

Sikh Council UK statement on restrictions on Indian Government officials from Gurdwara stages

Sikh Council UK – 31 January 2018

On Saturday 27th January 2018 Sikh Council UK executive committee delegates held a meeting at Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara Coventry and debated the recent decisions of Gurdwara management committees across the world including a number of Gurdwara members of the Sikh Council UK to publicise the placing of restrictions on Indian government officials from speaking from their Gurdwara stages and being given any recognition.

It was noted that publicising the restrictions on Indian officials made public the longstanding and ongoing restrictions that have been in place in many Gurdwaras in the UK and other countries across the Indian diaspora arising from longstanding and outstanding concerns of human rights violations of Sikhs and other minority communities in India and state interference in community matters. It was also noted the restrictions did not relate to anyone including Indian officials attending Gurdwaras for prayer in individual capacities.

Sikh Council UK executive committee delegates unanimously resolved to oppose any interference in internal Sikh affairs, doctrines and practices by any outside body or state and agreed it is within the prerogative of Gurdwara management committees to make decisions based on Sikh protocols and norms within the framework of the Sikh Rehit Maryada on who to invite or not invite to speak from or be given any recognition from Gurdwara stages. The delegates welcomed the recent clarification in this respect from the Akal Takhat the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs and agreed the publicising of the restrictions on Indian officials in Gurdwaras was an appropriate response to outstanding and ongoing community concerns.

It was noted that the Gurdwara stage is an important Sikh community platform and Gurdwara management committees are mandated to ensure its use accords with Sikh beliefs and traditions including the coupling of the spiritual with the temporal. Resistance to state tyranny and defending human rights and the freedom of expression are fundamental Sikh tenets and historical Sikh traditions and it is entirely appropriate for these matters to be raised within historical and contemporary contexts from Gurdwara stages.

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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