

5 August 2011

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sirs,

RE: Airport Screening

We have prepared this short guidance to assist airport security personal when encountering **Sikhs** on entering and exiting security at host airports. The guidance has come about as a result of increasing numbers of Sikh passengers complaining about unfair treatment in relation to infringements of their religious beliefs. A detailed guidance¹ has been prepared and circulated by the **Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)** on their website and can also be accessed on our website.

This guidance does not in any manner whatsoever intend to create legal obligations on host nations but does however oblige the strictest and most earnest observance to protect the basic and fundamental religious and human rights of **Sikhs**.

Whilst it is appreciated that there remains a global threat of terrorism; it is proposed that should a reasonable suspicion arise that necessitates the search of a **Sikh**, (rather than one based on ethnic and religious profiling, which is discriminatory); the following sequential steps should be taken;

- Step 1** Passenger walks through the compulsory magnetic scanner; if security alarm is triggered or staff not satisfied with the security check move onto step 2
- Step 2** A hand held scanner be used to conduct a localised scan; if the security alarm is triggered or staff feel that there remains a genuine suspicion move onto step 3
- Step 3** A Swab testing device be used, the swab should not have been previously used, a fresh swab should be used; if the security alarm is triggered or staff feel that there remains a genuine suspicion move onto step 4
- Step 4** Remove the passenger to a secure and private room and conduct a hand pat down of the turban, if any sharp objects or substance residues are detected move onto to step 5
- Step 5** Supervise the removal of the passengers' turban in a private room with dignity and respect

Whilst it remains the responsibility of each host nation to train and supervise their security staff for screening passengers, the Sikh Council request the full co-operation of the host nations in this regard. Should there be an occasion when indeed an individual Sikh has been asked to remove his turban, host nations are requested in the spirit of fairness to ask their staff to record full detailed observations as to why it was deemed that a reasonable suspicion arose necessitating the potential infringement of a Sikh's religious freedom.

Whilst the Sikh Council does not encourage or tolerate any form of religious violation, it does appreciate the need to take precautions in times of increased threat. It is only in the most compelling of circumstances should a Sikh be required to remove his/her turban after following the step by step approach highlighted above.

We trust this guidance will be warmly welcomed.

Yours faithfully



Mr J S Anand
on behalf of **Sikh Council UK**

¹ Guidance on the wearing of 'Sikh articles of faith' in the workplace and public places.