

# quarterly

Responsible for monitoring progress and strategic direction of the Sikh Manifesto over the next five years

**The Sikh Network marks 3 years since the launch of the highly acclaimed 10-point Sikh Manifesto published in January 2015. This past year in particular has seen significant progress on several Sikh Manifesto issues working with key stakeholders.**

## ***Sikh Network raise key issues at Government roundtable as well as discuss plans to hold Sikh Heritage and Awareness month from 2019***

The quarterly Sikh Roundtable meeting took place at the Home Office, chaired by Lord Bourne the Minister for Faith. The roundtable offers the opportunity for issues affecting the community to be raised and addressed by the minister and other government departments. The meeting was attended by Jas Singh of the Sikh Network and other representatives of the community including Dr Jasjit Singh and representatives from the Sikh Council UK and Sikh Federation (UK).

A variety of topics were discussed including Jagtar Singh Johal's ongoing incarceration in India, progress on the Sikh War memorial initiative, hate crimes targeting Sikhs, education and schools with a variety of other issues pertinent to the Sikh community.

Following discussions regarding the hate crime incident that occurred outside Portcullis House which is the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation, it was raised by Manvir Singh, representing

the Sikh Federation (UK) that due to a lack of education it was incumbent upon us to follow the lead of Canada, the United States of America and proposed an annual Sikh Heritage month in April from 2019 onwards in partnership with the Sikh community and government. Lord Bourne accepted the initial proposal and requested a further update.

The Sikh Network and Sikh Federation (UK) have committed and progressed the plan of a Sikh Heritage & Awareness Month in conjunction and support of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs, chaired by Preet Kaur Gill, which has already taken significant steps to bring this to fruition, including an EDM tabled by member Seema Malhotra MP.

Furthermore, other important issues around sexual grooming and targeting of Sikh girls were raised and it has been tabled that grassroots groups and individuals need to be included in a special working group going forward. This will highlight the work that the community is doing to rid this evil and insidious behaviour that impacts on the Sikh community amongst others. MHCLG also committed to reviewing the current research and reporting on this matter and this will also be taken forward collectively. As a result of the discussions, the Sikh Network has committed to conducting and supporting such research with grassroots groups and academics like Dr Jasjit Singh to bring the hard facts of this issue before the Minister and government.

Education and learning about Sikhi in mainstream schools was also raised. It was suggested that Sikhi is simply not being adequately discussed or taught in many schools outside of the Sikh faith schools and this needs to be urgently addressed.

Lord Bourne and representatives from the Home Office were also handed copies of the [Sacrificing Sikhs](#) report into the UK government role in the June 1984 Amritsar massacre and Sikh Genocide, compiled from official documents released to the National Archives.



## **Sikh Heritage Month**

## ***Attack on a turban wearing Sikh outside Parliament raised in the House and Speaker expresses regret***



Police are still investigating a racist attack on a turban wearing Sikh queuing outside Parliament to meet Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP. The attacker pulled at the turban of Ravneet Singh and shouted 'Muslim go back'.

The attack was raised on the floor of the House of Commons by Tanmanjeet Singh. He said: "the Sikhs regard the turban as a crown on their heads" and pointed out that the hate crime action plan published by the government in July 2016 after the Brexit vote woefully failed the Sikh community by neglecting to acknowledge hate crimes against Sikhs.

Sikhs are the most visible ethnic minority, especially those who wear turbans and been subject to unacceptable levels of hate since 9/11. The Sikh community were 'invisible' and not consulted in drawing up the plan that focused primarily on the more vocal Muslim and Jewish communities.

In response the Speaker, John Bercow MP, said: "it was a truly appalling incident" and "I feel a great sense of shame that such an act could have been perpetrated in our country." He continued "the act can have been motivated only by hatred, ignorance or—more likely— an extremely regrettable combination of the two."

He expressed regret about the attack and in an unprecedented move wrote on behalf of the House to empathise with Ravneet Singh.

The Sikh Network continue to work with a number of government departments and the Equalities & Human Rights Commission to publish a Code of Practice on the 5 Kakaars (articles of faith) and Sikh turban.

## ***Labour leader makes further commitment to honour 1984 independent public inquiry and include in next Labour manifesto***

The Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn speaking on 23 April at Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Watford where he had come to support Jagtar Singh Dhinsa's campaign to become the elected mayor confirmed in his speech the Labour Party's commitment to the 1984 independent public inquiry.

Dabinderjit Singh spoke before Jeremy Corbyn about the Labour Party manifesto commitment and the Sacrificing Sikhs report published in November 2017 that needs to be followed up by the Labour Party leadership.



Jeremy Corbyn went further and stated the pledge would be in the next Labour manifesto and it would be honoured. This was widely reported in the mainstream media, alongside the gaffe by Sir Simon McDonald, the Permanent Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who called the Golden Temple (Darbar Sahib) the Golden 'Mosque' and was forced to apologise within 24 hours.

## ***Freedom of Information Appeal over secret UK files on UK involvement in Sikh massacre in Amritsar in June 1984***

A three-day hearing before the First Tier Tribunal (Information Rights) took place between 6-8 March 2018 in London. Much of the hearing was held behind closed doors, with even the defence legal team kept out of closed sessions.

The appeal, supported by the Sikh Federation (UK) is against the decision of the Information Commissioner to uphold a refusal of a request made at the end of 2014 for Cabinet Office files relating to British involvement in the massacre in 1984 that were examined as part of Heywood's review.

Following numerous and unacceptable delays the three day hearing before the Tribunal heard evidence from senior civil servants from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and assessed evidence in several closed sessions. In addition Phil Miller and a representative of the Sikh Federation (UK) gave written and oral evidence and arguments were made by the Counsel for Phil Miller, together with KRW Law LLP.

The files requested by Phil Miller through FOIA could lead to further evidence of British involvement in advising the Indian government and its forces in order to secure trade and arms deals worth billions of pounds.

As the main author of [Sacrificing Sikhs](#) report, commissioned and published by the Sikh Federation (UK) in November 2017, to seek an independent public inquiry into these allegations that the UK government has declined to date. Further legal and political pressure continues for an independent public inquiry led by the Sikh Federation (UK) and backed by the Labour Party, that made a specific pledge in its 2017 General Election manifesto, the Scottish National Party and MPs from other political parties, including around 35 Conservative MPs.

The Sikh Network continues to monitor progress on this Sikh Manifesto demand. The tribunal judgement is likely to be in the coming weeks.

## ***Statue commemorating life of suffragist Millicent Fawcett unveiled in Parliament Square***

Preet Kaur Gill MP, the first Sikh woman MP and Sikh Network Board member joined other politicians at the unveiling in London's Parliament Square of a new statue of Millicent Fawcett, a leading light of the women's suffrage movement.



The monument is the first of a woman to be unveiled on the square and marks a century since women won the right to vote for the first time.

The plinth of the statue of Millicent Fawcett is engraved with the faces of a number of suffragettes, including Princess Sophia Duleep Singh. She was not only the grand daughter of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the ruler of the formidable Sikh empire who ruled from 1801 to 1839 and was known as the Lion of Punjab, but also the god daughter of Queen Victoria and a prominent suffragette who fought for women in this country over 100 years ago to have the right to vote.

Her high-profile public protests – including leaping in front of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith's car, refusing to pay her taxes and bankrolling the activities of her fellow suffragettes that caused much consternation amongst the British aristocracy and royalty.

## ***Religious leaders call on Home Secretary to put a time limit on immigration detention in post-Brexit law***

Liberty secured the support of religious leaders to issue a joint public statement calling on the Home Secretary to use the post-Brexit immigration bill to end the Government's use of indefinite detention – calling it "unjust, ineffective and inhumane".

Representatives of the Sikh Network joined senior figures in the Church of England, Catholic Church and other faiths to urge the Government to include

a 28-day limit on in the forthcoming bill, which will establish the UK's post-Brexit immigration system.

The UK is the only European country without a statutory time limit on immigration detention. Every year, the Home Office holds around 30,000 people on immigration grounds, including elderly people and survivors of rape, torture and slavery – making the UK's one of the largest detention regimes in Europe. No judge signs off on their detention and there is no legal limit on how long they can be held purely for the administrative convenience of the Home Office.

The statement widely published and covered on television from Sikh representatives said:

*"We are the only country in Europe to have indefinite immigration detention. It has become routine, is unacceptable and must come to an end."*

*"There is evidence this cruel and inhumane practice is causing harm and tearing families apart. In this country we have a proud tradition of upholding justice and need to treat people with respect and dignity by introducing a 28-day time limit."*

## ***Debate in Parliament on British Nationals imprisoned abroad focuses on Jagtar Singh Johal & forces Theresa May to raise case with Narendra Modi***



Preet Kaur Gill the MP for Birmingham Edgbaston and the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs, supported by Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi raised a number of important points in the debate in Westminster Hall on Tuesday 13 March that she organised on British Nationals imprisoned abroad.

The questions raised with Mark Field, the Minister for Asia and the South Pacific, included the lack of private access for Jagtar to British consular staff, the lack of an independent medical examination given the allegations of torture, the trial by media and the inability of Jagtar to get a fair trial. Several MPs, including Martin Docherty-Hughes MP and John Spellar MP urged the Minister to get Theresa May to raise the case with Narendra Modi when she meets him during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in mid-April in the UK.

The parliamentary pressure, letters sent by constituents to over 250 MPs and the protest by "Minorities against Modi" forced Theresa May to raise case with Narendra Modi at her meeting on 18 April before CHOGM.



#FREEJAGGINOW  
fb.com/freejagginow  
freejagginow@gmail.com  
@freejagginow

## ***Sikh Network evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee review on Hate crime published***

The Sikh Network provide written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee review on 'Hate crime and its violent consequences' which has been published on the Home Affairs government website;

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/hate-crime-and-its-violent-consequences/written/77712.pdf>

## ***Congratulations to Jas Athwal for further election success***



Great achievement by Jas Athwal - Leader of Redbridge Council for leading the substantial win of 51 out of the 63 seats available and assured Labour retain control.

Jas Athwal received a political recognition award from the Sikh Network at the 2016 Gurburb celebrations in Parliament. He has been recognised as a role model for many and we are extremely proud how he represents Sikhs on a local and national platform.