

PRESS RELEASE

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## **Sikh Council UK condemns immigration scam and criticises border officials**

Sikh Council UK criticised the case of an immigration racket reportedly involving Sikhs and criticised border control officials for their failure to spot it.

According to reports' the individuals in question admitted running the scam in which they provided British passports of family members to refugees from Afghanistan who were then able to enter the UK using those passports. Border officials are said to have had difficulty spotting the refugees who were not the real passport holders due to the passport photos being of Sikhs wearing turbans.

Secretary General of Sikh Council UK Gurmel Singh said "We condemn the commission of these crimes. The turban is sacrosanct for Sikhs and any abuse of it is an affront to its sanctity."

However; he added "Whilst we rightly condemn the individuals concerned, we are equally critical of border control officials for failing to detect the scam. It is not acceptable for them to hide their failures behind the Sikh turban; there were whole families of refugees including women and children who were not wearing turbans."

Sikh Council UK Chair of Community Safety Ravjeet Singh said "It has been disappointing to read press reports quoting Crown Prosecution Service representatives referring to the case as a 'Sikh conspiracy' as such we will be taking the matter up with the CPS. These were the actions of the individuals involved in the case and not the Sikh community as a whole."

He added "Whilst we are critical of the manner of entry of the refugees concerned, we note many of them have subsequently been granted political asylum in the UK. The persecution of minority communities like Sikhs in Afghanistan following the rise of the Taliban and the subsequent war is well documented and we have a moral as well as a legal duty in this country to offer a safe haven to those fleeing from persecution".

**End**

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Note for Editors: Sikh Council UK is the largest representative body of Sikhs in the UK. We are recognised as the national advocate for British Sikhs in the United Kingdom and in the European Union.

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