

# A VISION OF **HOPE, COURAGE, & CHARDI KALA**

LEGISLATION  
CAMPAIGNING  
UNIVERSITY  
DEMOCRATIC  
IDENTITY  
ACCORD  
EUROPEAN UNION  
BRITISH SIKHS  
NATIONAL ADVOCATE  
SARBAT KHALSA MODEL  
GURDWARAS  
LOBBYING  
CO-OPERATION  
CONSENSUS  
POLITICAL VOICE  
UNITED  
VOICE  
REPRESENTATIVE  
PLATFORM

General Assembly Report October 2017

## Message from Secretary General Gurmel Singh



Sec Gen. Gurmel Singh

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa  
Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

Dear colleagues

It is my pleasure to introduce the Sikh Council UK General Assembly Report for October 2017. This is a new initiative from the Council's Media and Communications Committee to highlight the Council's main work and activities over the past 6 months. The report will be a bi-annual publication to follow each General Assembly.

It has predictably been a busy past 6 months which saw a historical General Election campaign resulting in the success of Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi and the Council's own member Preet Kaur Shergill as Members of Parliament, the launch of Sikh Aware UK by the Home Secretary at the last Sikh Council UK General Assembly and the response to the Government's consultation on caste law to mention but a few. It has also been a busy period for the Council's administration with a number of cases being received in the past six months.

The Council is about team work and there will be much to do over the next period and I am pleased to confirm handover is complete and S. Jagtar Singh Gill will be in place as Secretary General following this General Assembly. The Council is in good hands and I am sure you will extend the same support and assistance to Jagtar Singh as you have given to me at this crucial time as the Council progresses to the next stages of its development.

The past seven years have been a truly rewarding and enjoyable time and it has been humbling to be at the heart of the development of the Sikh Council UK from the vision we shared before it came into existence to now being the preeminent representative body of the community. The Council has gone from strength to strength and is widely recognised for its achievement and its insightful approach.

I wish to truly thank each and every one of you; without your support and goodwill we would not have been here today. I will continue to support the work of the Council in my role as the Chair of the Policy, Strategy and Legal Affairs Committee. I shall also be contributing towards the further development of the Board of Jathedars.

I am very confident for the future of the Council to continue to act out of a paradigm of courage, hope and chardi-kala.

I wish to take the opportunity to pay tribute to Gurmel Singh as the outgoing Secretary General of Sikh Council UK. It was always a pleasure to work with Gurmel and I wish him all the best in the future. I also offer my congratulations on behalf of all at the Department for Communities and Local Government to Jagtar Singh as the incoming Secretary General.



I had hoped to be with you at your General Assembly today but am sorry I cannot due to other engagements. I wish you a successful General Assembly and I do hope to meet with you soon.

The Sikh community is a hardworking and entrepreneurial community which continues to enjoy success in all walks of life. I know you have actively campaigned for increased Sikh participation in public life. The Government is aware of the need to do more as we seek for Parliament and Government to reflect the society they serve.

The Race Disparity Audit established by the Prime Minister has recently published its findings of the audit undertaken on the disparity of treatment of different ethnicities across public services. This data will need to be analysed carefully and I know Sikh Council UK and other community groups will find this data valuable to inform their work. We want to build a country that works for everyone – and that means tackling the injustices that hold people back in life.

Once again congratulations to Jagtar Singh on your new role and I look forward to working with you and your team going forward.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth



Dear Members of Sikh Council UK

I wish you a successful and productive General Assembly this week.

The Sikh community plays a key role in British life. In all realms of culture, business and industry, Sikh people and organisations make a huge contribution to our society.

I know Sikh Council UK and others from the Sikh community have campaigned for more Sikhs in Parliament and I was proud to see history being made this year with the election of my colleagues Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi and Preet Kaur Gill as Labour MPs. The election of the first turban wearing Sikh and first female Sikh is an important milestone for the Sikh community and for Britain as a whole. We still have further to go to make Parliament truly reflect the society it serves and I am committed to making Parliament – and all parts of public life – more diverse.

For the first time, the Labour Party made a manifesto commitment to establish an independent inquiry to review the role of Margaret Thatcher's Government in the events in Amritsar in 1984 and to address longstanding concerns regarding the wearing of Sikh articles of faith in our country. I am fully committed to those pledges and look forward to implementing them in government.

Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP  
Leader of Official Opposition

## Message from Secretary General Elect Jagtar Singh

Since its inception in 2010 the overarching vision of Sikh Council UK has been to be a truly representative platform for Sikhs in the UK and Europe. Much has been achieved in recent years and the Council's relevance and position on major Sikh related issues is sought and respected.



Sec Gen. Elect Jagtar Singh

One of the objectives of this administration is to further enhance the support we provide for Gurdwara's and to this end we will be setting up a dedicated team to help provide support and economies of scale in areas such as the procurement of services and utilities, security, employment and HR and associated matters.

- Ethnic monitoring of Sikhs
- Recognition and honoring Sikh role in the world wars
- Promoting the Sikh hate reporting platform – Sikh Aware UK
- Improved Sikh representation in political and public life

As with previous administrations political engagement and working with government structures at all levels will be a priority to ensure the Sikh voice is heard and Sikh interests safeguarded. Existing issues include:

- Enhancing legal protections for the five Kakkars

The list of work streams is not exhaustive however but does highlight the importance of building our community capacity and infrastructure for future generations. Sikh Council UK continues to work closely with member organisations in calling upon skill sets, knowledge and experience to achieve these goals.





The Home Secretary Rt Hon Amber Rudd visited the General Assembly of Sikh Council UK which was held at Gurdwara Baba Budha Ji In Nottingham on Saturday 6th May 2017.

During the visit she addressed Sikh Council UK members and welcomed the launch of Sikh Aware UK, the first hate crime monitoring platform for the Sikh community in the UK established by Sikh Council UK in partnership with several supporting partner organisations.

Sikhs are now able to access Sikh Aware UK online to log anti-Sikh hate, discrimination, harassment and racism in all forms including all incidents of hatred where Sikhs are victims.

It is widely acknowledged there is underreporting of anti-Sikh hate crimes. In recent years Sikhs have

have been susceptible to attacks in particular due to their distinct identity in the form of the Sikh dastar (turban). In some cases Sikhs are the victims of hate crimes where the perpetrators are in fact motivated by Islamophobia. In response to Freedom of Information requests from the Network of Sikh Organisations the Metropolitan Police confirmed one in four victims of Islamophobia hate crimes recorded by the Metropolitan Police in 2015 and 2016 were actually non-Muslims.

Sikh Council UK also took the opportunity of the ministerial visit to touch upon a number of issues and community concerns to which the Home Secretary responded positively, agreeing the importance and the need for representatives of the community and the Government to continue working closely together and engaging in dialogue.





**SIKH AWARE UK IS A PUBLIC SERVICE PLATFORM WHICH MEASURES AND MONITORS ANTI-SIKHS INCIDENTS.** This platform allows victims to report any anti-Sikh hate crime they experience.

Sikhs have been susceptible to attacks more so due to the distinct identity in wearing of a Dastar/patka (Sikh turban). Sikhs are the victims of hate crimes where perpetrators are in fact motivated by Islamophobia. Metropolitan Police have confirmed 1 in 4 victims of Islamophobia hate crimes recorded between 2015 and 2016 were of non-Muslims.



## Anti-Sikh Abuse

**REPORT IT  
IT'S A CRIME**



## ANTI-SIKH HATE CRIME CAN INCLUDE:

- Violence or threats specifically because you are a Sikh
- Racially motivated comments or abuse in the street
- Racist graffiti on property/ies
- Hate via email or post.
- Racist Anti-Sikh posting/s on social media...

REPORT SIKH HATE CRIME ON

[www.SikhAware.co.uk](http://www.SikhAware.co.uk)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Sikh Aware UK is a platform for non-emergency crime reporting of anti-Sikhs incidents and monitoring. In case of emergency please call **999** or **101** for initially reporting non-emergency cases.



## 1984: The Bhan Singh List

Sikh Council UK hosted an international press conference in collaboration with Harinder Singh USA and Advocate Amar Singh Chahal from Punjab in June to release a 120-page list of 706 civilian Sikhs and others killed during Operation Blue Star that was prepared by Bhan Singh, the then secretary of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandak Committee (SGPC). Bhan Singh sent the list to Dr. Joyce Pettigrew in Northern Ireland in November 1985. He was assassinated in July 1988.

The list in Gurmukhi script meticulously detailed the names, fathers name, address, age, children and attester of those killed. The list is publically available on [www.1984.org](http://www.1984.org). The list tells us a few things: the official Indian Government figures of civilians killed recorded in the Government White Paper following Operation Blue Star were inaccurate, the SGPC administration attempted to prepare a detailed list of those killed but it discontinued this work and did not publish the list and that the posthumous publication of this list over 31 years later reaffirms the need for an open and independent investigation to get to the truth of the identity and number of the Sikhs that were killed by the Indian state in Operation Blue Star.

## A loss for the Sikh Panth – Bhai Jagraj Singh

Sikh Council UK offered its sincerest condolences following the loss of Bhai Jagraj Singh, founder of Everything13 and Basics of Sikhi. The Sikh community around the world has lost a great pioneer who brought Sikhi to millions of people around the world through his YouTube videos and charitable work.




*Bhai Jagraj Singh (1979-2017)*



# History for Sikhs in the UK

Sikh Council UK congratulated Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi and Preet Kaur Gill on their historic election to Parliament following the General Election in June. Tanmanjeet became the first turban wearing Sikh in history to be elected to the House of Commons whilst Preet became the first Sikh woman to be elected. We look forward to working to both in the months and years ahead.



  
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**GENERAL ELECTION REPORT 2017**

**A Quick Guide to Issues that Matter to Sikhs in the 2017 General Election**

Some of the key issues explained in bite sized chunks

**Statutory Regulations on the 5K's and Turban:** UK provides a good legislative framework for practising Sikhs but the dispersed nature of this framework is difficult to understand and navigate. Introduction of Statutory Regulations with legal basis that collates current legislation and guidance will simplify and ensure consistency in preventing discrimination.

**Brexit:** UK Sikhs and Government often drive issues of concern across the EU. Sikhs have concerns about the European Court of Justice ruling allowing employers to prohibit wearing of visible manifestation of religious belief in the workplace. Sikhs need to be able to raise issues with those engaged in Brexit negotiations.

**Caste Legislation:** Sikhs believe caste and caste based discrimination is wrong and should be eliminated. The inaccurate reference to Sikhs in the caste definition (Equality Act 2010) should be removed. There should be no unintended consequences that entrench rather than eliminate caste with a focus on existing provisions before introducing new provisions.




**Sikhs and India:** UK political parties and Government should do more in recognising and addressing human rights abuses in India. Sikhs require an independent public inquiry, including full disclosure of documents, into UK Government involvement in the 1984 attack on Sri Harmandir Sahib Ji complex, Amritsar by the Indian army and subsequent events.

**Ethnic Monitoring of Sikhs:** Sikhs call on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to agree to a separate ethnic tick box for Sikhs in the 2021 Census and to issue revised guidance to public bodies on collecting, monitoring and using ethnic group data by requiring Sikhs to be monitored as a distinct ethnic group.

**OTHER ISSUES:**

- Recognition and Honoring Sikh Role in World Wars through a Monument in Central London
- Improved Sikh Representation in Political and Public Life
- Accurate and clear food labeling of Halal and Asian Vegetarian food
- Addressing Hate Crime Against Sikhs
- Support for Sikh Schools

For further information, please contact [info@sikhcounciluk.org](mailto:info@sikhcounciluk.org)

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The General Election produced a hung Parliament with no party able to secure an overall majority leading to a coalition of the Conservative Party and Democratic Unionist Party.

Sikh Council UK will of course continue to work closely with all parties to promote and safeguard Sikh interests in particular in respect of the issues identified in Sikh Council UK General Election Report 2017 including strengthening protections around Sikh articles of faith, Sikhs and Brexit, caste legislation, Sikhs human rights matters pertaining to India and ethnic monitoring of Sikhs.

# Sikh Council UK hosts Panthic Meeting

**Sikh Council UK hosted a large panthic gathering at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara in Leicester on Saturday 2 September.**

The meeting was attended by over a hundred delegates representing Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations from across the country including London, the South East, West Midlands, East Midlands, North-West and North-East.

Following wide ranging discussion on key issues current in the Sikh community the meeting approved seven resolutions ranging from



the Sikh response to the ongoing consultation by the British Government regarding caste legislation to opposing any campaigns for the return

of the Koh-i-noor diamond and the remains of Maharaja Daleep Singh from the UK to India or Pakistan.

The resolutions included mandates for Sikh Council UK to establish a professional multi-skilled team to support the capacity building of Gurdwaras and to work on developing an accord/compact through consensus building to promote intra-community unity and prevent disharmony.

The resolutions are reproduced in full opposite.



# Panthic Meeting Resolutions

1. The reference to the Sikh faith in connection with caste in the Explanatory Notes of the Equality Act 2010 is offensive to Sikhs and we call upon the Government to change the Explanatory Notes to remove all reference to Sikh faith.
2. As case law has already provided appropriate legal protection for caste discrimination within the existing provisions of the law we favour a case law based approach. We object to the inaccuracies contained in the research produced by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research.
3. Sikh Council UK is mandated to establish an impartial one stop shop professional support and coordinating arrangement for Gurdwara committees as part of capacity building of our community institutions and to liaise with relevant bodies towards addressing issues and spear heading innovative developments
4. This Panthic meeting reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Anand Karaj Guidance and calls upon Sikh Council UK to consult on solutions for improving processes and securing positive outcomes in the coming months
5. British Sikhs oppose campaigns for the return of the Koh-i-noor diamond to India or Pakistan and resolve that it should remain available for viewing by the public and in a secure location until such time that there is a guarantee that the diamond would be in a safe and sole possession of Sikhs
6. We the British Sikhs oppose any campaign to remove the remains of Maharajah Duleep Singh to India or Pakistan. Exhuming the remains is not a Sikh religious necessity.
7. Sikh Council UK work towards developing a written accord/compact through consensus building as to how the Sikh institutions, organisations and media will conduct themselves to prevent distraction from our aspirations and disharmony.

# Mediation meeting in Brussels

In June, two days of intense discussions took place facilitated by senior representatives of Sikh Council UK including 2 members of the Board of Jathedars, with Committee members and sangat of Vilvoorde. This was part of mediation meeting relating to longstanding disputes. Subsequently it was unanimously agreed that individuals will rise above their differences and work towards building community cohesion and improving governance.

The meeting was held as a result of the closure of Guru Nanak Gurdwara Vilvoorde Brussels for over 8 months,

due to internal disputes. It became apparent that both parties had made numerous allegations against each other to the Mayor of Vilvoorde.

It is intended that a general meeting will be held to agree a new constitution, revised financial procedures and processes for dealing with complaints, handling disputes and disciplinary matters. Meanwhile the campaign for the re-opening of the Gurdwara Sahib is to continue by the sangat and committee with support of Sikh Council UK.





# Census 2021

Sikh Council UK wrote to the Office of National Statistics in September to reaffirm the case for a separate Sikh ethnic tick box in the Census 2021.

Over 83,000 Sikhs identified their ethnic background as Sikh in the last census in 2011 despite there being no designated provision for this. The ONS undertook consultations of stakeholders in respect of the next census in 2015 and 2016 and concluded there was demand and earlier this year tested the use of a separate Sikh ethnic tick box and are currently undertaking further research before making a recommendation in the next few weeks that will be reflected in the Census White Paper 2018.

Sikhs have long been recognised as a distinct racial group with respect to ethnic origins as well as a faith community and recording Sikh numbers by way of the mandatory ethnicity question as well as the optional faith question in the next census will assist public bodies, policy makers and community groups in addressing specific needs of the Sikh community.

Sikh Council UK will continue to engage with the ONS and other relevant bodies to maintain the pressure for a separate Sikh ethnic tick box at the next Census.





## Jagmeet Singh elected leader of NDP

Sikh Council UK welcomed the election of Jagmeet Singh as federal leader of the NDP party in Canada in October.

Jagmeet Singh became the first Sikh to lead a federal political party in the western hemisphere. He gained a majority of votes over all his rivals put together in just the first round of voting. It was an exceptional achievement, which will serve as an inspiration to Sikhs the world over particularly for younger Sikhs as we must remember Jagmeet is only 38.

Sikh Council UK welcomed Jagmeet Singh to speak at the National Sikh Seminar organised by Sikh Council UK with Harinder Singh USA last year in England and we were truly inspired by his words at that time. We congratulate Jagmeet on his achievement and look forward to working with him in the future.





## **Sikh Council UK hosts seminar by Phil Miller**

Sikh Council UK hosted a seminar by the independent freelance journalist Phil Miller at Guru Nanak Gurdwara Smethwick in September.

Phil was instrumental in unearthing the documents inadvertently released into the National Archives in January 2014 showing the then British Government sent an SAS officer to provide military advice to the Indian Government in the lead up to the June 1984 army assault on Harmandir Sahib.

Phil shared his experiences of how the discovery was made and provided further details of the files that have been withheld from the National Archives and the ongoing attempts to obtain their disclosure.

He mentioned ongoing work on reviewing the archives since that time and that he will be compiling a report on the matter with the Sikh Federation UK that will be released in the near future.

Phil also provided details of the work he had undertaken in the past in researching the National Archives relating to other conflicts such as in Sri Lanka in particular his discovery that MI5 provided counter insurgency advice to Ceylon in 1971 to help crush a leftist uprising.

Phil mentioned he hoped the lecture would encourage greater interest in history and activism in uncovering the truth about the past through archives.

# Casework – Sikh Kakkars

## Kirpan at schools

A parent contacted Sikh Council UK when her child was denied access to school wearing a kirpan. The child had initially been offered a place in an academy in Manchester but it revoked this when the child declared that he was wearing a kirpan. Sikh Council UK took this matter up with the academy and progressed it to the Board of Directors of the academy in addressing the issue.

In a separate case from another school in Manchester a Sikh child was also denied access wearing a kirpan following the child having taken Amrit over the Vaisakhi period. Sikh Council UK intervened to raise concerns which the school was prompt to listen to and it immediately accepted the child back into school by making adjustments to its current policies to accommodate Sikhs wearing kirpans.

## Kara Case in Hounslow

We were contacted by a school in Hounslow querying the potential to remove the kara during physical sport. Sikh Council UK took the opportunity to provide the school with information about the importance of the kara and provided options of possible ways to accommodate the kara during such sports. We advised that we would not be in a position to advocate the removal of a kara regardless of the situation.

## Kirpan in exam venues

We were contacted by students due to undertake their professional admissions exams following refusals from third party commercial venues where the assessments were taking place to permit the students to wear kirpans on their premises.

Sikh Council UK intervened to make urgent representations to the professional body and the venues in question. The professional body subsequently issued guidelines on the wearing of kirpans during sitting of exams stipulating the specific requirements of different venues including one venue which permitted access to students wearing kirpans who received a supporting letter from Sikh Council UK which was duly provided.

No Sikh student was prevented from sitting their exams in the circumstances. Sikh Council UK remains in dialogue with the venues and the professional body to find a longer term solution to address the issue of access for Sikhs wearing a Kirpan.

## Kirpan in arena

We were also contacted by Sikhs who were refused entry to an arena venue for a music concert over the wearing of the kirpans. Sikh Council UK representatives have been in dialogue with the venue and will be attending a meeting taking place in the coming weeks to make further representations.



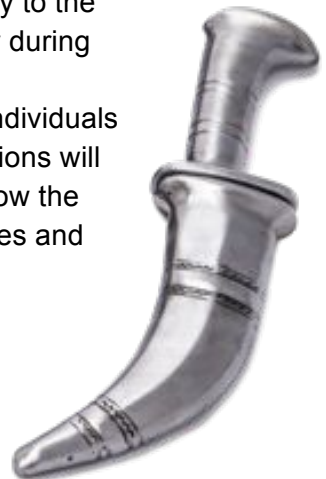
# Casework – Sikh Kakkars continued

## Drayton Manor Theme Park

**Sikh Council UK were made aware of Sikhs wearing kirpans being refused entry to Drayton Manor Theme Park on security grounds. Representatives from the Council made representations to the theme park owners confirming the significance of the kirpan to Sikhs following which the theme park agreed to change its policy and adopted guidelines permitting the wearing of kirpans subject to various requirements.**

A spokesperson for Drayton Manor Theme Park confirmed a change in its regulations effective from 14th August 2017 and provided the following details of the inspections that would be conducted upon guests arriving at the park by the park security team:

- Upon arrival please notify a staff member if you are wearing a Kirpan to allow for a suitable inspection, please do allow additional time for such inspection.
- The Kirpan should be no more than 6” in total.
- The Kirpan should be worn securely under clothes, out of sight and difficult to access
- The Kirpan should never be drawn from its sheath and a suitable clasp or mechanism to ensure it is not easily drawn should be incorporated.
- Due to the nature of some of the high speed, vigorous rides within the park. The Kirpan should be strapped securely to the body to ensure it does not move about freely during physical activity.
- Please note in the interest of public safety, individuals can expect that relevant searches and questions will take place. Non-compliance, or failure to follow the guidelines will result in refusal on the premises and park.'



# News in brief

## Kirpan in Italy

Sikh Council UK wrote to the Italian Embassy in London concerning the reported decision of the Italian Supreme Court to uphold a criminal fine levied on a Sikh for wearing a kirpan in a public place. In doing so Sikh Council UK expressed strong concerns following the decision of the Supreme Court and have called upon the Italian Government to address this matter with the Italian and international Sikh community as a matter of urgency.

## Saragarhi Foundation Service

Sikh Council UK representatives attended the wreath service organised by the Saragarhi Foundation in London to remember the 21 brave Sikh soldiers who died in the historical battle of Saragarhi.

## United Nations event

Sikh Council UK representatives attended the UNA-UK event hosted by H.E. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, who delivered his first major public speech in UK Central Hall Westminster. Mr Guterres spoke of his determination to make human dignity the core of his work, and to serve as a peace broker, a bridge-builder and a promoter of reform and innovation.

## Bogus Gurdwaras

Sikh Council UK was asked to appear in crown court as expert witness to a case of two bogus gurdwaras in Leeds operating above an off licence. The premises were instead used for illegal trafficking. Both sites were owned by the same proprietor who was running it as a family business. Subsequently; the individual was sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment and other members of his family were also sentenced to varied number of years.

## NHS dietary complaint

Sikh Council UK is currently pursuing a formal complaint to NHS Trusts across UK as it was noted that where individuals were not able to communicate their diet preferences for varied reasons, it is assumed they eat any type of meat, including halal, were being included into their diet and fed accordingly.

Having witnessed this on numerous occasions at two separate hospitals in the West Midlands, it was deemed that this may be the case across the board with a blanket approach. Some Trusts have rectified this while others are pending.

# About Us



**Sikh Council UK is the largest representative body of the Sikh community in the United Kingdom and is mandated to represent and safeguard the interests of Sikhs in this country and internationally.**

Amongst our affiliated member organisations we have Gurdwaras, local & regional Gurdwara Councils, Jathebandis, campaign groups, youth organisations, women's organisations and educational establishments.

## What we do

Sikh Council UK is primarily a representative body that seeks to unite Sikhs in their pursuit of personal, social, spiritual and economic well-being.

We provide collective leadership to a very diverse community and represents Sikhs and their views to local, regional, national and international decision makers and decision making bodies.

Sikh Council UK promotes Sikh values and principles and the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib as interpreted by the Guru Khalsa Panth through the institution of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib.

## Our values

Sikh Council UK believes and works according to universal Sikh values including:

**Chardi-Kala** - a vision and spirit of hope and courage;  
**Sarbat Khalsa** - cooperation, consensus and unity amongst Sikhs;  
**Ekta** - unity through embracing diversity and inclusiveness;  
**Miri Piri** - excellence in both spiritual and temporal life;  
**Sarbat da Bhalla** - working for the betterment of all.



# sikhcounciluk

A UNITED VOICE

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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