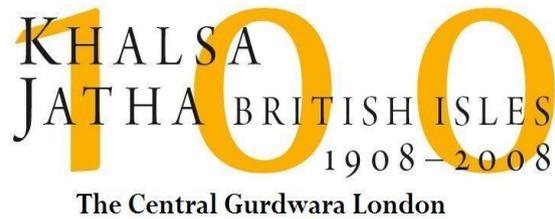




Recognize the Human Race as One



6th September 2010

The Hon'ble Prime Minister
Dr Manmohan Singh
Room No.148 B
South Block
New Delhi, India
110 001

Dear Prime Minister,

Polish Airports Turban Incidents

Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh

On October 8th 2009, members of the security team at the Frederick Chopin Airport of Warsaw, Poland, forced Narinder Singh Kalsi, a UK domiciled Sikh of Indian descent, to remove his turban in full view of the public. He faced this humiliation even though he had passed through necessary security checks without setting off metallic scanners or raising an alarm when his belongings were screened by X-Ray machines.

This very worrying incident is not an isolated one and is of great concern since EC Regulation 300/208 came into force on 29 April 2010, whereby the European Union altered the rules on the searching of religious headwear at airports.

This overzealous implementation of the new rules by Poland has had a severe impact on Sikhs and will potentially affect all Sikhs who are Indian nationals, who travel to Poland. Indeed, reports are filtering through from Poland and the rest of the world indicating that Sikhs at Polish airports are now routinely being asked to remove their turbans and are subjected to humiliating checks in full public view. One well known incident, after the new regulations were implemented, is that of Shaminder Singh Puri who was made to remove his turban despite having an ad hoc agreement in place with the Polish Border Guard. He offered to have his turban patted down, which in itself is extremely insulting, or have it

scanned using a handheld scanner but both his suggestions were rebuffed. Such repeated instances have now discouraged Mr. Puri from flying to Poland, thus adversely affecting his basic freedoms. It is clear from this example that some form of consistent practice must be requested from the Polish Government, rather than individual attempts to negotiate the sanctity of their dignity in piecemeal fashion.

The impact of the new regulations was discussed extensively in the United Kingdom Parliament, with the Secretary of State for Transport, Mr. Phillip Hammond recognising and highlighting the problems that have arisen due to the new E.U. instructions on searching headwear. The U.K. has taken the positive step of not implementing the new E.U. Regulation at its national airports, whilst they continue a dialogue with the Sikh community and the EU on use of scanners as a primary screening method.

We are aware that you will be meeting a Polish trade delegation on the 7th September 2010, which will include the Polish Prime Minister, Mr. Donald Tusk. We hope that you will be able to raise this critical concern with the Polish Government during the course of talks, given that the freedom of religion is a fundamental right enshrined in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Poland has ratified. Furthermore, Poland is duty bound to uphold its duty under Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

The Central Gurdwara (Khalsa Jatha) London, the oldest Gurdwara in the Western Hemisphere, and UNITED SIKHS, a UN affiliated, international civil and human rights advocacy organization, are optimistic that your timely intervention at this stage may help nip the problem in the bud. We are reminded of the uphill battle faced by French Sikhs after a law was passed banning turbans in public schools and on ID documents.

Should your office wish to contact us for any further information, please do not hesitate to do so.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Bhagwant Singh
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