



6 June 2015

Sikh Council UK Condemns Violence and Demands Action from Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister

The Sikh Council UK condemns the violence in Jammu and Kashmir, India resulting in the death of at least one Sikh and is appealing for calm on both sides as well as writing to the Chief Minister demanding decisive action to hold the Police to account for their actions.

The origin of these events is reported as the tearing down of a poster commemorating the 31st anniversary of the Indian Army attack on Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar by Police officers and has been seen as a provocative and inflammatory act, as well as being an infringement of the right to free speech and freedom of expression in a democratic country.

The Sikh Council UK totally condemns the use of live ammunition and resultant shooting dead of a Sikh as totally unacceptable in any circumstances in a democratic country. Whilst reaffirming our support for peaceful protest we would urge all concerned to exercise restraint in the face of provocation and to refrain from any act of violent behavior.

The use of live ammunition in a modern, civilised and democratic nation is an unacceptable and outdated method for policing demonstrations. It is inexcusable for the Police to be shooting its own civilians with live ammunition.

This disproportionate force appears to illustrate the perceived hostility that the State has towards Sikhs in India. The international Sikh Community are concerned that innocent Sikhs are still becoming victims of Police terror as they were during the 1980s and 1990s and once again question whether any justice is available to Sikhs living in India.

The Sikh Council UK is also alarmed by the imposition of a media and internet service blackout in Jammu and Kashmir. This appears to indicate that the Police wishes to deploy underhand and sinister methods to suppress the protests without media scrutiny in a similar fashion to the state censorship that occurred during Operation Bluestar and the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984.

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The use of a media and internet service blackout does nothing to ease tensions within the Sikh community but will only serve to inflame and create a sense of widespread panic and vulnerability for Sikhs living in Jammu and Kashmir. These methods have no place in a democratic society in which individual human rights as well as law and order are respected.

In a letter to the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Sikh Council UK has demanded he takes decisive action towards ensuring that the responsible Police officers are formally investigated and appropriately held to account for their failures in properly managing this situation. The letter also seeks confirmation of measures he has already taken and that he proposes to take to ensure the return of law and order whilst respecting the Sikh community right to protest.

The letter is copied to the Jammu & Kashmir Minister for Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs and Relief & Rehabilitation, the Minister of Home Affairs in the Union Government of India and the High Commissioner of India to the United Kingdom.

We note media reports of a FIR being registered against a Police officer alleged to have fired the round that took the life of a Sikh. We look forward to seeing due process being observed and justice being delivered to the Sikhs family.

END

Notes for Editors:

- The Sikh Council UK is the largest representative body of Sikhs in the UK.
- The organisation is recognised as the national advocate for British Sikhs in the UK and at the European Union
- It is a membership based, democratic and representative organisation.

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