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Zora Singh Commission Report Disclosure: Sikh Council UK calls for action

The Sikh Council UK today called for comprehensive and urgent action by the next Punjab Government following the leak of the findings of the Justice Zora Singh Commission.

The Commission was established in October 2015 by the Punjab Government following the desecrations of the holy Sikh scriptures the Guru Granth Sahib in Punjab and the subsequent killings of unarmed Sikhs who had gathered to protest against the desecrations.

The principal findings and recommendations of the Commission were that: -

- > The investigations by the Punjab Police into the incidents of the desecrations of Guru Granth Sahib at villages Burj Jawahar Singh Wala and Bargari were flawed and improper
- > Punjab Police officers fired rifle bullets at Sikhs protesting the desecrations at Kotakpura Chowk injuring seven including Ajit Singh grievously
- > The Punjab Police subsequently failed to provide CCTV footage to the Commission in relation to the events at Kotakpura Chowk giving inconsistent reasons why it was not available
- > Punjab Police officers fired rifle bullets from point blank range of approximately a yard out at unarmed Sikhs who were sitting on the floor peacefully protesting at the desecrations at Behbal Kalan killing Gurjeet Singh and Krishan Bhagwan Singh and injuring six others some grievously
- > The firing upon 'defenceless protestors' sitting on the floor at Behbal Kalan was 'absolutely unwarranted' and 'beyond comprehension' and not in self-defence as alleged by the Punjab Police; the Punjab Police officers interviewed provided inconsistent and false testimonies to the Commission in relation to the events at Behbal Kalan
- > The Punjab Police failed to undertake any alternative crowd control measures in the courses of policing the protests at Behbal Kalan such as loud speaker warnings or use of water-cannons, tear-gas, lathi charge, firing in the air, use of rubber bullets etc.
- > The Commission recommended a criminal investigation is undertaken to identify the police officers responsible for the firings including reviewing the complicity of the SSP in charge Charanjit Singh Sharma and that charges are laid against the offenders before a court of law within 6 months

Sikh Council UK Chair of Indian Subcontinent Affairs Sub-committee Gurdial Singh Atwal said “It is shocking that the Commission report has laid dormant for the past year with the Akali-BJP Punjab Government despite the clear findings. We are calling for immediate action by the next Punjab Government to implement the recommendations of the Commission against the guilty officials and also calling for a high level and independent investigation to be undertaken as a matter of urgency into the deliberate desecrations of religious scriptures that have occurred in recent years within Punjab”.

He added “It has been alleged the inaction of the Punjab authorities to bring the culprits to justice has been motivated by political calculations in the lead up to upcoming state elections in Punjab by way of seeking to gain the favour of political block voting of certain anti-Sikh groups whose members have even been suspected of having involvement in the incidents of desecrations. These allegations have gained more traction in recent days in light of the decision of the Dera Sacha Sauda cult group to support the Akali-BJP alliance political parties in the impending election following the visit by a number of prospective candidates of Shiromani Akali Dal to the Dera Sacha Sauda to garner the votes of the followers of this group in flagrant breach of the 2007 Hukamnama (edict) of the Akal Takhat which mandated Sikhs to socially and politically boycott this group for its anti-Sikh activities. We are calling upon the Akal Takhat to summon those Sikh representatives of the Shiromani Akali Dal for defying the Hukamnama”.

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Editors Note: Sikh Council UK is an accord of Gurdwaras and Sikh institutions in the UK and Europe. We are recognised as the national advocate for British Sikhs and at the European Union.