for the evening implored the audience to dig deep inside themselves to question the true meaning of oneness, of equality, of Sikh politics, unearthing popular, calming and peaceful depictions of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and shining light on the actual struggle Guru Ji faced in his lifetime whilst working to spread the message of Sikhi. Satpal Singh's connection with the audience was clear from the awe-struck silence within the packed room.



Jas Singh, founding member of the Sikh Network and co-author of the Sikh Manifesto and UK Sikh Survey encouraged audience members to come forward to become ‘activists’ and adopt Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s teachings shared by Satpal Singh. “Sikhi is not a spectator sport,” he cited and urged Sikhs to pursue the truth and engage on issues important to the community, issues clearly outlined in the Sikh Manifesto 2020-2025.



Jas Singh was followed by beautiful kirtan by international devotional singer, songwriter and philanthropist, Manika Kaur accompanied by leading, global violinist Jyotsna, Giuliano on guitar and Gurdain on tabla. The atmosphere created brought goosebumps to the entranced audience.

Canon Mark Poulson, Canon for inter-faith relations at St Paul's Cathedral and for the Diocese of London spoke eloquently on the role of Sikhs as a bridge between societies and the need for their true values to shine through particularly now, at a time of social unrest and changing political climate.

Dabinderjit Singh, OBE, long serving Director at the National Audit Office and principal adviser to the Sikh Federation (UK), emphasised the evening was about celebration, inspiration and recognition, but this year it was also about appreciation. He revealed to guests the specially commissioned 550th Guru Nanak Dev Ji Parkash Gurburb gold coin that was gifted to everyone to take away and treasure. Also tucked in their goodie bags was a donation pledge card to allow guests to show their appreciation for the Kartarpur Sahib Yatra Committee who are undertaking a significant accommodation building project to provide UK pilgrims with first class facilities. Guests were also given a glimpse of the Sikh Manifesto 2020-2025 that was later formally launched at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Smethwick on 23 November and in Glasgow on 24 November.

In line with previous events, a small award ceremony was held to provide recognition to various individuals and organisations who have gone above and beyond in the last year in their work for the Sikh community. The following were awarded for their contribution in their respective fields of work.



Contribution to Politics – Martin Docherty-Hughes

Contribution to Sports – Kirenjit Kaur Bains, Powerlifter

Contribution to Education – Munsimar Kaur

Contribution to Business – Paul Bassi CBE

Contribution to Media – KTV

Contributions in Charity Selfless Seva – Khalsa Aid, Ravi Singh

Contribution to Human rights – Redress

Recognised Organisation – Tribute 1984

Recognised International Contribution – Jaskaran Kaur, Ensaaf

Recognised Lifetime achievement – Pakistan PM Imran Khan

Sahibzada Jahangir, spokesman for the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Trade & Investment in UK & Europe, graciously received the Lifetime achievement award on behalf of Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan. He suggested the Kartarpur Corridor reinforced the idea of Sikhs as a bridge between cultures and countries. He went on to express how honoured the PM would be to receive this recognition and how keen he was to support Sikhs visiting Pakistan.

The event concluded with remarks from two of the event's Sponsors, Harmeet Singh, youngest ever General Secretary of the most iconic Gurdwara in London, Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall, and Amarpal Singh, owner of Punjab Restaurant. Manchandan Kaur from the Sikh Network commented on the event:

"This truly was a remarkable event; the best turnout we have had in the five years we have held this event. The move from Parliament to City Hall to mark the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Gurburb was positively received by our esteemed guests. It is our hope that each of our guests left the evening with a glimmer of Guru Ji's message inside them. The universal message of wellbeing



“Sarbat da Bhalaa”. Guru Nanak Dev Ji explained the importance of equality of all human beings, regardless of gender, background or creed. He stressed the need for social responsibility and an active concern for others. We are blessed today to have an incredible array of male and female Sikh role models to inspire us too, many of whom joined us to mark this once in a lifetime occasion.”

Award for PM Imran Khan by UK Sikh groups

The News: International – 21 November 2019

Prime Minister Imran Khan has been given a “Lifetime Achievement” award by two leading British Sikh organisations at City Hall during the 550th birth anniversary of the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak Dev Ji.



The event at City Hall was co-hosted by the **Sikh Network, Sikh Federation (UK)** and Dr Onkar Sahota, member of the London Assembly in collaboration with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.

The event, attended by dozens of Sikh figures and others from across Britain, celebrated the life and teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji focusing on his universal message of wellbeing “Sarbat da Bhalaa”.

Sahibzada Jahangir, spokesman for the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Trade & Investment in UK & Europe, received an award on behalf of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan welcomed guests to City Hall and highlighted the achievements and contributions of Sikhs in the UK. Khan expressed his admiration for the Sikh community and Sikh religion’s teachings of striving for equality, acceptance and oneness.

Preet Kaur Gill MP, Dr Onkar Sahota, Deputy Mayor Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Satpal Singh,

INTERNATIONAL
THE NEWS

Jas Singh, Canon Mark Poulson and others spoke during the event.

Sahibzada Jahangir suggested the Kartarpur Corridor reinforced the idea of Sikhs as a bridge between cultures and countries. He went on to express how honoured the PM would be to receive this recognition and how keen he was to support Sikhs visiting Pakistan.

He said that it was a matter of pride for Khan’s government that “tremendous work” on Kartarpur Corridor was completed in the shortest possible period of nine months in order to make it possible for the Sikh Community to come to Kartarpur to join in time for Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s celebrations.

Jahangir said: “It all became possible because of Imran Khan’s love and passion for peace & humanity. I invite Sikhs from all around the world to come to Pakistan and enjoy our brotherly hospitality and love. Pakistan is now open for foreign investment as the country’s natural resources offer them great opportunities & their assets under the leadership of Imran Khan will be 100 percent protected at all times.”

Dabinderjit Singh OBE, principal adviser to the Sikh Federation (UK), highlighted the importance of Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s message that those who choose the Guru’s Path should not listen to what others say and never flinch from performing righteous deeds. He appreciated the Kartarpur Sahib Yatra Committee who are undertaking an accommodation building project to provide UK pilgrims with first class facilities.

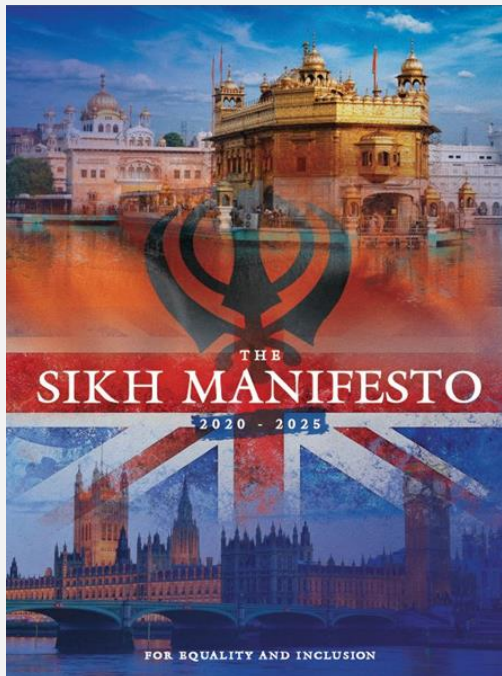
Manchandan Kaur from the Sikh Network commented: “The move from Parliament to City Hall to mark the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s Gurburb was positively received by our esteemed guests. It is our hope that each of our guests left the evening with a glimmer of Guru Ji’s message inside them.



SIKH MANIFESTO 2020-2025 GIVES NOTICE TO POLITICAL PARTIES AND THOSE WANTING TO BE ELECTED MPs

Sikh Manifesto 2020-2025 gives notice to political parties and those wanting to be elected MPs

21 November 2019 - "Millions of Sikhs across the world have in the last few weeks marked Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 550th Parkash, the birth anniversary of the founder and first Sikh Guru. He rejected all forms of discrimination and exploitation under any pretext and founded a new egalitarian social order. Equality for women, rejection of the caste system, respect for diversity while seeing God in all."



These are the opening words of the Sikh Manifesto 2020-2025 that has been developed by Sikh activists while living out what Guru Nanak Dev Ji taught us about achieving a fair, just and thriving society for all.

The Sikh Manifesto set out critical issues raised by members of the British Sikh community that were intended to help raise awareness with political parties and those hoping to be elected MPs on 12 December 2019. It is an invaluable reference document that was used not only in the run up to the election, but will be used over the next five years to monitor progress and judge the performance of MPs and the UK Government.

The Sikh Manifesto is about empowering the UK Sikh community to engage with the UK political system. The Sikh Network will continue to monitor progress against the Sikh Manifesto over the next five years and discuss and agree changes in strategy and approach to help deliver against the issues set out. The Sikh Federation (UK) will lead on lobbying and engagement with the mainstream media and government on many of these issues. The Sikh

Manifesto will test the commitment of the main political parties and individual politicians to the British Sikh community.

The ten-point Sikh Manifesto is unlike the manifestos of the political parties. All Sikh organisations can relate to all or part of the Sikh Manifesto as a briefing document. It is based on the widest possible consensus and collates the most important areas in which challenges remain for British Sikhs and where progress is required.

The first Sikh Manifesto 2015-2020 was widely viewed as a crucial development reflecting the political maturity of British Sikhs. This second Sikh Manifesto demonstrates a broadening of our reach, in terms of the influencing and lobbying of those in power and a deepening of our roots, in terms of coverage of the grassroots issues of importance to Sikhs.

Much progress has been achieved since the publication of the first Sikh Manifesto. The manifesto reflects issues of importance to the Sikh community that politicians need to understand and act upon.



THE SIKH MANIFESTO 2020-2025

- Section 1**– More effective representation of Sikhs in Parliament
- Section 2**– Sikh ethnic tick box option in the Census 2021 and systematic collection of data on Sikhs by public bodies
- Section 3**– Statutory Code of Practice on the five Kakaars (Sikh articles of faith) and Dastaar (Sikh turban)
- Section 4**– Hate crimes targeting Sikhs and our religious institutions
- Section 5**– Additional state funded Sikh faith schools or academies
- Section 6**– Religious freedoms and rights of minorities in India with a rise in Hindu extremism and restrictions on Sikhs practising their faith across the globe
- Section 7**– Release of Jagtar Singh Johal and permanent and unconditional release of other Sikh political prisoners from Indian jails
- Section 8**– Independent public inquiry into the actions of the UK Government and its' motivations for anti-Sikh measures in the 1980s in the UK pre and post the 1984 Sikh Genocide
- Section 9**– International recognition of the 1984 Sikh Genocide and UN-led inquiry
- Section 10**– Application of self-determination for the Sikhs

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FOR EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

Three new sections have been introduced in the refreshed Sikh Manifesto - Sections 4, 6 and 7 that expose hate crime, discrimination and human rights violations. Seven of the ten sections in the first Sikh Manifesto have been refreshed to reflect developments in the last five years and continue to be priorities to achieve or work towards.

Individual Sikhs, Gurdwara management committees and Sikh organisation representatives are encouraged to read and understand the Sikh Manifesto. The aim should be to discuss each of the sections directly with their Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) from each of the main political parties.

PPCs are being asked to confirm in writing, public statements and video messages on social media their commitment to support the Sikh Manifesto in general and specific sections if they wish to secure Sikh votes. This will allow progress to be discussed and tracked with those elected as MPs.

The Electoral Commission has highlighted that Sikhs participate in the British voting process more

than most other communities. However, to make the Sikh vote count Sikh voters are being encouraged to bear in mind the prior commitment of the party or the candidate to the issues and concerns raised by the Sikh community through the Sikh Manifesto.

150 constituencies that have 1,000 or more Sikh constituents have been pinpointed. Those elected in these constituencies are expected to ensure all issues important to the British Sikh community, as set out in this Sikh Manifesto, are raised and acted upon. A balanced scorecard has been developed and will be used to objectively judge the performance of MPs elected in each of these constituencies.

Tory MP candidate apologises for telling Sikh rival he is 'talking through his turban'



Labour says Philip Dunne should be sacked as a Conservative candidate

Independent – 28 November 2019

A former Tory minister has been forced to apologise after telling his Sikh rival he was "talking through his turban" during an election debate.

Labour has called for Philip Dunne to be sacked as a Conservative candidate in the upcoming poll over "disgusting, racist" remarks to opponent Kuldip Sahota at a hustings in his Ludlow constituency on Wednesday.

Mr Sahota said the comments were reminiscent of the kind of racism he suffered in the 1970s and

called for a probe into Mr Dunne, who previously held frontbench roles in health and defence.

The Labour candidate said: "I was shocked and deeply hurt that someone who was an MP for 14 years would make such a derogatory comment about the Sikh faith. This is extremely insulting to the Sikh community.

"These are the kind of offensive comments I remember receiving in the 1970s. They have no place in modern Britain and they certainly have no place in our parliament.

"I hope the Conservatives will investigate this matter immediately."



In response to the outcry, Mr Dunne issued a statement apologising for his remarks.

He said: "I apologised to Kuldip Sahota for my comments last night. I apologise again unreservedly for the offence caused."

However, Labour's Tan Dhesi said he should be suspended and accused the Tories of "condoning blatant racism".

Mr Dhesi, who condemned Boris Johnson in the Commons over racist language, said: "This disgusting, racist remark wasn't just made by a Conservative Parliamentary candidate, it was made by someone who was a Conservative MP for 14 years, who has served as a minister in several Conservative governments, and this year was even given an honour by the Conservative leadership.

"He is not a random candidate in an unwinnable seat. He is a senior Conservative figure who could be re-elected.

"This attack on the turban, which we consider a crown, is an attack on the entire Sikh community, who fought and died for Britain wearing those same turbans.

"The Conservatives must suspend him immediately and strip him of his honour. Anything less than that will be condoning blatant racism."

Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK), said: "This is nothing less than blatant racism, but we have complete silence from the Conservative Party leadership."

"Mainstream political parties and all religious leaders have a collective duty to stamp out all forms of racism irrespective of the perpetrator or victim and leave those making offensive comments in no doubt that their behaviour is unacceptable and take firm action against those peddling hate."

Poll: 'Overwhelming majority of Sikhs expected to back Labour'

AsianImage The voice of the Asian community

Asian Image - 9 December 2019

In a poll of voters conducted on Friday and Saturday, 58% of those that have decided how to vote say they will vote Labour.



Twenty-seven per cent will vote Conservative and 8% Liberal Democrats while 15% remain undecided says **the Sikh Federation (UK).**

The Sikh community is said to have one of the highest turnouts of any community at election time.

In total 150 constituencies have been identified where there are at least 1,000 Sikh constituents and candidates have been sent the Sikh Manifesto 2020-2025 produced by the Sikh Network.

In the poll of 1,100 Sikh voters conducted over a 24-hour period following the final leaders debate on Friday evening Sikh voters were asked to provide reasons for their voting intentions.

Among the reasons emerging why so many Sikhs may vote Labour rather than Conservative on Thursday.

1) Delivering Sikh MPs also able to represent the Sikh community

Before the General Election was called Labour had two Sikh MPs, Preet Kaur Gill the first Sikh woman MP and Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi the first turban wearing Sikh MP while the Conservatives had no Sikh MPs. Preet and Tanmanjeet have worked tirelessly since being elected in June 2017 in terms of serving their constituents and creating a public profile of effectively representing their constituents and the Sikh community.

2) Focus on Sikh specific issues by political parties and Sikh candidates

References in the main Labour Party manifesto to an apology to the worldwide Sikh community for the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in Amritsar in 1919 and an independent inquiry and wider



review into UK involvement in the 1984 Sikh Genocide appear to have consolidated the Sikh vote.

Additional references to addressing Sikh hate crimes and safeguarding Sikh articles of faith in Labour's Race and Faith Manifesto and Jeremy Corbyn's endorsement of the Sikh Manifesto has put the Conservative Party on the back foot and at a disadvantage.

3) Properly dealing with racism and hate towards Sikhs

The Sikh poll suggests the issue of racism and hate towards Sikhs may be a key factor why Labour is ahead of the Conservatives when it comes to Sikh voters. Those polled not only expressed concerns about anti-Semitism and the influence of the far left in the Labour Party, but

serious doubts about the numerous past comments of Boris Johnson.

4) Can Boris Johnson be trusted on Brexit, the NHS and dealing with racism and the far right and clarity on Labour leadership after Jeremy Corbyn

The final issue which emerged from the Sikh poll that could be a key deciding factor in the next few days with the entire electorate is one of trust. Some of those polled said they did not think Boris Johnson could be trusted with regards to Brexit, the NHS and dealing with racism and the far right.

Some of those polled also used the opportunity to make the point that Jeremy Corbyn was unpopular and not trusted by the electorate in general and if the Labour Party could deliver clarity on the future leadership after Jeremy Corbyn in the next few days this could make all the difference on Thursday.

BJP, RSS's campaign to interfere in UK election fails miserably



GEO TV – 19 December 2019

The Indian government's attempts to interfere with the outcome of UK general elections through groups affiliated with ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) were unsuccessful as each and every Labour candidate targeted by the affiliates of Hindutva groups won their seat.



The BJP and RSS's fronted organisations British Hindu and Indian Votes Matter (BHIVM), Conservatives Friends of India (CFI) and the Overseas Friends of BJP (OFBJP) had announced to target 70 Labour candidates for the December 12 elections. After the election results were announced the groups announced that their campaigning on communal lines against the Labour candidates influenced the outcome.

However, thorough research shows that the claim by Hindutva groups is baseless and fictitious.

In fact, the well-oiled campaigning by these groups failed to make any impact and Indian and Hindu voters showed little or no interest in the communal and sectarian campaign encouraged by the Indian government.

These groups claimed that they were angered by Labour and Jeremy Corbyn's support for the right of self-determination for the oppressed people of Kashmir. The groups initiated the campaign after Labour party passed a resolution at the annual conference, ahead of elections, condemning revocation of Article 275 by the Narendra Modi regime.

The Hindutva groups targeted two British Sikh MPs for their support for Khalistan and right of self-determination, six Labour MPs with majority significant Indian and Hindu voters in these constituencies and dozens of other constituencies.

Sikh Federation (UK) Chair Bhai Amrik Singh commenting on the OFBJP's threat to defeat Labour MPs and Hindu Temples said, "In advance of the General Election, BJP only named six MPs or constituencies where they said they would carry out the threat. This included the two Sikh



MPs – Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese and Preet Kaur Gill, where they backed the Conservative candidates. In both cases, their divisive tactics failed and the Conservative vote dropped as they won with large majorities of 13,640 and 5,614 respectively.”

He told Geo News that the other four Labour candidates they said they would defeat were Seema Malhotra, Valerie Vaz, Lisa Nandy and Claudia Webb but all won with comfortable majorities despite the Labour vote dropping nationally because of its stance on Brexit and many not having confidence in the Labour leader.

“Their strategy the BJP and Hindu Temples proved to be a mitigating disaster as all six Labour candidates were elected,” Singh added.

In Leicester East, Claudia Webbe won by 6,018 on the seat vacated by Keith Vaz over a sex scandal. Webbe said she was delighted to be elected but said she had been facing a divisive campaign based on misinformation related to occupied Kashmir.

In Wigan, Lisa Nandy successfully defended Labour’s control of the constituency with a comfortable win at the polls. She won by nearly 7,000 votes.

In Walsall South, Labour’s Valerie Vaz won with a majority of 3,456, followed by Conservative candidate Gurjit Kaur Bains who secured 17,416.

In Feltham and Heston, Labour’s Seema Malhotra won by a margin of nearly 7,000 votes.

First-ever Sikh female MP and Labour candidate Preet Kaur Gill secured victory by more than 6000 votes, fending off the Tory challenge of Alex Yip who received 15,603 votes.

Britain’s first-ever turban-wearing Sikh MP Labour’s Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese was viciously targeted by the BJP and RSS activists in Slough but he beat Tory candidate Kanwal Toor Gill by 13,640 votes.

Political commentator Sunny Hundal said the pro-BJP campaign to affect the outcome of election results was very limited and “mostly resonated with older generation British Indians, rather than the younger generation”.

Hundal said that people could be influenced by misinformation and propaganda - like anywhere. But that impact was limited and mostly resonated with older generation British Indians, rather than the younger generation.

“It certainly did not have enough of an impact to change any seats. Many were more worried about Brexit and the NHS than Kashmir,” he said.

OFBJP President Kuldeep Singh Shekhawat said that “not a single Hindu will vote for Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese this time because Hindu voters think he was working closely with the Pakistani community”. However, evidence shows that no heed was paid to the misleading propaganda run on doorsteps by the BJP and RSS supporters.

A look at the data from the 2011 census shows that there were 30 constituencies in which Asians constituted over 25 per cent of the population. Of these, the largest chunk of 14 seats was in the London area; six constituencies in West Midlands; four in the Birmingham area; and constituencies in and around Manchester, Leicester; Bradford, Luton and Slough made up the rest.

Results of December 2019 election shows that Labour won 29 of these 30 constituencies – exactly the same as in the last general election in 2017. Data showed a drop in the Labour vote share from 68 per cent to 62 per cent. This drop of around 6.5 per cent is lower than the decline of 8 per cent nationally.

The BHIVM, CFI and OFBJP claimed to have mobilized hundreds of volunteers but on ground reports and outcome showed that they were able to manage a few dozen hardcore RSS supporters.

PREET KAUR GILL MP RE-ELECTED CHAIR OF INFLUENTIAL PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADING ON SIKH ISSUES

21 January 2020 - Preet Kaur Gill the Labour MP for Birmingham Edgbaston was re-elected unopposed as the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs at its well-attended Annual General Meeting (AGM).



The Sikh Federation (UK) set up the APPG in 2005 and has been providing secretariat support to it for nearly 15 years. Following the General Election its principal adviser who acts as the secretariat for the APPG and interface with the Sikh community wrote to each of the 150 MPs that have more than 1,000 Sikh constituents that the Sikh community will be looking to work on Sikh issues in the Sikh Manifesto 2020-2025 in the next 5 years.

ਐਮ. ਪੀ. ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਕੌਰ ਗਿੱਲ ਮੁੜੀ ਬਣੀ 'ਆਲ ਪਾਰਲੀਮੈਂਟਰੀ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਫ਼ਾਰ ਸਿੱਖਸ' ਦੀ ਚੇਅਰਪਰਸਨ

ਲੰਡਨ, 22 ਜਨਵਰੀ (ਮਨਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੱਧਨੀ ਕਲਾਂ)- ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਾਮਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਜ਼ਿੱਠਣ ਲਈ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਾਮਲਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਆਵਾਜ਼ ਬੁਲੰਦ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਬਰਤਾਨਵੀ ਸੰਸਦ ਦੇ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਸਦਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਾਂਝੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ 'ਆਲ ਪਾਰਲੀਮੈਂਟਰੀ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਫ਼ਾਰ ਸਿੱਖਸ' ਦੀ ਸਾਲਾਨਾ ਮੀਟਿੰਗ 'ਚ ਐਜਬਾਸਟਨ ਤੋਂ ਸੰਸਦ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਕੌਰ ਗਿੱਲ ਨੂੰ ਮੁੜ ਚੇਅਰਪਰਸਨ ਨਿਯੁਕਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ. ਕੇ. ਵਲੋਂ 2005 'ਚ ਇਸ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਦਾ ਗਠਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ ਅਤੇ 15 ਸਾਲ ਤੋਂ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਸਹਿਯੋਗ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਪਾਰਟੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਰਜਨਾਂ ਸੰਸਦ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਹਨ।



In the 10 days leading up to the AGM dozens of MPs from different political parties came forward to become members of the APPG for British Sikhs. Photographs that have emerged from the meeting show there was unprecedented interest in joining and taking up office bearer positions in the APPG with standing room only.

Supporting Preet Kaur Gill will be five Vice-Chairs from the Conservative Party, five Vice-Chairs from the Labour Party and three Vice-Chairs from the Scottish National Party as follows:

Five Conservative Vice Chairs:

1. Stuart Anderson, Wolverhampton South
2. Eddie Hughes, Walsall North MP,
3. Joy Morrissey, Beaconsfield MP,
4. Nicola Richards, West Bromwich East MP,
5. Lord Ranbir Singh Suri

Five Labour Vice Chairs:

1. Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, Slough MP,
2. Kate Green, Stretford and Urmston MP,
3. Pat McFadden, Wolverhampton MP,
4. John Spellar, Warley MP,
5. West Streeting, Ilford North MP

Three Scottish National Party (SNP) Vice Chairs:

1. Martin Docherty-Hughes, West Dunbartonshire MP,
2. Kirsten Oswald, East Renfrewshire MP,
3. Alison Thewliss, Glasgow Central MP

Others that attended the meeting included:

Collen Fletcher, Labour MP for Coventry North East, Imran Hussain, Labour MP for Bradford East, Khalid Mahmood, Labour MP for Birmingham Perry Barr, Caroline Nokes, Conservative MP Romsey and Southampton North, Taiwo Owatemi, Labour MP Coventry North West, Amanda Solloway, Conservative MP for Derby North, Valerie Vaz, Labour MP for Walsall South, Matt Western, Labour MP for Warwick and Leamington, Lord Indarjit Singh, Lord Rami Ranger



The APPG discussed several of its priorities, including:

- helping secure the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box response in the Census 2021
- issues concerning the 5 Kakaars and Sikh dastaar
- hate crimes targeting Sikhs
- human rights cases like that of Jagtar Singh Johal; and
- the UN Security Council looking into the 1984 Sikh Genocide.



Labour leadership candidate Keir Starmer visits Smethwick Gurdwara

The leading contender to become the new Labour party leader made a visit to the country's largest Gurdwara.

Express and Star - 10 March 2020

Sir Keir Starmer paid the visit to the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Smethwick to meet with Sikh representatives and hear about a range of issues.

These included the ten issues set out in the Sikh Manifesto that the Sikh community asked him to take forward as the Labour leader.

Other discussions included the focus for Sikh to be added as an ethnicity in the 2021 Census and the impact of hate crimes targeting Sikhs in the country.

Following the meeting, Mr Starmer also addressed the congregation at the Gurdwara, before serving and partaking in Langar.

Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK), attended the meeting and praised Mr Starmer for his willingness to listen and continue a dialogue around the issues discussed.

He said: "There are a number of human rights issues in the Sikh Manifesto concerning religious and other minorities in India, Sikh political

prisoners, the 1984 Sikh Genocide and the Sikhs right to self-determination."

"We encourage Labour Party members to back Keir Starmer as we are confident as a human rights lawyer he will assist in addressing issues where we have most concerns."

Following his visit to the Gurdwara, Mr Starmer said he would return to the Gurdwara and would continue the discussion on the issues set out in the Sikh Manifesto.



OVER 200 GURDWARAS AND SIKH ORGANISATIONS IN THE UK SEND OPEN LETTER TO THE UK GOVERNMENT REJECTING GOVERNMENT'S PLACES OF WORSHIP TASKFORCE AND THEIR PLANS TO OPEN PLACES OF WORSHIP LAST

18 May 2020 - On 11 May 2020, the government announced that places of worship would reopen in the third and final phase of the government's "COVID-19 recovery strategy", with 4 July earmarked as the earliest date this could happen.

The Sikh Council UK has been developing guidance and best practice working with Gurdwaras from across the UK. This guidance was sent by the Sikh Council UK to the Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick on 11 May.

The government by its actions in the last 7 days has clearly only wanted to engage with those keen for places of worship to remain closed while encouraging people back to work and businesses to open.

Places of worship have shockingly been put into the same category as pubs, restaurants and cafes, hairdressers, libraries, museums and cinemas. This is totally unacceptable and shows a complete disrespect to places of worship and those that regularly use them.

In an attempt to silence those from faith communities the government announced the setting up of a Places of Worship Taskforce and to look into whether individual prayer might be permitted before places of worship fully reopen.





The UK Government must respect Places of worship as essential



The 8-week lockdown period should have been used by government to work with Gurdwaras and other places of worship to prepare them to safely open with social distancing.

Instead Ministers have met individuals from the Sikh community that have little or no direct contact with Gurdwaras. Not surprisingly most of them have advised Gurdwaras should remain closed.

The government's setting up of the Places of Worship Taskforce lost them all credibility by appointing a so-called Sikh faith leader who has never been involved in running a Gurdwara, is not a practising Sikh, is from a controversial organisation that is often critical of Gurdwaras and that has been forced to apologise for inappropriate and offensive remarks about the Sikh way of life on multiple occasions.

Gurdwaras have developed guidelines to open safely with limited numbers of the public, while adhering to social distancing that were sent to Ministers in early May.

Gurdwaras were already open to volunteers and their numbers were gradually increased to prepare for safe opening as soon as possible.

SIKH REP ON GOVERNMENT'S PLACES OF WORSHIP TASKFORCE RESIGNS WITHIN A WEEK FOLLOWING HUGE SIKH COMMUNITY OUTCRY

24 May 2020 - It was a massive blunder and insult for MHCLG Ministers and officials to appoint Jasvir Singh as the Sikh faith leader to the Government's Places of Worship Taskforce on 15 May.

Jasvir Singh has no experience whatsoever of running Gurdwaras, is not a practising Sikh and should never have been offered or accepted a role for which he was not qualified.



Jasvir Singh realising he was not suitable and lacked knowledge to represent Gurdwaras decided to immediately set up a National Advisory Group (NAG) with the help of two recently set up organisations - Gurdwara Aid and the Sikh Assembly with little or no track record.

Within 48-hours of Jasvir Singh's appointment Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations united and unanimously rejected the Government's Places of Worship Taskforce and gave MHCLG a 5-day ultimatum in an open statement.

Preparations commenced at Gurdwaras independently of the Taskforce to safely re-open dozens of Gurdwaras across the UK to anyone wishing to undertake "sewa" at the Gurdwara.



This may have been seen as an act of defiance as “sewa” can take many forms, but government guidelines allow volunteers (or sewadars) to be at Gurdwaras.

Over 1,000 Gurdwara sewadars or volunteers have been universally praised. They have used Gurdwaras to prepare and distribute over 2 million free meals in the lockdown to those most vulnerable and NHS frontline staff.

The Sikh Council UK shared with MHCLG Ministers on 11 May detailed plans on the re-opening of Gurdwaras. These plans were developed and refined with Gurdwaras across the UK during the lockdown by picking up best practice.



Whilst the NAG temporarily shielded Jasvir Singh for a few days a Sikh TV channel KTV soon exposed how Gurdwara Aid and the Sikh Assembly had misled and fraudulently used the names of many Gurdwaras.

NAG was disbanded quickly and those running Gurdwara Aid further alienated those managing Gurdwaras by making offensive remarks about them on an Internet TV Channel.

It is absolutely clear that the stance taken by Gurdwaras and the Sikh community has forced MHCLG within a week to get Jasvir Singh to step down stating personal reasons.

To make matters worse the Faith Minister has misleadingly quoted the Number 10 press office and tried to spin and misrepresent the situation by presenting Jasvir Singh as a victim to hide their own shortcomings and poor judgement.

Threats and hate against anyone are totally unacceptable and should be reported to the police so they can be investigated and those responsible charged. Jasvir Singh's close friend and co-founder of City Sikhs was recently charged by police with a religiously aggravated hate crime after he was found to have harassed fellow Sikhs.

Row heats up in UK over lockdown curbs

Times of India – 25 May 2020



A moderate Sikh has been forced to quit a government taskforce set up to develop the plan for reopening places of worship in Britain as a row escalates over how and when gurdwaras should reopen when the lockdown eases. Barrister Jasvir Singh, chair of professional networking organisation City Sikhs, who was awarded an OBE in 2017, stepped down on Saturday.

Jasvir Singh made a personal decision to step down from the places of worship taskforce, a government spokesperson said. “Since his appointment, he has experienced a sustained campaign of abuse, intimidation, and threats against him and his family and we condemn this in the strongest possible terms. A replacement is being worked out.”

The Sikh Federation (UK) had issued an open statement 48 hours after Jasvir's appointment, backed by some gurdwaras and Sikh

organisations, rejecting Jasvir and the taskforce and giving the government a five day ultimatum “to properly engage with gurdwaras”. Within three days, Gurmail Singh Malhi, president of Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall, was swiftly invited to take part in a Zoom call with the taskforce, but minutes before he backed out.

Jas Singh, advisor to the SFUK, said gurdwaras were angry that the government “put us in the same category as pubs and nightclubs,” which are tentatively scheduled to reopen on July 4. “If you are allowing people to go back to work, then you should also be allowing us back to gurdwaras.”

The Sikh Council UK has already published detailed guidance on the safe reopening of gurdwaras based on inputs from Sikh medical professionals, he pointed out. “We plan to open gurdwaras up this week to anyone wishing to undertake 'sewa'. They were never closed as



gurdwaras have served one million meals throughout the pandemic. Now we want to extend it for wider use so that people can go inside, pay their respects and receive the blessings. We completely reject the advice coming from the government.”



He said gurdwaras rejected Jasvir as their representative because he was not a baptised practising Sikh and the taskforce was considering “no reciting of prayers, no kirtan (communal singing) and no blessing”. “None of that is acceptable,” he said.

“Even during Operation Blue Star, they sang hymns when the gurdwara was being bombed. Is going to the gurdwara more high risk than going to the supermarket? I don’t think so.”

Jasvir told TOI he had been approached by the government and “told to take on the role”. “I’m not a Khalsa Sikh but I have never claimed to be. I am a practising Sikh, as I attend a gurdwara and I believe in the faith.”

Jatinder Singh, secretary general of Sikh Council UK, who also sits on the management committee of Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Smethwick, said, “We have been providing meals, mobile langar and PPE throughout the pandemic and then when it came to finding someone from the Sikh faith on the taskforce, we were not consulted and he was imposed on us. Jasvir doesn’t have any relevant experience on how gurdwaras are managed.”

UK Sikhs unhappy over gov guidelines for places of worship



Times of India – 16 June 2020

UK based Sikh body **Sikh Federation (UK)** has claimed that as many as 100 gurdwaras and Sikh organisations in all nine regions of England and in nearly 50 towns and cities have dismissed government guidance for places of worship relating to England on the plea that the guidance fails to understand Sikh religious practices and contains insensitive and offensive material.



While talking to TOI on Tuesday, principal advisor to the Sikh Federation (UK), Dabinderjit Singh said that within 48 hours of the establishment of the ‘Government’s Places of Worship Taskforce’, gurdwaras unanimously rejected the Taskforce as the Sikh representative appointed by the government was allegedly inappropriate.

He said their concerns about the guidelines included not allowing kirtan, food or drinks in the gurdwaras, use of alcohol based hand sanitizers, keeping the gurdwaras closed during normal services, not allowing persons above 70 years of

age to visit gurdwaras , discouraging Sangat to donate cash etc.

“It is criminal to allow the government to issue guidance to gurdwaras that is offensive, interferes with Sikh religious practices and contains fundamental errors” said he.

Notably a National Gurdwara Advisory Group (NGAG) comprising of 11 gurdwaras was set up to deal with the impact of Covid-19 on gurdwaras which were opened in UK on June 13.

“Government should never have appointed someone who is not a practicing Sikh and has never been involved in the management or running of a gurdwara” he resented

He further claimed that the gurdwaras and Sikh organisations were incensed that those attending meetings with government over the last one month had advised and agreed government guidelines that compromise Sikh religious practices.

“This has resulted in inaccurate and in some cases inappropriate advice to Sangat on essential Sikh religious practices in Gurdwaras” he said.



DEFENDING AND PROMOTING THE SIKH IDENTITY

UK court to hear legal challenge over Sikh ethnicity tick-box in census

The Tribune

A British-Sikh group lobbying for a separate Sikh ethnicity tick box in the next UK census in 2021 has been granted permission by the UK High Court to present its arguments in court.

Tribune – 11 September 2019

A British-Sikh group lobbying for a separate Sikh ethnicity tick box in the next UK census in 2021 has been granted permission by the UK High Court to present its arguments in court.

A judge considered the written submissions presented by the **Sikh Federation (UK)** and the counter arguments of the UK Cabinet Office and granted permission for a judicial review hearing, which is to take place over a day and a half later in the year.

“This decision by Justice Thornton sends a clear message to the Cabinet Office that our claim has legal merit,” said Amrik Singh, the Chair of Sikh Federation UK.

The organisation believes that it would be “unlawful” for the Cabinet Office to lay before Parliament a Census Order based on the proposals set out by the UK’s Office for National Statistics (ONS) in its December 2018 White Paper, which had rejected the need for a separate tick box.

Sikhs are recognised as a separate religion in the optional religious question introduced in the 2001 Census.

The UK’s Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 placed an obligatory duty on the country’s public authorities to monitor and positively promote race equality in the provision of public services.



According to Sikh Federation UK, public bodies tend to only reference the ethnic groups used in the census and demand a separate Sikh ethnic tick box to ensure Sikhs have fair access to all

public services. The issue has divided the British Sikh community, triggering a war of words between different groups disputing even a divide over the issue.

“Many Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations would strongly argue the Sikh community is far from divided,” claims Sikh Federation UK, which says it speaks for around 150 Gurdwaras in Britain.

Meanwhile, the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which conducted a detailed consultation ahead of the next UK census, stresses that as the religion question will have a specific Sikh tick box response option, everyone who wishes to identify as Sikh in response to the ethnicity question will be able to do so through a write-in option in the next 10-year census.

“We do not comment on ongoing litigation. However, no group will be missed out in the digital-first 2021 Census,” the ONS said.

Sikhs sue Government over refusal to treat them as ethnic group in census

The Daily Telegraph

Daily Telegraph – 11 November 2019

British Sikhs are taking the Government to the high court on Tuesday over its “unlawful” refusal to treat them as an ethnic group in the 2021 census.

They claim Government is acting unlawfully by denying the UK’s estimated 800,000 Sikhs the right to declare their ethnicity alongside other groups including Afro-Caribbeans, black Africans, Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, Arabs and gypsies or Irish travellers.



They want a mandatory ethnicity tick box question to be included in the 2021 census, saying it was unlawful for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to refuse them such a right.

The census provides Government, councils and other local authorities with the information on their local populations that they need in order to help plan, provide and fund services.

In 2011, the UK-wide census recorded about 430,000 Sikhs based on a non-mandatory question about religion.

However, **the Sikh Federation**, which is bringing the legal action, says not all people who would identify as ethnically Sikh identify as religiously Sikh.

It estimates there are 700,000 to 800,000 ethnic Sikhs in the UK and says it is vital that the ethnic Sikh population is properly accounted for.

Rosa Curling, a solicitor at the London law firm Leigh Day, which is acting for the Sikhs, said: "Our clients have identified a number of flaws

within the process for determining whether to include a Sikh ethnicity category in the 2021 Census.

"They believe it is crucial that individuals are able to identify as ethnically Sikh in the next census to ensure a more accurate picture of the community is taken.

"This will ensure public bodies are fulfilling their duties under the Equality Act when making decisions about the allocation of vital public services."

The ONS said its recommendations followed extensive research and consultation and everyone who wished to identify as Sikh would be able to do so either through the religion question or a "write-in" option on the ethnicity question.

It added: "ONS will estimate the Sikh population using alternative data sources to assess the numbers who may declare themselves of Sikh background but not through the religion question."

OPTIONAL RELIGIOUS QUESTION IN THE CENSUS SET TO BECOME USELESS AS SIKHS WAIT FOR HIGH COURT JUDGEMENT BEFORE GENERAL ELECTION:

- **Incomplete data from the optional religious question in the Census is of no use to 40,000 public bodies**
- **Optional religious question in the Census significantly underestimates the Sikh population**

15 November 2019 - The Sikh Federation (UK) with the support of over 150 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations challenged the Cabinet Office and Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the High Court.



The objective has been to get the ONS's process to decide on which ethnic groups should be included in the Census 2021 declared unlawful. It has also allowed the case for the inclusion of a Sikh ethnic tick box in the Census 2021 to be highlighted in court. In addition to reference being made again to *Mandla v Dowell Lee* [1983], where the House of Lords held that Sikhs are an ethnic group which cannot and has not been disputed in court.

The hearing lasted a day and a half, during which the court heard arguments from David Wolfe QC representing the Sikh community and from the legal team representing the Cabinet Office. The Sikh



community had its opportunity to present arguments to the court. The hope is the court will agree that the Defendant (Cabinet Office) has acted unlawfully. The judgment has been reserved until a later date.

ONS has been backtracking in recent months since the legal action was launched and increasingly arguing the optional religious question is a reliable basis of accurately estimating the number of Sikhs in the Census 2021. This is a dishonest approach, as ONS had by the end of 2017 reduced the number of ethnic tick boxes requested from 55 to 4 (one of which was Sikh) as they concluded that the four had the highest user need and due to the non-availability of alternative data sources.

The religious question was first introduced in the Census 2001 and it was the only question that has been made optional by the ONS in 2001 and 2011 as they were concerned about "public acceptability". Astonishingly the first choice in the optional religious question in 2001 and 2011 has been "no religion".

In 2011 over 20 million of the UK population did not answer the optional religious question or chose the first option of "no religion". In some local authorities less than 50% of the population declared their religion. ONS have admitted they have no reliable way of determining how many of the 20 million would answer the ethnic group question if a Sikh ethnic tick box option was available.

Jonathan Athow, the former Interim National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority revealed for the first time in the Census 2011 that thousands who recorded their religion as: Christian, Muslim and Hindu unbelievably ticked "other" and wrote "Sikh" as their "ethnic" group. If the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box had been available numbers would clearly have been much higher. ONS and those relying on the optional religious question knowing this fact and given over 20 million did not declare their religion now have no answers.

ONS anticipate in 2021 the optional religious question will become almost totally useless due to the level of non-response or respondents choosing "no religion". If the trend from 2001 and 2011 continues there will be over 25 million of the UK population that will not declare their religion. Faced with these facts ONS know they have no reliable way to accurately estimate the number of Sikhs, although the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box to the compulsory ethnicity question would clearly assist.

Sikh Federation plans Court of Appeal battle to get recognition as ethnic group

BirminghamLive

The Sikh Federation (UK) says it will be taking its fight to the next level to get a tick box on the next UK census for Sikhs as an ethnic group, not just as a religion.

Birmingham Live – 13 December 2019

The Sikh Federation has today confirmed it will be taking its census battle on to the Court of Appeal.



The Federation wants a tick box included in the 2021 UK Census for Sikhs to record themselves as an ethnic group, not just as a religion.

This latest development follows news that High Court judge Mrs Justice Lang dismissed the Federation's bid for ethnic recognition as too early because the Government is still deciding on the final form of the census questions.

In her ruling she added: "The Claimant will be able to bring a challenge to the Order in Council once made, if the Sikh tick box response is not included."

Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "This ruling necessitates the



Cabinet Office Minister to challenge and take an independent view on the evidence presented in court and decide whether to include the Sikh ethnic group tick box option in the draft Census Order to be presented to Parliament.

"The Minister now also knows from the High Court ruling that the Order in Council will be open to judicial review challenge.

"We will in the next 21 days be appealing to the Court of Appeal arguing why we are not too early, so the arguments set out in our judicial review claim and presented to the High Court at the hearing in November concerning the need for a Sikh ethnic tick box can be substantively considered and a judgement given.

"The Cabinet Office Minister has failed to lay a draft Order in Parliament for almost a year since the publication of the 2018 White Paper."

The Federation says it brought the case early so the census would not be delayed.

It had been discussing the issue with the Cabinet Office Minister and Office for National Statistics between January and May 2019 but says "the ONS was not willing to accept that their process may have been flawed."

The Federation is arguing that the decision not to include a tick box for the Sikh ethnic group is unlawful.

It claims the census will not give an accurate picture of the number of Sikhs in the UK "and this would lead to that group to be left out of government decisions on funding and provisions

of public services which are made based on the census data."

Rosa Curling, solicitor from Leigh Day, added: "Our client believes that it is of great importance that ethnic Sikhs are given the opportunity to mark their ethnicity on the census in 2021 so that an accurate picture of ethnic Sikhs in the UK can be established to inform government decisions and meet community needs. We will now be working with them on their application to appeal."



The 2011 UK Census recorded about 430,000 Sikhs based on a question about religion, which it was not compulsory to answer.

However, the Sikh Federation estimates there are approximately 700,000 to 800,000 ethnic Sikhs living in the UK.

In Birmingham, according to the 2011 census, just over 3 per cent of the population (about 32,000 people) identify as Sikh by religion, higher than the national and regional average.

But events such as Vaisakhi attract more than 100,000 people, with two processions taking place - one from Hockley and one from Smethwick.

The processions head to the site of a huge free festival in Handsworth Park every year.

Sikhs announce next step in fight against ethnic rights snub on census

BirminghamLive

Federation warns of Court of Appeal legal action causing delays to Census 2021 if ministers do not agree to provide Sikh ethnicity tick box.

Birmingham Live – 6 January 2020

Sikhs fighting for the recognition of ethnic rights have announced they have begun the process of taking their battle to the Court of Appeal.

Lawyers acting for the Sikh Federation have advised the Government they intend to appeal against a High Court ruling made in December 2019.

The Federation wants a tick box for Sikhs in the ethnic options on the next census. At present, the census recognises Sikhs as a religion but not as an ethnicity.

The High Court had dismissed the Federation's case, saying it was too early as the census had not yet been finalised.

A Federation statement said: "The Sikh Federation (UK) with the backing of over 150 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations was forced to



begin judicial review proceedings in the High Court as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was unable to provide conclusive evidence to support its proposals on the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box over a six month period after the Census White Paper was published on 14 December 2018.



"Ethnic tick boxes as opposed to religious tick boxes are used by decision makers in allocating resources and making decisions on the provision of public services.

"By providing the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box it will supplement data from the voluntary religious question and provide a more accurate picture of the Sikh community and the composition of Britain's ethnic makeup."

The census needs to be approved by March 2020 so that it can be sent out a year later on March 21, 2021. The Federation is warning that its appeal could delay the census.

However, Kevin Foster, Parliamentary Secretary (Cabinet Office), already indicated that there will be a tick box for Sikhs under the religion section but NOT under ethnicity.

Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) said: "The Cabinet Office now need to make a decision knowing it can be challenged in court.

"The overwhelming evidence presented in court supports the inclusion of a Sikh ethnic tick box response in the Census 2021.

"Although Justice Lang concluded the legal challenge was premature she also stated a judicial review claim will be possible if the Cabinet Office Minister does not include the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box when the draft Census Order is laid in Parliament.

"Our legal battle may therefore now be on three fronts. We are already appealing to the Court of Appeal that our claim was not too early and to decide on the substantive issues of the claim where there has already been a High Court hearing.

"If the Minister ignores the evidence and refuses to grant the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box response in the draft Census Order laid in Parliament we may be able to expedite the situation by going back to the High Court for a ruling that we believe will be in our favour.

"We are also in the process of obtaining legal advice in respect of raising a possible action in the Court of Session in Edinburgh."

"Ministers north and south of the border must at this stage independently look at all the evidence before making a final decision. We believe that decision should go in our favour, so a Sikh ethnic tick box response option is included in the draft Census Orders to be presented in Westminster and the Scottish Parliament. All legal actions can then come to an end and a delay in the Census 2021 can be avoided."

He added: "Public bodies will only start to systematically collect information on Sikhs if there is a specific Sikh ethnic tick box option.

"Ministers know it is in the public interest that there are equal opportunities and the need to address discrimination against the minority Sikh community by public bodies.



"This will only be possible if Sikhs are accurately counted and systematically monitored by decision making bodies as a distinct ethnic group defined by the Census 2021."

The 2011 UK Census recorded about 430,000 Sikhs based on a question about religion, which it was not compulsory to answer.

However, the Sikh Federation estimates there are approximately 700,000 to 800,000 ethnic Sikhs living in the UK. In Birmingham, according to the 2011 census, just over 3 per cent of the population (about 32,000 people) identify as Sikh by religion, higher than the national and regional average.



Sikh Federation (UK) lodges appeal in Court of Appeal over Sikh ethnic tick box

TOI

Times of India – 6 January 2020

The Sikh Federation (UK) has lodged an appeal in the Court of Appeal against a high court decision dismissing its challenge over the long-running Sikh ethnic tick box issue which could now lead to a delay in the UK 2021 census being carried out.



The SFUK launched a pre-emptive challenge in November 2019 after the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) proposed not to include a Sikh ethnic group tick box response in the 2021 UK Census in its white paper published in December 2018. The SFUK claims the UKSA adopted an unlawful approach in assessing the census questions.

In her judgment, handed down on December 12 in the administrative court of the high court, Mrs Justice Lang dismissed the SFUK's claim, saying: "The court should not determine the claim as it is plainly premature. A ministerial decision has not yet been made; no draft Order in Council has been published or approved by Parliament; and the Queen-in-Council has not made an order."

A Court of Appeal spokesperson confirmed to TOI that the SFUK had lodged its appeal on January 3. "Next a lawyer will look at it and put it in line to obtain all the relevant documents from all the parties. Then it will get passed to a judge who will most probably make a decision on paper as to whether to grant leave to appeal. This could take

nine to 12 months. If the judge refuses permission, that is the end of the matter. If the judge grants leave to appeal then there will be an appeal hearing and, if they lose that, they can approach the Supreme Court."

Responsibility for making a final decision on the content of the census questionnaire rests with the minister for the Cabinet Office. Once a decision has been made, a draft Order in Council will be laid before Parliament. This has not happened yet and the whole timescale of the preparation of the census could now get affected by these legal proceedings. The census is currently due to be carried out in March 2021 and a draft census was expected to be laid before Parliament in October 2019.

Dabinderjit Singh, principle adviser for the SFUK, told TOI he was not worried about legal costs. "Costs have been capped at £100,000 in the original case. If the Court of Appeal reaches a decision in our favour then we will not have to pay any costs. We have got enough pledges to cover the costs. One gurdwara offered to pay the full £100,000," he said.

In the 2011 Census the ethnic box options were Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; and there was a write-in option for "Any other Asian background", where Sikh could be written, if desired.

A Cabinet Office spokesperson said: "Anyone who chooses to will be able to identify as being of Sikh ethnicity in this census by using the write-in option."

But SFUK wants "Sikh" included in the 2021 Census ethnicity question.

Bhai Amrik Singh, chair of the SFUK, who is bringing the legal action on behalf of the SFUK with the backing of more than 150 gurdwaras and Sikh organisations, said: "Public bodies will only start to systematically collect information on Sikhs if there is a specific Sikh ethnic tick box option. Ministers know it is in the public interest that there are equal opportunities and that there is a need to address discrimination against the minority Sikh community by public bodies. This will only be possible if Sikhs are accurately counted."



The debate around whether Sikhs should be an ethnic group on the UK census is set to reignite



The issue has been divisive within the Sikh community

i newspaper – 24 January 2020

The divisive debate around whether Britain's Sikh community should be considered an ethnic group is set to reignite as preparations are made for the 2021 census.

An Order Paper for the census in England and Wales, which will be laid before Parliament this year, will set out which questions the public will have to answer and give MPs a chance to debate and agree the proposals.

One topic that is likely to be up for discussion is the Office for National Statistics's (ONS) decision against including a Sikh tick box under the ethnicity question.

Sikhism is already an option under the religion question on the census but some campaigners believe it is a religio-ethnic community that should be considered an ethnicity on the form, which collects information about the UK population every decade.

The Sikh Federation, a non-governmental organisation which aims to promote the community's interests among policymakers, say there is a lack of information about Sikhs in Britain, which could impact the provision of public services for the community. This could be resolved by making a Sikh tick box under the ethnicity question, which, unlike the religion category, is compulsory to fill in.

High Court battle

But in December, the Sikh Federation lost a High Court battle in which it argued it would be "unlawful" for the 2021 Census not to include the tick box.

The judge said the claim was "premature" and should have been brought after the Census Order. The Cabinet Office does not have a date for the order, which was expected in autumn 2019, but it is likely to be high on the agenda as the nationwide questionnaire is scheduled for next year.

The Sikh Federation, supported by some members of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs, is seeking permission to appeal the legal ruling.

"The High Court judgement on 12 December 2019 and the appeal are [putting] huge pressure on Cabinet Office ministers to grant the option of a Sikh ethnic tick box response in the draft Census Order to be presented to Parliament," the federation told i.

A further legal challenge could mean the 2021 census suffers significant delays, it warned.

'Put this wrong right'



Preet Kaur Gill MP

Chair of the APPG and Labour MP Preet Gill says the campaign for a Sikh ethnic tick box has cross-party support and that efforts are being made "to put this wrong right".

"The Sikh community is asking the Government to give them the same rights as the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community in ensuring public bodies record data so that service provision addresses the needs of the wider community regarding health inequalities, housing and school provision," she adds.

Consultation

The ONS, which is responsible for the census in England Wales, carried out a consultation on the Sikh tick box but decided against recommending any changes to the form.

It said the evidence showed it would "not be acceptable to a proportion of the Sikh population".



"ONS considers that the estimates of the Sikh population can be met through data from the specific response option in the Sikh religion question," it added.

During the last census, in 2011, 430,000 people said their religion was Sikh. But according to the Sikh Federation, the population could be between 700,000 and 800,000.

Even without any fundamental change to the ethnicity options in the 2021 census, people can still choose to write in Sikh under "other, specify".

The Cabinet Office said: "Anyone who wishes to identify as Sikh has and will be able to do so.

"The Office for National Statistics' recommendations follow extensive research and consultation with a range of groups and individuals, including the Sikh community."

Sikhs warn of further legal action over census snub on ethnic status

BirminghamLive

Sikh Federation has already begun appeal against High Court ruling and now says it will take action against Scottish Government too

Birmingham Live – 31 January 2020



And now the Federation is threatening to take Scottish ministers to court over the 2021 Scotland Census also failing to include a tick box for Sikh ethnicity.

A spokesman for the Federation said: "Public bodies in Scotland will only start to systematically collect information on Sikhs if there is a specific Sikh ethnic tick box used by decision-makers in allocating resources and making decisions on the provision of public services."

Fiona Hyslop, the culture secretary, told Holyrood's culture committee: "There are different views within the Sikh community and we know that some Sikh respondents found inclusion under an ethnic group inappropriate or confusing... so it will appear under the religion section but it will be possible to write in Sikh under the ethnic section as well."

A row over recognising Sikhs as an ethnic minority - and not just a religion - on census documents could lead to further legal action.

The Sikh Federation has already said it intends to appeal against a High Court ruling over their request for a tick box for Sikhs in the ethnic options on the 2021 Census in England and Wales.

The High Court had dismissed the Federation's case, saying it was too early as the census had not yet been finalised.

Kevin Foster, Parliamentary Secretary (Cabinet Office), indicated there will be a tick box for Sikhs under the religion section but NOT under ethnicity.

The Federation has warned of legal action if the Scotland Census is not amended.

The 2011 Census documents across the UK recorded 432,000 Sikhs based on a question about religion, which it was not compulsory to answer.

However, the Sikh Federation estimates there are approximately 700,000 to 800,000 ethnic Sikhs living in the UK.

According to religion, there are just under 117,000 Sikhs in the West Midlands, including 32,000 in Birmingham (about 3 per cent of the city's population), 27,000 in Sandwell and 23,000 in Wolverhampton.



Sikh Federation ramps up pressure over census recognition

THE  TIMES

The Times - 15 February 2020

Sikhs in Scotland are intensifying legal pressure on Scottish ministers to declare them an ethnic minority in the next nationwide population census.

The Sikh Federation said that it was meeting with a leading QC and a specialist human rights lawyer next week to consider “legal options” for taking their case through the courts.



The group says that National Records Scotland (NRS), the agency, which is planning for the census next year, is “dragging its feet” on Sikh demands to be recognised in their own right on the census form.

In the previous census in 2011 Sikhs could only identify themselves through a voluntary “religion” tickbox. The Federation says that this undercounts the number of Sikhs in Scotland and denies the group a fairer share of financial resources allocated to ethnic minority groups.

In 2011 there were 9,000 Sikhs recorded on census forms but community leaders estimate the true figure was more than 15,000.

Sikhs emigrated to Scotland in large numbers last century and prominent members of the community include the chef Tony Singh and the actor Sanjeev Kohli.

CABINET OFFICE MINISTER CHALLENGED IN PARLIAMENT ON TIMING OF CENSUS ORDER

27 February 2020 - The Sikh Federation (UK) approached the powerful Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) about an inquiry into the Census 2021.

The Select Committee is in the process of being re-constituted and has oversight of the work of the Cabinet Office, including the Census 2021. It will almost certainly have an inquiry into preparations for the Census 2021 as well as its delivery.

The Federation will also meet Fiona Hyslop, the culture minister, and officials from the NRS next week to discuss changes to the census questions.

Davinder Singh, principal adviser to the Federation, said: “Politicians are always sympathetic to our case say but then say it is up to the NRS as it is an independent body.

“We think legal action will force the Scottish government to take the issue more seriously rather than hiding behind the NRS. Although our gripe is with the NRS, it is ultimately Fiona Hyslop’s decision.”

The census provides governments, councils and other local authorities with the information on their local populations that they need to help plan, provide and fund services. Outside the confines of census questions, Sikhs have been considered an ethnic minority in the UK since 1983. Mr Singh said that it was illogical for Sikhs to be unable to tick an ethnic minority box on the form.

The Federation, which works to promote Sikh issues, has started legal proceedings against the UK Cabinet Office over similar provisions in the census of England and Wales.

Ms Hyslop’s office referred questions on the issue to the NRS. Last month she told the culture committee: “There are different views within the Sikh community and we know that some Sikh respondents found inclusion under an ethnic group inappropriate or confusing. So it will appear under the religion section but it will be possible to write in Sikh under the ethnic section as well.”

The NRS said it had no comment to make on its position before the meeting on Tuesday. A spokeswoman added: “The cabinet secretary is meeting representatives from the Sikh Federation UK next week to discuss Scotland’s next census.”



William Wragg MP, the Conservative Chair, has taken a keen interest on the issues we have raised about the need for a Sikh ethnic tick box option and the evidence we have produced. How the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has acted, its oversight by the UK Statistics Authority and the role of the Cabinet Office may be investigated if the census is delayed.



In questions to the Cabinet Office, William Wragg MP challenged Chloe Smith the Cabinet Office Minister responsible for the Census 2021 on the timing of the Census Order and a possible delay to the Census 2021. He suggested the Census Order is now too late to deliver the Census on 21 March 2021 based on what Iain Bell, the Deputy National Statistician and the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the Census 2021 said in February 2019.

The Sikh Federation (UK) last year took the Cabinet Office to the High Court. On the final day of the High Court hearing on 13 November 2019 lawyers for the Cabinet Office told Justice Lang that the Census Order and Census Regulation would need to be approved by Parliament and in place by 31 March 2020 for it to be delivered on 21 March 2021.

10 years ago, the time lapse between the Census Order being laid and the Census Regulation coming into force was over 5 months with the process starting in October 2009. Until Parliament approves the Census Order and Census Regulation progress cannot be made on the logistics for a digital census and printing of the forms cannot be given the go ahead. Uncertainty will also remain on the timing of employing additional staff needed to deliver the census.

At this rate given the legal challenge, that has been deemed technically “too early” by the High Court, legislation is unlikely to be approved before the summer recess and the census could easily be delayed by up to a year. The only way for the Cabinet Office to get back on track is to include a Sikh ethnic tick box response option in the Census Order to eliminate the risk of ongoing or new legal action to disappear.

Sikhs can list group on census

The Times - 28 February 2020

Sikhs will be able to declare themselves as an ethnic minority on Scotland's census after they threatened to take ministers to court.

The Sikh Federation said its community had been recognised as an ethnic group in the UK since 1983 and expressed “disbelief” that it would not be identified as such on the census.

Pagans will be an accepted religion for the first time but there is no room for Episcopalians, who outnumber Sikhs, Jews and pagans combined in Scotland.

Fiona Hyslop, the culture secretary, has suggested writing “Sikh” in a line below the ethnicity tick boxes. The Sikh Federation said it

THE TIMES



was a step in the right direction but “does not go far enough” and refused to withdraw their threat of legal action.

Ms Hyslop told MSPs: “If you wanted an ethnic tick box for the Sikh community we would have to withdraw this order and start again. I am



considering putting in the regulations . . . a proposal to put the word Sikh in there and that would improve visibility.”

She said legal action would be counterproductive. “It would most certainly disrupt the process and can be used as a threat. I don’t think that’s a wise thing to do and it would be unfortunate if people were to pursue it,” she said.

Bhai Amrik Singh, chairman of the Sikh Federation, said Ms Hyslop’s suggestion was a “halfway house” that despite being a welcome suggestion did not go far enough. He said public bodies would not be helped to recognise Sikhs as “a legally recognised ethnic group when making policies and taking decisions unless they are instructed by the Scottish government to do so”.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY APOLOGISES TO FIRST SIKH WOMAN MP FOR BREACH OF PERSONAL DATA AND PUBLISHING REFERENCE TO “MISOGYNY”

18 March 2020 - In April 2019 Preet Kaur Gill MP, the first Sikh woman MP, requested all correspondence from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in relation to the Sikh ethnic tick box.



This was after having established the ONS could not justify, with evidence, the statement in the Census White Paper published in December 2018 that the inclusion of a Sikh ethnic tick box “would not be acceptable to a proportion of the Sikh population”.

The correspondence requested over a 3-year period was to determine what if any community opposition existed or if opposition was generated by the ONS to justify their decision not to recommend a Sikh ethnic tick box response option in the Census White Paper.

Personal data relating to Preet Kaur Gill MP and others backing the campaign for a Sikh ethnic tick box appears to have been deliberately disclosed by the ONS who had made the information publicly available for nearly 10 months.

The ONS should have ensured it was lawful and fair to release the personal information in keeping with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Following an internal review by the UK Statistics Authority they have now written to Preet Kaur Gill MP and concluded: “there were a few areas where . . . names had been redacted where they did not strictly need to be. In addition, there are a small number of instances where names were included where they should have been redacted, for which we apologise.”

Preet Kaur Gill MP raised an objection to a phrase in an email sent by Lord Singh to John Pullinger, the former National Statistician on 5 August 2018 that referred to misogyny and accused MPs of being bewildered. The UK Statistics Authority have stated they “have reassessed the original decision not to redact the phrase that has caused concern” and have now redacted the offensive comment.

The UK Statistics Authority have also apologised to Preet Kaur Gill MP for the delay in responding to the original request for information.

Preet Kaur Gill MP said:

“I welcome the admission and apology from the UK Statistics Authority and am pleased they have taken steps to rectify the mistakes by the ONS.”



“During the campaign to secure a Sikh ethnic tick box I have faced misogyny, bullying behaviour and lies.”

“The process followed by the ONS and government ministers has not been transparent. It is a real shame that the Sikh community has been forced to challenge the government in the High Court and Court of Appeal.”



This latest admission and apology by the UK Statistics Authority underscores an attitude and strategy to fabricate division within the Sikh community that was non-existent during official consultations. ONS has been exposed for trying to reinforce institutional discrimination against the Sikh community.

100% of Gurdwaras, the main religious institutions of the Sikhs in July 2018 unanimously backed a Sikh ethnic tick box in response to a survey conducted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs, led by Preet Kaur Gill MP.

The cross-party group of MPs met the National Statistician on 23 July 2018 and provided him with details that should have ensured a Sikh ethnic tick box as the Deputy National Statistician had earlier indicated they were simply looking for majority support from the Gurdwara survey.

However, the ONS papers show the National Statistician rather than validate the individual returns from over 100 Gurdwaras that he specifically requested instead choose, within a week, to instigate a series of meetings with certain individuals within the Sikh community linked to the Indian authorities to spearhead opposition.

A letter on House of Lords letterheaded paper dated October 2018 shows how meetings took place with senior ONS officials and a “common approach” was discussed how the Sikh community could be denied a Sikh ethnic tick box.

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

“Sinister forces have been at play with ONS officials leading Ministers up the garden path and forcing the Sikh community to legally challenge the government.”

“Our legal challenge supported by over 150 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations continues and combined with the added complication of Coronavirus will delay the Census 2021 unless politicians see sense and census legislation is urgently withdrawn and changed.”

SIKHS INCREASE POLITICAL AND LEGAL PRESSURE TO OPPOSE DRAFT CENSUS ORDER THAT COULD LEAD TO DECADES OF INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SIKHS

23 March 2020 - The Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, the opposition Cabinet Office front bench and Preet Kaur Gill have put down Early Day Motion 309 to signal to the UK Government it is opposed to the draft Census (England and Wales) Order 2020.

Whilst the wording of the EDM is short and general it has been put down by the Labour leadership to signal to the government it opposes the draft Census Order as it does not include a Sikh ethnic tick box response option. The absence of a Sikh ethnic tick box will lead to 40,000 public bodies not tackling discrimination against Sikhs for decades.

Surprisingly Cabinet Office Ministers laid the Census (England and Wales) Order 2020 in Parliament on 2 March 2020 knowing a case remains lodged with the Court of Appeal declaring unlawful the decision not to have a Sikh ethnic tick box response option. The case has been with the Court of Appeal for nearly 12 weeks.



2021 ਜਨਗਣਨਾ 'ਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਖਾਨਾ ਲਾਜ਼ਮੀ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਹੱਕ 'ਚ ਆਏ 200 ਸੰਸਦ ਮੈਂਬਰ

ਲੰਡਨ, 23 ਫਰਵਰੀ (ਮਨਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੱਧਨੀ ਕਲਾਂ)- 2021 'ਚ ਬਰਤਾਨੀਆ ਦੀ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਜਨਗਣਨਾ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਐਥਨਿਕ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਦੇ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਾਨਾ ਲਾਜ਼ਮੀ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਚੱਲ ਰਹੀ ਮੁਹਿੰਮ ਨੂੰ ਉਸ ਵੇਲੇ ਵੱਡਾ ਹੁੰਗਾਰਾ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਜਦੋਂ ਇਸ ਮੁਹਿੰਮ ਨੂੰ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਦੀਆਂ ਵੱਖ ਵੱਖ ਰਾਜਸੀ ਪਾਰਟੀਆਂ ਦੇ 200 ਦੇ ਕਰੀਬ ਸੰਸਦ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਹਮਾਇਤ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸੰਸਦ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਮੂਲ ਦੇ ਸੰਸਦ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਵਰਿੰਦਰ ਸ਼ਰਮਾ, ਸੀਮਾ ਮਲਹੋਤਰਾ, ਐਮ.ਪੀ. ਤਨਮਨਜੀਤ

ਸਿੰਘ ਢੇਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਕੌਰ ਗਿੱਲ ਵੀ ਸ਼ਾਮਿਲ ਹਨ। ਬੀਤੇ ਕੁਝ ਦਿਨਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਸਰਕਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਰਾਜਸੀ ਦਬਾਅ ਵਧਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਯਤਨ ਕਰ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਲਈ ਇਕ ਪੱਤਰ 250 ਸੰਸਦ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਭੇਜ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਲਈ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਖਾਨੇ ਦੀ ਹਮਾਇਤ ਲਈ ਮੰਗ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਸੀ, ਜਿਸ ਦੇ ਜਵਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਹੁਣ ਤੱਕ 200 ਦੇ ਕਰੀਬ ਸੰਸਦ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਹਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਹੁੰਗਾਰਾ ਭਰ ਚੁੱਕੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਪੱਤਰ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਸਬੰਧਿਤ ਮਹਿਕਮੇ ਦੇ ਮੰਤਰੀ ਕੌਲ ਸਮਿੱਥ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਯਕੀਨੀ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਪੁੱਛਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਐਥਨਿਕ ਖਾਨੇ ਨੂੰ ਜਨਗਣਨਾ ਦੇ ਖਰੜੇ ਵਿਚ ਸੰਸਦ ਵਿਚ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਸ਼ਾਮਿਲ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ। ਸੰਸਦ ਵਿਚ ਸਵਾਲ ਜਵਾਬ ਸੈਸ਼ਨ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਐਮ.ਪੀ. ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਕੌਰ ਗਿੱਲ ਵਲੋਂ ਪੜ੍ਹੇ ਸਵਾਲ ਦੇ ਜਵਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਮੰਤਰੀ ਕੌਲ ਸਮਿੱਥ ਨੇ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਜਨਗਣਨਾ ਨੀਤੀ ਦਾ ਖਰੜਾ ਤਿਆਰ ਹੋ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਦੇ

ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਕਾਨੂੰਨੀ ਚਾਰਾਜੋਈ ਵੀ ਕਰ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਸਿੱਖ ਐਥਨਿਕ ਲਾਜ਼ਮੀ ਖਾਨਾ ਨਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਤਾਂ ਅਦਾਲਤ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੱਕ ਵਿਚ ਭੁਗਤ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। ਸੂਤਰਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਇੰਗਲੈਂਡ ਅਤੇ ਵੇਲਜ਼ ਦੀ ਜਨਗਣਨਾ 2021 ਦਾ ਕੁੱਲ ਅੰਦਾਜ਼ਨ ਖਰਚਾ 900 ਮਿਲੀਅਨ ਪੌਂਡ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਹੈ ਜੋ 2011 ਦੀ ਜਨਗਣਨਾ ਤੋਂ ਲਗਪਗ ਦੁੱਗਣਾ ਹੈ। ਜ਼ਿਕਰਯੋਗ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਵਿਚ ਜਨਗਣਨਾ 21 ਮਾਰਚ 2021 ਤੋਂ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਹੋਣ ਦੀ ਯੋਜਨਾ ਹੈ। ਆਲ ਪਾਰਟੀ ਪਾਰਲੀਮੈਂਟਰੀ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਫਾਰ ਬ੍ਰਿਟਿਸ਼ ਸਿੱਖ ਵੀ ਸਪੱਸ਼ਟ ਕਰ ਚੁੱਕਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਐਥਨਿਕ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਵਜੋਂ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਦੇ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਵਲੋਂ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਜਾ ਚੁੱਕਾ ਹੈ। ਭਾਈ ਅਮਰੀਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਗਿੱਲ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਸਰਕਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਸਬੰਧਿਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਮੰਗ ਨਾ ਮੰਨੀ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਕੌਲ ਕਾਨੂੰਨੀ ਕਾਰਵਾਈ ਤੋਂ ਇਲਾਵਾ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰ ਰਾਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਚਦਾ।



A decision on whether to grant a Court of Appeal hearing has been made more difficult by the laying of the draft Census Order some six months after when it was originally expected. Covid-19 has now introduced another massive complication that could now easily delay the census by several months beyond the 21 March 2021. This date is not only stipulated in the draft Census (England and Wales) Order 2020 before Parliament but is also date in the Census (Scotland) Order approved by the Scottish Parliament on 4 March 2020 that may need to be re-approved.

Leigh Day Solicitors acting for the Sikh Federation (UK) added to the pressure by writing to the Cabinet Office Minister and their lawyers. Thereby putting the Cabinet Office on notice of another legal challenge of the draft Census Order in the High Court if it is approved in Parliament without a Sikh ethnic tick box response option.

In the letter Leigh Day have quoted the High Court judgement on 12 December 2019 where Justice Lang warned “the Claimant will be able to bring a challenge to the Order in Council once made, if the Sikh tick box response is not included”. Justice Lang continued that the Cabinet Office and UK Statistics Authority “are best placed to decide whether a legal challenge after an Order in Council is made would be so detrimental to the preparation of the 2021 census, because of the uncertainty and delay, that it would be preferable for the Claimant’s claim to be determined now, on the merits.”

Leigh Day asked for a response by Wednesday 25 March and enquired about the impact of Covid-19 on the timing of the Census 2021. Parliament is set to break up early for its Easter break, once it



passed key emergency legislation covering the Covid-19 outbreak. The 2020 Coronavirus Bill is expected to clear all its Commons stages and become law.

EDM 309 and the supporting EDM 311 (2021 census and a Sikh ethnic tick box) tabled by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs attracted cross-party support from over 250 MPs and will result in the draft Census Order being debated and challenged in the Commons when MPs return after the recess. Parliament had been due to rise for the Easter recess next Tuesday on 31 March 31, but it has been reported there is a cross-party consensus that it would make sense to head for the break earlier.

The other major doubt is when MPs will return with Covid-19 expected to peak in three or four weeks when they are set to return. It is now a real possibility that the government will be unable to approve the Census Order and Census Regulation before the summer recess. All these factors point to a delay in the census that was set to take place on 21 March 2021.

Half of Sikh deaths in West Midlands in two weeks 'due to coronavirus' - community groups claim

BirminghamLive

The Sikh Federation and other community groups urging government to consult them over deaths

Birmingham Live – 17 April 2020

Almost half of Sikh deaths in the West Midlands over the last fortnight have been victims of COVID-19, community groups claim.

The Sikh Network, Sikh Council UK and Sikh Federation (UK) is now calling for government consultation after collecting data from Gurdwaras and funeral directors.

The groups claim their own data showed 47 per cent of all Sikhs deaths in the region came from the deadly bug. Wolverhampton has one of the largest UK Sikh communities outside of London.



Downing Street has announced an inquiry into why ethnic minorities may be disproportionately affected by COVID-19. It will be led by the NHS and Public Health England and will look at both the wider community and those working for the NHS.

Bhai Amrik Singh, the chairman of the Sikh Federation (UK), said: "Specific health vulnerabilities have been reported by leading

medical journals about people of Sikh background i.e. diabetes, heart conditions, etc.

"Therefore, the inquiry looking at ethnicity should examine if public bodies and decision makers provided timely and appropriate advice to those at greatest risk.

"We hope the NHS and Public Health England that are leading the inquiry will reach out from the outset to us and other ethnic minority groups that best understand the combination of age, medical condition, social habits, religious practices and extended families."

The latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data released this week based on registration of deaths confirmed 21.2 percent of deaths in England and Wales were a result of COVID-19.

The ONS data indicated 22.1 percent of the deaths were COVID-19 related in the West Midlands. The ONS data for London that has seen the highest proportion of deaths from COVID-19 was over 46 percent.

On the day of lockdown on March 23, Preet Kaur Gill, the first female Sikh MP and Shadow International Development Secretary asked Health Secretary Matt Hancock how many Sikhs had been diagnosed with COVID-19 and died because of the disease.

The Sikh groups said that weeks later Health Minister responded, stating that "we do not collect data on cases or deaths by ethnicity or religion".



The Sikh Federation (UK) said they wrote to the ONS at the start of the month about the data they release every week on deaths.

They claim the ONS responded: “Our data is taken directly from the Death Certificate, ethnicity and faith are not recorded as part of the registration process and therefore we have no access to this data.”

Mr Singh added: “Government must consult leading Sikh community organisations on the continued restrictions on places of worship and produce specific guidance in a number of different areas tailored for individual ethnic minority communities knowing their precise needs.”

Sikh Federation member dies in UK due to Covid-19

hindustantimes

Ran construction business in Leicester and was associated with various gurdwaras there

Hindustan Times – 17 April 2020

Mandeep Singh, a member of **Sikh Federation UK**, died due to Covid-19 at Leicester city in the United Kingdom on Thursday evening.

Mandeep, 46, who hailed from Chitti village of Jalandhar district, ran a construction business in Leicester and was associated with various gurdwaras there.

Varinder Singh, chairman of Gurdwara Guru Teg Bahadur, Leicester, told HT over phone that Mandeep got infected with coronavirus in the last week of March and was shifted to a hospital in Leicester two weeks ago. He was on ventilator and breathed his last late Thursday evening.

He is survived by his parents, wife and two sons.

Mandeep moved to the UK in 1993 and established his business.

Gurjit Samra, spokesperson for Sikh Federation UK, said that Mandeep remained on the front foot in the community fund-raiser functions. “He was a very nice person and an asset to the community.”

Claudia Webbe, member of parliament from Leicester East, tweeted, “So sad to learn of the



#Coronavirus death of Mandeep Singh Chitte. He'd been a huge support to me. My thoughts are with his family, friends & loved ones. He did so much for the community, so gentle, so kind and well respected amongst @SikhFedUK of Leicester-this is a massive loss.”

Sikhs give ministers two-week warning of census legal action

THE  **TIMES**

The Times – 20 April 2020

Sikhs have given Scottish ministers two weeks to confirm they will be recognised as a distinct ethnic group on the next census before launching legal action.

The Sikh Federation has posted a “pre-action letter” to the Scottish government saying that

ministers’ plan to exclude them from the ethnicity tick-box list is illegal under equalities law.

The Federation said its community had been recognised as an ethnic group in the UK since 1983 and expressed “disbelief” that it would not be identified as such on the census.



Pagans will be an accepted religion for the first time but there is no room for Episcopalians, who outnumber Sikhs, Jews and pagans combined in Scotland.



Fiona Hyslop, the culture secretary, warned that an amendment or legal action would delay the implementation of the whole census as she would be forced to do a complete redraft.

She offered Sikhs a compromise where they would be given advice in the explanatory notes to declare their ethnicity in the “Other” section beneath the tick boxes.

The Federation said in February that this was a step in the right direction but did not go far enough and refused to withdraw its threat of legal action.

Scottish ministers have been now been informed by Balfour and Manson LLP that legal action will commence in two weeks unless a change is put into action.

The Federation said: “The ethnic groups specified in the census are used by public bodies in Scotland for resource allocation, to inform policy development and make service planning decisions.

“It also helps public bodies meet and monitor their statutory obligations arising from equalities legislation.”

The federation said that Sikhs in Scotland “are consistently being overlooked and discriminated against by public bodies in deciding policies that impact on them”, in contravention of EU equalities law and the Equality Act 2010.

It added: “Scottish ministers have been asked to confirm they will therefore lay an amended

Census Order in the Scottish parliament with a Sikh ethnic tick box response option or they could find themselves in the Court of Session in Edinburgh accused of discrimination.”

A meeting to discuss the amendment on March 25 was postponed due to “urgent parliamentary business” and the rearranged meeting on April 2 was cancelled as the coronavirus crisis escalated.

The Scottish government, health bodies and National Records of Scotland have been unable to provide data on the number of Sikhs testing positive for Covid-19 or on the number of Sikh deaths occurring from the disease in Scotland.

The Federation hopes the pause in parliamentary legislation will give Scottish ministers time to reflect on their decision to exclude them from the census.

The legal challenge is also expected to resonate in England and Wales, where the Sikh Federation (UK) has launched a second judicial review against a similar omission there.

In the first judicial review challenge that took seven months in the courts on an expedited timetable, the High Court ruled on December 12 last year that the claim was too early as the Cabinet Office minister had not yet laid the draft Census Order before parliament.



A Scottish government spokesman said: “National Records of Scotland continues to plan for Scotland’s census in March 2021 and is committed to delivering a set of questions and associated guidance which enables everyone in Scotland to access, understand and complete the census.

“Following engagement with stakeholders, National Records of Scotland is proposing that the question on ethnic group will include a prompt to highlight the opportunity to write in ‘Sikh’ as a response.”



British Sikhs ‘highly dissatisfied’ with UK govt’s handling of Covid crisis: Survey

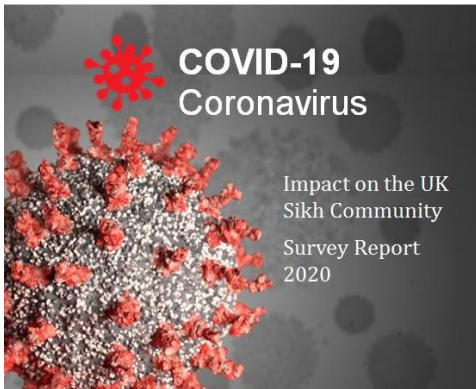
Times of India - 29 May 2020

A survey examining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the British Sikh community has found “extremely high levels of dissatisfaction” with the UK government over its handling of the crisis.

The survey of 1,553 British Sikhs by the Sikh Network found that 92% did not think the government acted quickly enough to tackle the pandemic. One Sikh woman even blamed two deaths in her family on the government “not sharing guidance and advice to those most vulnerable sooner”.

THE SIKH NETWORK

Connecting & representing Sikhs around the Sikh Manifesto & UK Sikh Survey



Nearly 96% said they were “very concerned” with the high proportion of Sikh deaths from Covid-19, “which are approximately twice the national average”. British Sikh Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesei has lost three family members to the viral infection.

Of the Sikhs working in the NHS or social care sector, 88% stated they were “very unsatisfied” with the availability of PPE kits, with one NHS Sikh worker describing the lack of preparation for the crisis and government incompetence as “corporate manslaughter”.

Further, 88% of the respondent said they were “very unhappy” with the UK’s testing strategy, specifically the delay in being tested, the time it takes to get results and also missing results.

One Sikh woman working in a care home said, “I have been working on the frontline since Day 1, but have still not been tested.”

Besides, 85% of those Sikhs working in the NHS or social care, or those with immediate family members working in these sectors said Covid-19 had created unbearable strains within the family due to lack of testing, lack of availability of proper PPE, high proportion of BAME deaths and the need to be ultra-cautious not to spread the disease to loved ones.

One Sikh nurse said she was paying for a hotel out of her own pocket to self-isolate from mother-in-law and the daily trauma and isolation was making her depressed.

As many as 86% stated the government had been negligent by not issuing funeral guidance specific to each faith. Many suggested this had created huge problems for bereaved Sikh families.

Moreover, 98% were extremely unhappy that the government did not consult gurdwaras before forcing them to close their doors to the public and 95% said the government has failed to properly engage with gurdwaras on their re-opening. Also, 95% stated the government failed to appreciate the significance of gurdwaras to the Sikh way of life and 91% said they were comfortable with re-opening gurdwaras to the public.

Nine out of 10 Sikhs stated the Foreign and Commonwealth Office did far too little to support tens of thousands of British Sikhs stranded in Punjab.



Yet despite this widespread dissatisfaction, more than 100 Gurdwaras have prepared and distributed more than one million free meals since the start of the lockdown — amounting to 120,000 free meals per week — to those most vulnerable and to NHS frontline workers, the report said.



CENSUS 2021 FACING ONE-YEAR DELAY DUE TO LEGAL BATTLE WITH SIKH COMMUNITY AS PARLIAMENTARIANS PROVE THEY ARE POWERLESS

4 May 2020 - On Wednesday 6 May the draft Census (England and Wales) Order 2020 will be debated and the government could face criticism from MPs on all sides on the absence of a Sikh ethnic tick box response option as there is cross-party support for the Sikh community on this issue.

There is no process in Parliament to allow for an amendment to the ethnic group question and the draft Census Order is guaranteed to be approved.



We argued this point in the first judicial review in the High Court but lawyers for the Cabinet Office maintained Parliament could withhold giving approval.

The Court of Appeal in *R v Her Majesty's Treasury, ex p. Smedley* (1985) concluded Parliament only has the "power of veto" with such orders.

However, in this case this "power of veto" has also been taken away by Covid-19 as it has disrupted normal Parliamentary processes and government ministers, their counterparts and whips are agreeing in advance of

a debate to pass legislation without a division or vote.

The draft Census Order does not include a Sikh ethnic tick box response option and the Sikh Federation (UK) supported by over 150 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations are legally challenging the Cabinet Office.

The Labour Party and the frontbench are supporting the need for there to be a Sikh ethnic tick box in the Census 2021 and there is cross-party support for the Sikh community.

However, it is clear the Sikh community will have to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds in court as Parliamentarians are powerless to amend or annul the draft Census Order.

We argued this in the High Court and is what we put to the Court of Appeal in our appeal lodged on 3 January 2020 that is waiting to be heard. The Court of Appeal will now have to take note that the right of Parliamentarians to annul the draft Census Order was denied.

The Cabinet Office Ministers have three legal challenges to worry about as well as the impact of Covid-19 on the timing of the Census 2021.

The first judicial review challenge by the Sikh Federation (UK) commenced in May 2019. It took seven months on an expedited timetable before the High Court ruled on 12 December 2019 that the claim was too early as the Cabinet Office Minister had not yet laid the draft Census Order in Parliament and Parliament could choose to annul the draft Census Order.

The Cabinet Office Minister promised in the December 2018 Census White Paper that the draft Census Order would be laid in Parliament in Autumn 2019 consistent with the timetable for the



census 10 years earlier. In Scotland the draft Census Order was shared with Parliamentarians in September 2019.

The Sikh Federation (UK) lodged an appeal on 3 January 2020 arguing against the High Court ruling that the challenge was pre-mature, Parliament could only annul the draft Census Order (that has also been denied) and requested a ruling on the substantive issue. The Court of Appeal has not yet decided on the timing of a hearing.

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

“Requesting a tick box for Sikhs in the ethnic group question taking the number of tick boxes from 19 to 20 so data can be systematically collected by public bodies on Sikhs to ensure equal opportunities is a reasonable ask.”

“We commenced legal proceedings in May 2019 to ensure the Census 2021 would not be delayed. However, the High Court ruled in December 2019 our legal challenge was too early as the Cabinet Office delayed presenting the draft Census Order to Parliament.”

“The Cabinet Office lawyers argued this technicality in the first case and now face the dilemma that the courts will take their time to hear our second case.”

“We have today sent a briefing to MPs that may wish to speak in the debate on Wednesday. However, we will make clear to the courts this was an academic process as Parliamentarians were denied the right to annul the draft Census Order.”

ਸਕਾਟਲੈਂਡ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਮਰਦਮਸ਼ੁਮਾਰੀ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਸਿੱਧੇ ਢੰਗ ਨਾਲ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਕੀਤਾ ਨਸਲੀ ਖਾਨੇ 'ਚ

ਲੰਡਨ, 10 ਮਈ (ਮਨਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੱਧਨੀ ਕਲਾ)- ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਵੱਸਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਵਲੋਂ ਮਾਰਚ 2021 ਦੀ ਮਰਦਮਸ਼ੁਮਾਰੀ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਖਾਨੇ ਨੂੰ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਸ਼ਖਰਸ਼ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਸਕਾਟਲੈਂਡ ਦੀ ਸੰਸਦ ਤੇ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਦੀ ਸੰਸਦ ਵਲੋਂ ਜਨਗਣਨਾ ਖਰੜੇ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨਗੀ ਦੇ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਇਸ ਖਰੜੇ 'ਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਸਲੀ ਕਾਲਮ (ਖਾਨੇ) 'ਚ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ, ਜਿਸ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਅਦਾਲਤ ਦਾ ਸਹਾਰਾ ਲੈਣ ਦਾ ਐਲਾਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ ਪਰ ਇਸ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਹੀ 7 ਮਈ ਨੂੰ ਸਕਾਟਲੈਂਡ ਸੰਸਦ 'ਚ ਮਰਦਮਸ਼ੁਮਾਰੀ (ਸਕਾਟਲੈਂਡ) ਰੈਗੂਲੇਸ਼ਨ

2020 ਪੇਸ਼ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ, ਜੋ ਅਗਲੇ ਮਹੀਨੇ 16 ਤਾਰੀਖ ਨੂੰ ਲਾਗੂ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਇਸ ਰੈਗੂਲੇਸ਼ਨ 'ਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਸਿੱਧੇ ਢੰਗ ਨਾਲ ਨਸਲੀ ਖਾਨੇ (ਕਾਲਮ) ਵਿਚ

ਕਾਨੂੰਨੀ ਜੰਗ ਜਾਰੀ ਰਹੇਗੀ-ਗਿੱਲ

ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਕਰ ਲਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਸਰਕਾਰ ਵਲੋਂ ਜਾਰੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਇਸ ਨਵੇਂ ਖਰੜੇ 'ਚ ਨਸਲੀ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਕਿਹੜਾ ਸਵਾਲ ਦੇ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਹੋਰ ਨਸਲੀ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ 'ਚ ਅਰਬ, ਸਿੱਖ ਅਤੇ ਜਹੂਦੀ ਸ਼ਪਸ਼ਟ ਲਿਖ ਕੇ ਪੁੱਛਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। 17

ਅਪ੍ਰੈਲ 2020 ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਵਲੋਂ ਸਕਾਟਲੈਂਡ ਦੇ ਕਾਨੂੰਨੀ ਡਾਇਰੈਕਟੋਰੇਟ ਨੂੰ ਲਿਖੇ ਪੱਤਰ ਦੇ ਜਵਾਬ 'ਚ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਖਰਾ ਨਸਲੀ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਮੰਨਦੇ ਹਨ। ਭਾਈ ਅਮਰਿਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਗਿੱਲ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਕਾਟਲੈਂਡ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਵਲੋਂ ਵੱਖਰਾ ਨਸਲੀ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਮੰਨਣਾ ਤੇ ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਕਾਨੂੰਨੀ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਮਾਨਤਾ ਦੇਣ 'ਤੇ ਧੰਨਵਾਦ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਪਰ ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਸਿਰਫ ਅੱਧਾ ਸਫਰ ਹੀ ਤੈਅ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ, ਜਦਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬਰਾਬਰ ਹੱਕ ਮਿਲਣ ਤੱਕ ਜੰਗ ਜਾਰੀ ਰਹੇਗੀ।



Times of India – 29 June 2020

The Sikh Federation UK (SFUK) is celebrating a “victory” in its campaign to get a Sikh ethnic tick-box added to the 2021 UK census after Scottish ministers agreed to put a prompt for Sikhs in the “other” part of the ethnicity response options. They also assured to “monitor Sikhs as an ethnic group as well as religion” going forwards.

The SFUK, which claims to have the backing of more than 150 gurdwaras and Sikh organisations, has withdrawn its legal case in Scotland but is still battling ahead with a second judicial review against the Cabinet Office over the lack of a Sikh ethnic tick-box in the proposed census for England and Wales.



In the past public bodies have only followed the Census categories for ethnic data collection. “The only reason we wanted a Sikh ethnic tick-box was to force Scotland to monitor Sikhs,” explained Singh. “We feel we have won the war in Scotland and do not feel there is any point in continuing legal action in the court of session.”

The Federation has also withdrawn its appeal against a December 12, 2019, judgment handed down in a first judicial review the SFUK brought against the Cabinet Office over the England and Wales census after the government objected to there being two cases running simultaneously over the same issue.

On June 11, SFUK submitted an application for a second judicial review to the high court seeking to quash the Census (England and Wales) Order 2020 on the grounds it was unlawful after Mrs Justice Lang ruled the first legal challenge was premature. Bringing the first case cost the Federation just over £100,000 in ‘capped’ legal costs for both sides.

If the second judicial review is allowed, the legal costs may not be capped and if the Federation win the case, the UK-wide census scheduled for 21 March 2021, could be delayed.

On June 16, the high court ruled the second judicial review would be “expedited” and put before a high court judge on or before July 3 to make a decision as to whether it can be allowed.

A Cabinet Office spokesperson said: “Anyone who chooses to identify as being of Sikh ethnicity in this census will be able to by using the write-in option and the search-as-you type function online.”

Question	Instruction for respondent	Response options
What is your ethnic group?	The respondent is required to select one option only. The next question asks the respondent about their ethnic group in more detail.	<input type="checkbox"/> White (including Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showman/Showwoman) <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (including any mixed or multiple ethnic groups) <input type="checkbox"/> Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian (including any Asian ethnic group) <input type="checkbox"/> African, Scottish African or British African (including any African ethnic group) <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean or Black (including Scottish Caribbean, Black Scottish) <input type="checkbox"/> Other ethnic group (any other ethnic group) (including Arab, Sikh, Jewish)
Which one best describes your other ethnic group or background?	The respondent is required to select one option only. If the respondent selects “Other” they are required to enter their other ethnic group (for example “Sikh”, “Jewish”) in the box provided.	<input type="checkbox"/> Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab <input type="checkbox"/> Other (for example, “Sikh”, “Jewish”)

Source: The Census (Scotland) Regulation 2020 laid in the Scottish Parliament on 7 May 2020

On May 7, the Census (Scotland) Regulation 2020 was laid in the Scottish Parliament which included a prompt for Sikhs and Jews in the “Other” response option to the question “What is your ethnic group?”.

“At the top there is a choice of White, Mixed, Asian, African, Caribbean and Other. Sikhs is not within Asian, it is coming under Other,” said Dabinderjit Singh OBE, principal adviser to the SFUK.

The Federation’s tick-box campaign got a further boost in a letter dated June 24 from Scotland’s economy secretary Fiona Hyslop. The letter, which TOI has seen, states she will now “work with the Sikh Federation (UK) to ensure public bodies in Scotland monitor Sikhs as an ethnic group, as well as a religion”.



Sikhs drop legal action (in Scotland) after being **THE** **TIMES** included on the census

The Times - 16 July 2020

Scotland's Sikhs have dropped plans to launch legal action against the government after receiving assurances that they will be recognised as a distinct ethnic group.

This year **the Sikh Federation** threatened a court challenge, which could have delayed the 2021 Scottish census, after ministers indicated they had no plans to include a separate tick box for Sikhs in the ethnicity section.

A compromise measure, inviting respondents to write "Sikh" in the "other ethnic group" section was rejected as not going far enough.

However, the impasse was resolved following a meeting between community leaders and Fiona Hyslop, the cabinet secretary for culture, and Christina McKelvie, the equalities minister.

Dabinderjit Singh, who represented the Sikh Federation, said: "We had an excellent meeting with Fiona Hyslop and Christina McKelvie who both showed a real passion and leadership to address inequalities and racism faced by the Sikh community in Scotland. In the last six months Scottish ministers have shown a clear desire to properly recognise the Sikh community in the census.

"We now have an agreement to work together and build a road map for public bodies in Scotland to



get them to collect ethnicity as well as religious data on Sikhs to help with decision making. The positive and constructive approach taken by Scottish ministers listening and working with the Sikh community means we have no need to pursue a legal route in Scotland."

Gurpreet Singh Johal, of the Scottish Gurdwara Council, added: "We are delighted to be working with the Scottish government and appreciate the leadership ministers are showing to make the lives of Scottish people better. The ministers appreciate having good quality data will make a real difference to the Sikh community in Scotland."

There were about 10,000 Sikhs in Scotland in the 2011 census. Bodies in Scotland have been unable to provide data on the number of Sikhs testing positive for Covid-19 or the number of Sikh deaths occurring from the disease.

CABINET OFFICE WILL STRUGGLE IN HIGH COURT TO JUSTIFY NOT INCLUDING SIKH ETHNIC TICK BOX IN CENSUS 2021

Pressure from MPs representing Sikh community forces U-turn on Panjabi for Census community engagement roles that will be highlighted in High Court battle

6 August 2020 - Preet Kaur Gill MP, the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs believes the Cabinet Office will struggle in the High Court in October 2020 to justify not including a Sikh ethnic tick box in the Census 2021.

The Sikh Federation (UK) with the support of over 150 Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations has been granted permission for a full judicial review hearing in the High Court, expected to take place in October.

The Federation argues that the decision to exclude a Sikh ethnic tick box response option in the forthcoming 2021 Census is based on legally unsustainable reasoning and is therefore unlawful.

Preet Kaur Gill MP sent two letters to the Cabinet Office on 30 June and 14 July that have just had a response from Chloe Smith, the Cabinet Office Minister responsible for the Census.





The Cabinet Office Minister has for the first time confirmed in writing the Equality Act 2010 considers Sikhs to be an ethnic group due to the ruling in *Mandla v Dowell-Lee* (1983).

The Minister has also confirmed Sikhs are therefore “afforded protection from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010” in respect of religious affiliation and ethnicity.

On 17 July the Scottish Government decided to delay the census in Scotland by 1 year due to the disruption caused by COVID-19. The Sikh Federation (UK) has raised with Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary the possibility of the insertion of a Sikh ethnic tick box in a Census Amendment Order that may be necessary to legalise the change of date in Scotland.

In an interesting twist the Cabinet Office Minister has now distanced the approach being taken in England

and Wales from Scotland by stating “the Census is devolved to Scotland and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the respective roles of Scottish Ministers and National Records of Scotland (NRS).”

This contrasts with Chloe Smith’s letter to Preet Kaur Gill MP dated 25 June 2020 where she commented on the recommendations of NRS to add ‘Sikh’ prompts to the ethnicity question following discussions with the Sikh Federation (UK). She controversially suggested the addition of Sikh prompts in Scotland would compromise data quality as prompts are “leading”.

She has however failed to respond to Preet Kaur Gill’s assertion on 30 June that she was astonished with this conclusion as “tick boxes” exist in themselves to collect specific information and improve data quality and are deliberately designed to “lead” respondents or the census would have no tick boxes.

The Cabinet Office Minister has drawn attention to a recently published ‘prioritisation report’ that sets out how the final conclusion on ethnic groups was reached. The Minister illogically states the decision on ethnic tick-box response options for both Sikhs and Jews “was not based on a judgement of whether or not these were ethnic groups.”

On 14 July Preet Kaur Gill MP took up the matter of ONS job advertisements for community advisers covering the Sikh community focusing on the need to speak English and Gujarati with no mention of Panjabi. This showed the needs of the Sikh community were invisible to the ONS before it was pointed out despite the case in the High Court.

The Minister in her letter indicated ONS was in the process of finalising these role specifications and Panjabi has now been added to the job descriptions. This U-turn following pressure highlights the needs of Sikhs are invisible to public bodies unless challenged.

Preet Kaur Gill MP said:

“I am confident the High Court will consider the legitimate concerns of the Sikh community.”

“The Cabinet Office can wait for a hearing and ruling later this year, but given Sikhs are a legally recognised ethnic group with specific needs it would be best for the Cabinet Office to learn from the Scottish Government and indicate it will amend the Census Order and add a Sikh ethnic tick box response option.”

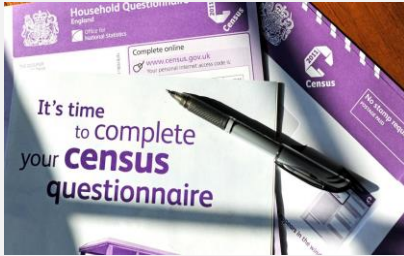


“These letters and associated reports show ONS and the Cabinet Office have been shifting their position and logic on why a Sikh ethnic tick box was not recommended in the December 2018 White Paper ‘Help shape our future’.”

“However, in my opinion they reinforce the ONS has reached the wrong conclusion.”

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

“The Minister has clarified Sikhs are an ethnic as well as a religious group and protected under the Equality Act 2010.”



“The failure of ONS to recognise Panjabi and not Gujarati is the main language of Sikhs is an excellent example from ONS itself that will be used in the High Court.”

“The ONS gaffe underlines why there is a need for a Sikh ethnic tick box response option in the census that will result in better recognition of Sikhs.”

“We are confident the High Court will rule in favour of the Sikh community.”

RAISING AWARENESS & CAMPAIGNING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

UK counter-extremism body forced to remove controversial paper on Sikh activism

Times of India – 9 October 2019



The UK's Commission for Countering Extremism, which published a report into 'hateful extremism' in the country on Monday, was forced to take down an academic paper on Sikh activism by Sikh groups. The commission told TOI it had taken down the paper “for legal issues.”

Also, two of the 19 peer-reviewed academic papers commissioned for first-of-its-kind study on the scale of extremism in Britain were never published after the commission discovered anti-semitic material was tweeted by the authors. The report had highlighted threat posed by a section of hardline Sikhs and Hindus, Islamists, the far right and the far left groups.

A spokesperson for the commission said: “Following legal advice we have taken down an

independent academic paper on Sikh activism. We will aim to republish a version as soon as possible.”

The UK Sikh groups, including **Sikh Federation UK** (SFUK), had serious objections to the academic paper, ‘The changing nature of activism among Sikhs in the UK today’, by Birmingham University lecturer Dr Jagbir Jhutti-Johal and journalist Sunny Hundal. They wrote to the commission seeking withdrawal and redaction of parts of the paper.



The academic paper by Jhutti-Johal and Hundal, which was removed from the gov.uk website on Wednesday, had described a report called ‘Religiously Aggravated Sexual Exploitation of



Young Sikh Women Across the UK' produced in conjunction with Sikh Youth UK as "filled with sweeping generalisations and poorly substantiated claims."

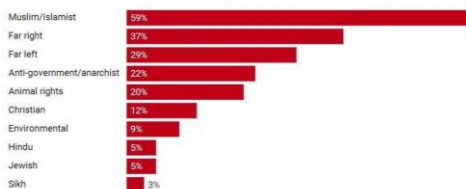
Deepa Singh, a Sikh Youth UK leader, who is named in both the academic paper and the report, told TOI he has instructed human rights lawyer Gareth Peirce to consider legal action over both the paper and the report.

"Sikhs did not understand why government were paying academics to investigate 'Sikh extremism' given their own evidence showed this was a non-issue. The authors make judgments about Sikh organisations and named individuals without the organisations and individuals being consulted or given the right to reply. We do not understand why the commission were hellbent on publishing a report to try and bring the Sikh community into disrepute," Bhai Amrik Singh, the chair of SFUK said.

Of the 17 published papers, the other 16 focus on the far right, Islamism, the far left, the drivers of extremism, online extremism and approaches to countering extremism. This led the Sikh groups to question why a special academic paper was commissioned on the Sikhs. "Why did they just do a paper on Sikhs? They should do one on every major religion and not singled Sikhs out to do a paper on. What are young people supposed to think if they see something one-sided like this on

a government paper?" said Harnek Singh, national press secretary, SFUK. "We like anybody else want to make sure society is safe. But if we are not careful what gets published, it could lead to a backlash against Sikhs. In every section of society there are people with extreme views."

What kind of extremism the public are witnessing in the UK



742 members of the public said they had witnessed extremism and responded to this question on the survey. A further 7% said they were unsure what kind of extremism they had witnessed, while 32% said 'other'.

Source: Commission on Counter-Extremism - Get the data

"They did not contact us at all about this report. My understanding is they have taken their own legal advice following our complaint and decided to take it down. We have offered to have a meeting with them," he added.

However, Hundal remained defiant. "Let them complain. People should read the report when it's out again to see if they're justified. We are just taking the right legal precautions. We stand by the report. So does CCE. It's just a small legal issue," he told TOI.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST TAKE TOUGH ACTION AGAINST HINDU-NATIONALIST BJP REGIME BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

20 December 2019 - In December 2019 India passed the so-called Citizenship Amendment Bill or CAB that sparked protests across India from people belonging to all walks of life.

Protesters were shot dead by police and para-military forces, but opposition continued to grow.

Draconian laws that prevent a gathering of more than four people were being used across India to try and shut down protests and thousands of protesters were detained and treated as criminals. This is an abuse of power and an attack on the fundamental right to free speech and the right to freedom of assembly.

Amnesty International said: "denying permission for peaceful protests shows an apparent disdain for the right to freedom of expression". Opposition to CAB grew further within India and the United Nations described CAB as "fundamentally discriminatory in nature".

The Hindu-nationalist BJP government is re-writing history in India's textbooks, institutions are crumbling, the public services are compromised, media is being silenced, and the judiciary intimidated.



Modi and the BJP have ideological reasons for the new law that is discriminatory against Muslims and promotes inequality. There are no doubts CAB is directly linked to the ambition of a “Hindu Rashtra”.

Since 2014 Modi has turned a blind eye to threats, bullying, attacks and even killings of minorities that have increased exponentially since the BJP came to power. Modi has single-mindedly focused on appeasing and obtaining the backing of the Hindu majority.

In his second term Modi is now unashamedly using legislation to legitimise his right-wing Hindu agenda. The BJP government first unilaterally dismantled the statehood of India’s only Muslim-majority state, Jammu and Kashmir. Local leaders were put in jail, the internet was cut off, and the military put in charge.

Then came the National Register of Citizens, or NRC that was originally intended as an attempt by the federal government to identify illegal immigrants in the north-eastern state of Assam. Some 2 million people in Assam found that their names were not on the NRC. If they cannot prove their citizenship, they will be put in detention camps and deported. Those in Assam whose names do not appear on the NRC have been told the burden of proof is on them to prove that they are citizens. A quarter of the population of Assam is illiterate.

For the moment, the NRC has been confined to Assam. But the BJP government has plans to take it nationwide. BJP leaders have been using inflammatory and dehumanising language to describe Muslims. Home Minister and BJP President Amit Shah has described Muslims as “termites” and claimed the NRC would be used to “remove them” across the nation. In other words, a clampdown on the 200 million Muslims in India. The international community must act now as Modi appears to want to build a Hindu Rashtra on the graves of millions of Muslims.

ਲਹਿੰਦੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਗਵਰਨਰ ਚੌਧਰੀ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ ਸਰਵਰ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਵਲੋਂ ਮੀਟਿੰਗ



ਲਹਿੰਦੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਗਵਰਨਰ ਚੌਧਰੀ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ ਸਰਵਰ ਦਾ ਸਨਮਾਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋਏ ਸਿੱਖ ਆਗੂ।
ਤਸਵੀਰ: ਮਨਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੱਧਨੀ ਕਲਾਂ

ਲੰਡਨ, 11 ਦਸੰਬਰ (ਮਨਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੱਧਨੀ ਕਲਾਂ)- ਲਹਿੰਦੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਗਵਰਨਰ ਚੌਧਰੀ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ ਸਰਵਰ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਦੀ ਇਕ ਅਹਿਮ ਮੀਟਿੰਗ ਮਾਨਚੈਸਟਰ ਵਿਖੇ ਹੋਈ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਕਰਤਾਰਪੁਰ ਲਾਂਘੇ ਬਾਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ | ਚੌਧਰੀ ਸਰਵਰ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਹਾਲਾਤ ਬਹੁਤ ਵਧੀਆ ਹਨ, ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਲਈ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਦਰਵਾਜ਼ੇ ਖੁੱਲ੍ਹੇ ਹਨ | ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ.ਕੇ. ਵਲੋਂ ਭਾਈ ਦਬਿੰਦਰਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਦਾ ਧੰਨਵਾਦ ਕੀਤਾ, ਤੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ ਭਰ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਕਰਤਾਰਪੁਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਲਾਂਘੇ ਨੂੰ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਮਨਾਈ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ | ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ

ਆਗੂਆਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਚੌਧਰੀ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ ਸਰਵਰ ਤੇ ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ ਦੀ ਕੌਂਸਲੇਟ ਜਨਰਲ ਫਾਜ਼ੀਆ ਨਿਆਜ਼ੀ ਦਾ ਸਿਰੋਪਾਓ, ਯਾਦਗਾਰੀ ਚਿੱਠ ਤੇ 550 ਸਾਲਾ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਪੁਰਬ ਮੌਕੇ ਤਿਆਰ ਕੀਤਾ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਸਿੱਕਾ ਭੇਟ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਸਨਮਾਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ | ਇਸ ਮੌਕੇ ਭਾਈ ਕੁਲਦੀਪ ਸਿੰਘ ਚਰੇਤੂ, ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ, ਜਸ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਦਿ ਹਾਜ਼ਰ ਸਨ |



PAKISTAN AUTHORITIES MUST RESPOND TO CLEAR THREATS OF VIOLENCE AND ETHNIC CLEANSING TOWARDS SIKHS IN NANKANA SAHIB

4 January 2020 - Sikhs across the globe have been deeply upset with the mob scenes, pelting of stones, anti-Sikh slogans and incitement of violence towards Sikhs and their religious institutions in the vicinity of Sri Nankana Sahib that took place in early January.



Whilst local law enforcement agencies disbanded the mob, arrested some of the protesters and took control of the situation and the main instigator has now apologised the Pakistan authorities must take further action due to the inflammatory nature of the hate remarks and threats of violence and ethnic cleansing towards the Sikh minority.

The Pakistan authorities should investigate how a personal matter that started with a police raid was manipulated so quickly to arouse ant-Sikh emotions and find and deal with all the instigators that may have planned this incident for some time.

In November, Sri Nankana Sahib the birth place of Guru Nanak Dev Ji was lit up to celebrate his 550th birth anniversary. Imran Khan, the Pakistan Prime Minister was credited with negotiating an agreement to open the 2.9-mile Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, allowing Sikh pilgrims to travel between Gurdwara Der Baba Nanak and Kartarpur Sahib on the other side of the border. Relations between Muslim-majority Pakistan and the international Sikh community were then at a historic high.

In the current climate the Pakistani authorities will want to take a tough stand against anti-Sikh activities as isolated ugly incidents like this will be fully exploited by Indian politicians to undo all the good work in recent months and deflect attention away from the anti-Sikh actions of the right-wing Indian authorities, including the recent demolition of Mangu Mutt Sahib in Orissa.

Sikhs across the globe who regularly visit Pakistan have in the last 48 hours been writing and approaching the Pakistan authorities to provide reassurances. We want the Government of Pakistan to not only ensure the safety of the minority Sikh community and Sikh Yatris but also to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the sanctity of Gurdwaras in Pakistan.

Sikh diaspora calls for Rwanda-style tribunal for 1984 anti-Sikh riots

TOI

Times of India – 19 January 2020

The Sikh Federation UK (SFUK), a UK NGO, is joining forces with around 200 Sikh representatives from more than 20 countries to lobby the UN Security Council (UNSC) for a “Rwanda-style” international tribunal to investigate crimes during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

In 1995, the UNSC established the “International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)” to prosecute those responsible for genocide and other violations of international humanitarian law committed in Rwanda in 1994, which led to 93 indictments.

Last week, the Narendra Modi-led NDA government accepted the findings of the Supreme



Court-appointed Justice SN Dhingra Committee — the latest of the 10 such other panels — which was scathing of the then Rajiv Gandhi



government, judiciary, and Delhi Police, accusing them of not investigating anti-Sikh violence, while charging some police officers of conspiring with the perpetrators.

Bhai Amrik Singh, chair of SFUK, said: “Our experiences from the last 35 years and this latest report shows the police, politicians, and judiciary in India are corrupt to the core and the wheels of justice hardly turn. It is therefore impossible to secure justice within the Indian system. We are confident in securing the support of the majority of the five members of the UN Security Council. It is the entire Indian machinery that must be put on trial in an international arena.”

Rami Ranger, chairman of the British Sikh Association, said he supports the initiative.

The SFUK is launching its new “collective platform” in Paris at the end of March and says it will allow for international co-ordination of a range of political activities around a shared global agenda.

Lord Singh, a British Sikh peer, said: “There should be a criminal investigation into 1984, there is no doubt. Many of us have been pressing for it for years. The Indian authorities aren’t doing it.”

But he said he could not see the UNSC entertaining it. “Britain, America, and Russia have all economic interests in India. It needs an independent inquiry. Britain would support a refusal to consider it. The UN can set it up but big global players should not be involved.”

He said, ideally, the India government should commission an independent inquiry.

“The Modi government can’t be blamed for 1984 but they could and should have launched an independent inquiry more on the lines of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (assembled in South Africa after

apartheid) as to lessons learned and if there is criminal behaviour and people are still about, they should be punished.



“The Justice Dhingra Committee report has not done that. It needs clout. It has drawn attention to failings and abuse in a kind of academic way, but it is not enough. A proper inquiry should go further and look to punishment and lessons learned. The punishment is not as important as to the cause and how it started because there is a feeling in the Sikh community that it started at the very top of the government and there is evidence of that and that has not been clarified. I don’t know why the present government can’t pin the blame on those responsible from Rajiv Gandhi downwards. That is what makes it a genocide — the deliberate, planned extermination of a people of a certain religion — and that has not been investigated.”

Preet Gill, British Sikh MP, told TOI: “I welcome the BJP accepting the findings of the Special Investigation Team (SIT). We have seen many investigations take place, so I commend the BJP for pushing this. Union minister Prakash Javadekar has called 1984 (anti-Sikh riots) a genocide and it must be recognised as such,” she said, referring to the comments of Javadekar where he said: “What happened in 1984 was not just riots but the worst kind of genocide against the Sikhs”.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE TOUGH ACTION AGAINST MP’s DEPORTATION FROM INDIA

18 February 2020 - A British MP critical of the Indian government was denied entry into India on 17 February. Labour MP Debbie Abrahams was stopped at Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi and she was sent back to Dubai, from where she had come to Delhi.

Responding to Debbie Abrahams deportation Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) said:



“It is totally unacceptable that the Indian authorities should deny entry to a UK MP with a valid visa. The British Government must take a tough stand.”

“India should not be allowed to treat a UK MP in this way. The Indian authorities must immediately make a full apology and give assurances that this will never be allowed to happen again. Heads must roll of those responsible for this decision.”

“This is the thin end of the wedge and designed to silence opposition against politicians speaking out about human rights violations taking place in Kashmir.”

SIKH FEDERATION (UK) CONDEMNS TERROR ATTACK ON SIKH GURDWARA IN DERBY

27 May 2020 - In the early hours of Monday 25 May, Sri Guru Arjan Dev Gurdwara Derby was attacked in a violent rage, in which bricks and a steel car jack was used to cause thousands of pounds of damage.



Thankfully there were no injuries or harm caused to the Granthis who were in residence. Granthis are those who organise the daily services and read from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Sikh holy scriptures.

The lone perpetrator was identified and arrested within hours of the attack, with the assistance of the Derby Sikh community. 31-year old Mr Mohammed Ibrar of Cromwell Road, Derby has since been

interviewed and charged with the attack.

The motive and intent behind this attack is clearly political and racial. In a note left by the attacker, he stated that his actions were in retaliation for the Indian governments’ oppression and human rights abuses in Kashmir. The note also threatened more violence and harm to Sikhs and the Gurdwara if such atrocities continued in the disputed region over 4,000 miles away.

Such actions go way beyond the boundaries of religiously aggravated hate crime, which would be the minimum classification of any attack on a place of worship, however in this case the Derbyshire constabulary shockingly communicated this incident as an attempted ‘burglary’.

This official communication has caused deep anger and outrage in the community and triggered the Gurdwara management committee to summon the police to an urgent meeting to clarify its blunder.

Such errors of judgement in communication lead to a lack of confidence and trust in the police and their ability to fully investigate such crimes. All efforts on the ground were to ease community feelings and tensions to maintain the positive and harmonious interfaith relationships in the city.

Sikhs have in the past seen similar downgrading of attacks on Gurdwaras and individuals with the misreporting and under reporting of hate crimes. However, the note left by Mr Ibrar left no doubt of his intentions to cause harm and of the political and extreme views he held. Therefore, the community both locally and nationally are expecting a detailed and thorough terror related investigation to establish the full extent of any extremism activity.



Whilst the perpetrator attacked the Gurdwara alone, it is essential that his background and links be fully investigated on how and where he acquired such radical views and the plan to attack the Sikh Gurdwara. It is also unclear if he was part of a larger group who may share similar views or plans.

The Sikh Federation (UK) raised this case and concerns with senior police officers at the Metropolitan Police at a quarterly National Sikh Forum meeting on Tuesday 26 May. We were assured they would reach out to the Derbyshire Constabulary at a senior level and make the issues known. It was also confirmed that it was national police policy to treat any attack on a place of worship as a hate crime.

Since the attack many Muslim and Kashmiri organisations, groups and places of worship have publicly condemned this terror attack and expressed their solidarity with the respected and admired Sikh community, as well as their support to secure justice.

However unfortunately in this time of communities coming together, there are those who have tried to exploit this incident and inflame it to turn Sikhs against Muslims. Surprisingly the Indian Consulate in Birmingham and the Congress Chief Minister of Punjab, Captain Amarinder Singh both tweeted about the attack emphasising the unconfirmed Pakistani origins of the perpetrator.

The Sikh Federation (UK) responded to both for raising their concerns but reminded them of the genocides, human rights abuses and Indian army attacks on Sikh Gurdwaras in India since 1984, for which justice remains outstanding.



The Sikh Federation (UK) have been supporting the Gurdwara management committee and we demand that the Derbyshire Constabulary review its communication process, but more importantly record this crime and subsequent charge and prosecution as a terror attack.

Tajinder Singh, a management committee member at Guru Arjan Dev Gurdwara said:

“When I reached the Gurdwara it was clear the person responsible for the violence held extreme views towards Sikhs and our Gurdwara. I was shocked and saddened to see the damage that was done in this terror attack.”

“Police in attendance agreed this was a terror attack on our Gurdwara. We were therefore outraged when the police initially communicated the attack as a burglary.”

“We would like to thank all the local communities for their support and thoughts and Sikh organisations and media who have issued supportive statements and provided coverage.”

INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK BLOCKED #SIKH – WAS IT REALLY A MISTAKE?

4 June 2020 - Facebook and Instagram claim that the hashtag #SIKH was 'mistakenly' blocked on its global platforms.

There was a major outcry of censorship from the Sikh community at the beginning of June as we marked the 1984 Sikh Genocide by the Indian authorities at our holiest shrine, the Sri Harmandir Sahib Complex in Amritsar in June 1984.

Instagram confirmed the blocking of the #SIKH on their own communications page and announced an investigation into why and how it had happened.

It has also emerged that some Black Lives Matter hashtags were also being blocked.





The #Sikh was unblocked and immediately started trending indicating the mass concern of censorship that was taking place.

Facebook, who owns and runs both platforms, has suggested that the block started in March at around the time of the Sikh New Year (14 March) and before one of the most significant events of the year - Vaisakhi in April.

They claim it was a mistake, but they have provided no explanation on how this could have happened or who in the company is responsible.

This must be fully investigated and action taken against those in charge. As far as Sikhs are concerned it remains highly suspicious, with some speculating right-wing Hindu groups linked to the Indian government that wish to subsume the Sikh faith may be responsible.

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

"For 36 years attempts have been made to silence the voice of the Sikh community through bloodshed, violence and censorship."

"Indian propaganda has created a false narrative and ignored the pain and suffering of millions of Sikhs."

"The age of the internet has allowed hope for the truth to be aired, so for social media giants like Instagram and Facebook, who claim to be and should be the bastions of freedom of speech, to block #Sikh and other Black Lives Matter hashtags is unacceptable and blatant censorship of the truth and feeling of oppressed minorities."

"Whilst we welcome the unblocking and assurance it will not happen again; we demand a full and transparent investigation into how both of these popular movements had their hashtags blocked and who was behind it."

"Truth must always prevail and the confidence of millions of users of Facebook and Instagram need to be restored."

Britain's Sikhs rally on 36th anniversary of the Amritsar genocide



Morning Star – 7 June 2020



Sikh communities in Britain gathered in London today to mark the 36th anniversary of the 1984 Amritsar genocide.

A rally of around 150 people took place in the capital while organisers, the Sikh Federation (UK), said they worked to ensure social distancing.

Members of the community assembled near Wellington Arch and marched to Trafalgar Square following a prayer.

Tens of thousands of members of the community would normally gather, with coaches from across Britain bringing Sikhs to Hyde Park, the Federation said.





Events have been taking place every year since June 1984 to commemorate the victims of the military attacks on the Sri Harmandir Sahib, popularly known as the Golden Temple, in Amritsar under then prime minister Indira Gandhi.

In 2014, the British government's involvement in the genocide was first "inadvertently" declassified

when Cabinet papers were released under a 30-year rule of disclosure.

The Sikh Federation (UK) is calling for the inquiry to investigate the British government's advice and assistance to the Indian authorities at the time they were planning the attack on the holy shrine.

Campaigners are also calling for a public inquiry into the anti-Sikh measures taken by the British government at the request of the Indian authorities to restrict their democratic freedoms.

The government must also accept the application of self-determination to the Sikhs, the Federation said.

A spokesperson said: "The UK government has a historic and moral responsibility to recognise the widespread human rights violations by the Indian authorities and responsibility towards resolving the conflict Sikhs have in the Indian subcontinent."

WORKING WITH THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND UK MPs WE WILL ENSURE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS IN INDIA AND THOSE BENEFITING FACE SANCTIONS ABROAD

7 July 2020 -A new Global Human Rights Sanctions regime will come into force in the UK after Brexit. However, yesterday the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, a former human rights lawyer, named some of those accused of human rights violations whose assets will be frozen.

The move against individuals, separate from a country-wide sanctions regime, follows the passage of the 2018 Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act setting up an independent post-Brexit sanctions regime.

In total 49 individuals and organisations involved in human rights violations and abuses in Russia, Saudia Arabia, Myanmar and North Korea have been designated for sanctions by the Government.

They include 25 Russian nationals involved in the death of whistleblower Sergei Magnitsky, 20 Saudia nationals implicated in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, two high-ranking Myanmar military generals responsible for the persecution of Rohingya Muslims, and two organisations responsible for the operation of gulags in North Korea.

Dominic Raab has taken a tough stance despite misgivings among some in the Foreign Office over its likely impact on bilateral relations with some strategic allies with poor human rights records. He has admitted there had been "some disquiet" about the effect of the sanctions regime on bilateral relations but added: "It is morally the right thing to do."

Dominic Raab said: "We will defend media freedoms, protect freedom of religion and, with the measures we are announcing and enacting today, hold to account the perpetrators of the worst human rights abuses." They include the right to life, threatened by extra-judicial killings and the right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Dominic Raab has told MPs that the UK's new independent system of targeted sanctions would act as a "forensic tool" to punish the perpetrators of such crimes rather than the country as a whole. He



continued: "The powers enable us to target a wider network of perpetrators including those who facilitate, insight, promote or support any of these crimes."

He continued: "Today this Government and this House send a very clear message on behalf of the British people that those with blood on their hands won't be free ... to waltz into this country, to buy up property on the Kings Road, do their Christmas shopping in Knightsbridge, or siphon dirty money through British banks."

"You cannot set foot in this country, and we will seize your blood-drenched ill-gotten gains if you try."

Dominic Raab, a long-term campaigner for the measures, said the individuals sanctioned on Monday were a first step and he would welcome MPs proposing names to add to the list. MPs universally welcomed the measures. The system that has been developed allows the UK government to respond to specific concerns without interfering with wider considerations such as a trade deal.



Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) appreciated the new measures and said:

"The sanctions will cover threats to an individual's right to life, freedom from torture and freedom of religion and will be aimed not just at those directly committing human rights abuses, but those who are benefiting and profiting from them."



"This is an important milestone against human rights violators. We have undertaken some initial work and believe many that have

perpetrated serious human rights violations against Sikhs and other minorities in India, such as police officers involved in extrajudicial killings and torture can be successfully excluded from the UK and if they have any assets here they can be seized."

"Political leaders in India will be more difficult to target, but we have been given assurances former leaders and state level politicians in India that have benefited from the genocide of the Sikhs, crimes against humanity and human rights violations to build a power base and a fortune are in scope."

"The Foreign Office must ensure individuals or countries like India are not excluded due to wider UK diplomatic or trade interests. Politicians in India are the ones that have assets abroad and send their children here to benefit from the education system. We have already reached out to the Foreign Office and MPs to begin compiling evidence for some test cases."

"Similar schemes operate in the United States and Canada and the EU is working on its own version. As sanctions are always more powerful if imposed collectively, we will work with like-minded Sikhs in these countries to share information and develop a global strategy to tackle perpetrators of human rights abuses against Sikhs."



CALLS FOR INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO UK INVOLVEMENT IN 1984 SIKH GENOCIDE GROW AS BRITISH OFFICIALS WITH CONFLICT OF INTEREST REVEALED

4 August 2020 - The Foreign Office has admitted after losing a Freedom of Information court case to Declassified UK in March 2020 that 'one or more' staff with a conflict of interest were involved in influencing what documents investigators supporting Sir Jeremy Heywood review were able to access.



The revelation strengthens call for an independent public inquiry into UK involvement in the 1984 Sikh Genocide.

Sir Jeremy Heywood was asked in January 2014 by Prime Minister David Cameron to look into the extent of the UK's role in the 1984 massacre on Sikhs. Heywood quickly assembled a team from Whitehall's Cabinet Office to look into the affair. Three weeks later, the Heywood Review was published and concluded the advice given by the SAS officer had "limited impact in practice".

The Sikh Federation (UK) branded Heywood's review as a "whitewash" and the opposition Labour Party have been calling for an independent public inquiry.

A list of the files Heywood's review had examined included a Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) file entitled "UK military training assistance to India". Heywood's team had seen the file, but not mentioned a key aspect of it in their review.

Part of the file discussed "an Indian request for military assistance in the setting up of a National Guard for internal security duties". It was dated 3 July 1984, less than a month after the massacre.

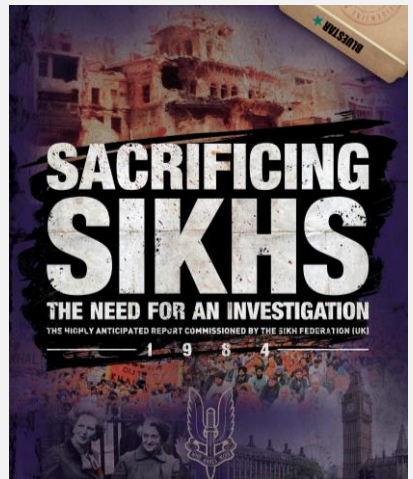
Crucially, the memo shows British officials were considering "the possibility of an SAS involvement" in helping to set up the new unit.

The rest of the file containing this memo was censored, so it was unclear whether or not the SAS training had gone ahead.

The National Archives database shows that the Foreign Office had an entire file from 1984 titled "Indian National Security Guard". The file is not accessible to the public, nor did it appear on the list of files that Heywood's team had examined.

The Indian National Security Guard, which sounds strikingly similar to the nascent National Guard mentioned in the mysterious memo, was set up after the 1984 Amritsar massacre.

It was "modelled" on the SAS and became an elite commando unit – nicknamed the Black Cats – which was involved in further raids in Amritsar. Much of this and more was exposed in the highly anticipated report, commissioned by the Sikh Federation (UK) in to the UK govt role in 1984, 'Sacrificing Sikhs', which is available to download from www.sikhfeduk.com.



Rather than the SAS mission to Amritsar being "limited" as Heywood claimed, was it in fact the start of a pattern in which British special forces repeatedly aided India's crackdown on Sikhs? And why



had Heywood not been shown this file? Among the British diplomats named in the UK government's first "National Guard" memo from July 1984 – the month after Operation Blue Star – was a member of the Foreign Office's South Asian Department, Bruce Cleghorn, who was privy to the discussions about possible training for the elite unit.

It was later discovered that Cleghorn had gone on to work as a "sensitivity reviewer" for the Foreign Office during 2014. In this role, he was tasked with vetting files before they were released to the National Archives to ensure any embarrassing information was not disclosed.

According to the declassified files, the day before Operation Blue Star, Cleghorn had warned colleagues: "It would be dangerous if HMG [the British government] were to become identified, in the minds of Sikhs in the UK, with some more determined action by the Indian government, in particular any attempt to storm the Golden Temple at Amritsar."

The potential significance of Cleghorn's views became apparent in September 2017 when a press officer at the Foreign Office admitted to Phil Miller that its "sensitivity reviewers helped to locate and identify FCO papers" for the Heywood Review.

This raised the possibility that diplomats-turned-censors such as Cleghorn – who were at the heart of UK-India relations during Operation Blue Star – had been allowed to influence which records the Heywood Review saw.

Two-and-a-half years of obstruction followed as the Foreign Office refused to answer a freedom of information (FOI) request about this issue. Whitehall claimed Cleghorn would be subjected to online trolling and even physical attacks from the Sikh community if his role in the Heywood review was confirmed.

Phil Miller took the government to an Information Tribunal to demand disclosure. Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese MP gave a witness statement in support of the case. He argued the Foreign Office's concerns about reprisals from the Sikh community were "thinly concealed racism".



Dhese stressed that British officials active in Anglo-Asian affairs in the 1980s should not then have been permitted to "select which files investigators had access to" in 2014.

He added that if that did prove to be the case, it would not result in criticism of the individuals involved, but rather a call for a truly independent inquiry "to rectify the apparent inadequacy of the Heywood Review".

Despite the British government's best efforts, this year the Information Tribunal found partly in favour of Phil Miller, concluding that "there should be

transparency of all relevant issues about a matter such as the Heywood Review".

While the judge stopped short of ruling that Bruce Cleghorn's own role should be revealed, as it might cause him "distress", the Tribunal did order the Foreign Office to answer my more general question.

In June 2020, the FCO finally answered this question, conceding: "We can confirm that one or more officials who worked on UK/India diplomatic relations in 1984 helped locate and identify papers for this 2014 review."

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese MP welcomed the ruling, telling Declassified: "This judgment vindicates the stance taken by the likes of myself and strengthens the Labour Party's call for an independent inquiry



to establish the extent of the Thatcher Government's involvement in the 1984 attack on the Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) complex in Amritsar."

UN team presses India on claims arrested Scot was tortured



The Times – 11 January 2020

Allegations that a Scot has been tortured while being held without charge in India for 800 days are being investigated by United Nations representatives.



Four UN experts have raised concerns about the welfare of Jagtar Singh Johal, 32, from Dumbarton, who denies allegations by India's counterterrorism unit that he took money to Sikh nationalists accused of terrorism.

Nils Melzer, UN rapporteur on torture, Dainius Puras, rapporteur on physical and mental health, Ahmed Shaheed, rapporteur on freedom of religion, and Leigh Toomey, vice-chairwoman of the working group on arbitrary detention, wrote a joint letter to the Indian government condemning the alleged torture.

The letter has been made public after their inquiries went unanswered after 60 days. The UN representatives said: "While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, grave concern is expressed at the alleged torture and ill-treatment of Mr Johal.

"We respectfully recommend that an immediate investigation be conducted into the allegations of torture by ensuring that, as an initial step, Mr Johal receives urgent access to an independent medical examination, including psychological evaluation."

The added: "In the event that perpetrators of the alleged acts of torture are identified, please provide the full details of any prosecutions which have been undertaken."

A spokeswoman for Redress, an anti-torture organisation that is assisting Mr Johal's family, said: "Sunday, January 12 will mark 800 days since Jagtar Singh Johal was hooded and abducted by plain-clothed police officers on November 4, 2017 while he was in India to get married.

"In a handwritten note that his family made public in 2018 he described how electric shocks were administered by placing crocodile clips on his ear lobes, nipples and private parts and how he was threatened with being burnt alive. As far as Redress is aware, no evidence has been presented so far against him.

"Coinciding with this anniversary, there has been a renewed interest in the case by the UN."



FAMILY OF JAGTAR SINGH JOHAL CALL NATIONAL PROTEST OUTSIDE DOWNING STREET FOLLOWING OVER 1,000 DAYS OF INCARCERATION

19 August 2020 - Scottish born British national Jagtar Singh Johal (33), known affectionately as Jaggi has now spent 1,020 days in an Indian prison following his abduction and subsequent physical and mental torture by the Indian police authorities.





The #FreeJaggiNow campaign, run by the elder brother of Jaggi, Gurpreet Singh Johal, called a nationwide protest outside No.10 Downing Street, London for Wednesday 19 August. The protest was supported by the Federation of Sikh Organisation (FSO) and many UK Sikh Gurdwaras.

Well over 500 people attended, despite the Covid conditions, to call on the Prime Minister to personally intervene and do much more to secure the release and return to Scotland of Jagtar.

The family are in deep despair and frustrated by the British government and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Their lack of action in protecting the human rights of Jagtar is disgraceful.

The Foreign Office have repeatedly not followed up with agreed actions and promises and the family has been forced to lodge a number of complaints against the consular support teams.

The family feel that Jaggi has been deprioritised by the FCO and that his case would have been treated differently if he had been white.

This has been further compounded by the continued refusal of Dominic Raab, the Foreign Secretary to meet with Jagtar's family, including his wife, who is in the UK fighting her own deportation case with the Home Office.

On 14 August 2020 Sir Philip Barton current British High Commissioner to India, and soon to become the Permanent Secretary in the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, met with both Jaggi's brother and wife via a zoom call. However, he said nothing new to provide any hope or assurance about Jagtar's welfare, other than to allow the legal process to run its course.

Lord Tariq Ahmad, Minister for South Asia, also met with Jaggi's brother and wife on 18 August. Gurpreet Kaur Johal appealed to the minister to do much more to bring her husband home to her, she also shared her frustrations at the lack of activity by the UK Government.

Jaggi completed his 1000th day in prison on 30 July 2020 having suffered third degree torture, threatened to be burnt alive by police and has been subject to trial by media.



The judicial process is ignoring due process and riddled with delays, yet the UK Government has left the plight of Jagtar in the hands of junior officials and junior minister Lord Ahmad. They have still not received a substantive response from the Indian authorities, including medical examinations, private visitation and access to call his family in the UK.

Despite having over 180 court appearances, Jaggi is yet to be formally charged by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) who had claimed that Jagtar was a prime suspect in a number of targeted killings three days after his arrest. They have yet to present any evidence or witnesses to the courts.

Over the past few weeks the #FreeJaggiNow campaign has trended on social media with support from all corners of the world, and a strong show of solidarity from other families who have or are suffering similar traumatic times, including Richard and Nazanin Radcliffe, Mathew Hedges and Daniela Tejada, Billy and Yvonne Irving and Yemi Hailemariam.

Jaggi's wife Gurpreet Kaur Johal said: *"I have pleaded with the British Government to bring my husband home, I never thought the UK Government would leave my husband languishing in prison for as long as they have. I have been in the UK since April 2019 and not seen any progress in my husband's case nor any intervention from the UK Government, this is so upsetting and I don't know who to turn to"*.



Gurpreet Singh Johal, elder brother of Jaggi said: *"The family have been going through hell since 4 November 2017 with expectations that the UK Government will ensure its citizen's human rights will be protected however they have failed miserably. 1020 days of incarceration without formal charges and no sign of the "extreme action" promised by Rory Stewart in Parliament in November 2017"*

"We have called this protest to remind the UK Government that they are neglecting the life of a British citizen and to be the voice of Jaggi calling for his return to Scotland."

END UNFAIR TREATMENT OF SIKH POLITICAL PRISONERS

26 August 2020 The leadership of the Sikh Federation (UK) has welcomed the release of Bhai Lal Singh and stated it expects Professor Devinderpal Singh Bhullar, Gurdeep Singh Khaira and others will also be permanently released in the near future.

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

"The release of Bhai Lal Singh after 28 years has brought into sharp focus the unfair treatment of Sikh political prisoners that must come to an end."

Bhai Lal Singh was sentenced to life, but under Indian law a prisoner is usually eligible for release after 10 to 14 years.



“Bhai Lal Singh has therefore spent at least an extra 14 years in prison as Sikh political prisoners face indefinite prison sentences. He lost both his parents while in prison.

Those that know Bhai Lal Singh know of his dedication in giving up his life in Canada to join the Sikh freedom movement.

By all accounts Bhai Lal Singh is a gentle natured man and had an impeccable record of ‘good conduct’ in prison.

The Sikh Federation (UK) members regularly visited Bhai Lal Singh and his family, throughout his detention and during his parole home visits to offer support and solidarity.



ਭਾਈ ਲਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਾਂਗ ਬਾਕੀ ਬੰਦੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਵੀ ਰਿਹਾਅ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ. ਕੇ.

ਲੰਡਨ, 27 ਅਗਸਤ (ਮਨਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੱਧਨੀ ਕਲਾਂ)- ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ. ਕੇ. ਨੇ ਭਾਈ ਲਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੀ ਪੱਕੀ ਰਿਹਾਈ ਦਾ ਸਵਾਗਤ ਕਰਦਿਆਂ ਮੰਗ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪ੍ਰੋ. ਦਵਿੰਦਰਪਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਭੁੱਲਰ, ਗੁਰਦੀਪ ਸਿੰਘ ਖਹਿਰਾ ਆਦਿ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਜਲਦ ਰਿਹਾਅ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ | ਸਿੱਖ ਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਯੂ. ਕੇ. ਦੇ ਚੇਅਰਮੈਨ ਭਾਈ ਅਮਰੀਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਗਿੱਲ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਭਾਈ ਲਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੀ 28 ਸਾਲਾਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਰਿਹਾਈ ਰਾਜਸੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੈਦੀਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਵਿਤਕਰੇ ਦਾ ਸਬੂਤ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਜਲਦੀ ਖਤਮ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ | ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਉਮਰ ਕੈਦ ਦੇ ਹਿਸਾਬ ਨਾਲ 10 ਤੋਂ 14 ਸਾਲ ਕੈਦ ਹੋਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਸੀ | ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਭਾਈ ਲਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਆਜ਼ਾਦੀ ਸੰਘਰਸ਼ ਲਈ ਆਪਣੀ ਕੈਨੇਡਾ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵੀ ਛੱਡੀ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ 'ਚ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਚੰਗਾ ਵਤੀਰਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ | ਭਾਈ ਗਿੱਲ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਭਾਰਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਜੇਲ੍ਹਾਂ 'ਚ ਬੰਦ ਰਾਜਸੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੈਦੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਰਿਹਾਈ ਜਲਦੀ ਹੋਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ |





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 homeland Khalistan.

THE SIKH NETWORK

The Sikh Network was independently established in August 2014 as an open collective of Sikh activists and professionals from all backgrounds and organisations. The primary output of the Sikh Network is to monitor progress and set strategic direction for the Sikh Manifesto 2015 -2020 and the UK Sikh Survey. The Sikh Federation (UK) fully acknowledge the need for such networks and fully supports the Sikh Network's activities in both Panthic and political areas.

The Sikh Network plan to report progress via a quarterly newsletter and hosting relevant professional events throughout the year. Individuals in the Sikh Network have an opportunity to fully participate and contribute to the Sikh Manifesto, even those who wish to remain in the background and do not belong to any Gurdwara or organisation.

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SIKH FEDERATION (UK)

WORKING FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE & FREEDOM



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

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.

 www.sikhfeduk.com

 info@sikhfeduk.com

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