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*Recognise the Human Race as One*

*To transform underprivileged and minority communities and individuals into informed and vibrant members of society through civic, educational and personal development programmes.*

## Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon. My name is Jaspreet Singh and I'm the Staff Attorney for UNITED SIKHS, an international, UN-DPI-Affiliated non-profit engaged in humanitarian relief and civil and human rights advocacy. Firstly I'd like to thank all of you for commitment towards the elimination of weapons and violence, and your commitment to peace on earth. It is frankly disturbing that we do not have a global arms treaty, and that torture and war are just as commonplace in our modern world as they were in the past – and are common topics on our media outlets, in our current state to state communication, and in our political dialogue. I would have hoped that after the last century of violence, States, if not terrorists and criminals, would have committed more heavily to the rule of law.

I think I can safely state that all reasonable people believe that nuclear weapons and a nuclear attack of any kind are truly frightening. I concur with my Jain colleagues that we have to be philosophically, spiritually, rationally, and practically committed to peace, and each one of you here and your supporters are doing just that. I'm a firm believer that we all have our pieces of the puzzle to contribute. My aim in this presentation three fold: 1) To have a dialogue with you about nuclear weapons and lay out some of the major arguments/problems with disarmament 2) To educate you about

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who the Sikh community is, and their position in being stuck in between two nuclear rival states, India and Pakistan, that are most often discussing the nuclear option in times of conflict, and 3) to present to you reasons for disarmament from a perspective of basic ethics, from the Sikh ethical perspective, and then to also have a dialogue with you about the practicality of disarmament.

### Nuclear Weapons Are Scary.

I'm sure you are all aware that enough nuclear arms exist in the world to make the human population virtually extinct time and time again. We live in a culture of fear: fear of terrorism, ticking time-bombs, biological and chemical disasters. Somehow our valuation of how fearful we are of each of these things changes and our focus changes. During the Cold War, the major fear and rightfully so, was nuclear arms. In the following years people seem to have become less concerned – so, let us get a little scared:

Nuclear weapons are in a class by themselves in relation to indiscriminate, comprehensive, long-lasting destructiveness - the only weapons now known that could plausibly destroy all of civilization.

India and Pakistan gained independence from the British in 1947. India tested its first nuclear weapon in 1974, and Pakistan tested its first in 1998, though it had conducted twenty five “cold tests” by the late 1980s. I'm going to assume that we're all familiar with the Cold War, the tensions, and how close we came to nuclear conflict between USA and the USSR and the destruction of the modern world as we know it.

The source of conflict between India and Pakistan is primarily Kashmir, and tens of thousands of people have died in that conflict in the past decades. In a recent interview, eminent Pakistani nuclear physicist Pervez Hoodboy cited five major nuclear crises between India and Pakistan.

The first was in 1987: Following elections in Kashmir and protests in the region, a large number of Indian tanks were moved towards the Pakistan border, in a similar fashion that was seen in the 1971

war. Reportedly, Pakistan conveyed to India via US intermediaries that “you can’t come that close to the border, we’ve got nukes.” This was reported in newspapers, though the military on both sides deny it.

The second was in 1990: Again, with tensions rising over Kashmir, this time American satellites reportedly picked up images of nuclear weapons being moved from a uranium enrichment plant and nuclear weapons storage facility in Pakistan towards an air base to be loaded on F-16s. Robert Gates of the National Security Council says he communicated this to the Indians and defused a possible nuclear war.

The third was in the tense period between 1999 and 2000 where Pakistan and India came close to a full scale war over Kashmir. Both sides were began fighting in the Kargil area of Kashmir, and again the potential for actual nuclear conflict arose. It took international intervention, primarily from the US, to again divert the conflict.

The fourth was in 2001, after the attack on the Indian parliament by a terrorist organization based in Pakistan. After the attack, the Indians blamed the Pakistani government for supporting the group, and brought forces again to the border. A standoff developed between the two forces that lasted through a good part of 2002, during which time, the threat of using nuclear weapons came up again and again on both sides. Eventually, the situation was calmed, again much in part through international intervention.

The fifth was around November of 2008, at the time of the Mumbai massacre. A terrorist group based in Pakistan was responsible for the attack, but in this situation it is unlikely the Pakistani government knew what was going on. Military threats including nuclear ones were quick to follow, and I was personally surprised when I read some opinions of people that nuclear arms should be used. I believe a large portion of the general public still do not understand the destruction nuclear conflict could inflict on the world. According to Hoodboy's recent interview – Even more disturbingly, on Pakistani TV, retired army general, formerly the Minister of Defense, General Hamid Nawaz, stated “We

shouldn't wait for India to attack us. We should attack right away and nuke them if they appear to be readying for an attack." Estimates of the human cost of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan range conservatively from 2 million dead, 100 million wounded, and clouds of radioactive dust around the globe to over 20,000,000 dead. In relation to the resulting environmental catastrophe, some have theorized that a war in the region could result in a total global death toll in the range of one billion from starvation, and in another recent study, the ozone layer would be severely damaged and would trigger catastrophic health problems globally.

So, now that we're all a little frightened - I'm going to take a few minutes and talk a little bit about the position of Sikhs in Panjab.

### Who Are Sikhs?

I'm Sikh, and I know many of you probably don't know much about us, so I thought I'd take the opportunity to quickly cover Who Sikhs Are. Worldwide, there are about 25 million Sikhs that constitute the fifth largest religion in the world. Sikhism is only a little over 500 years old. The majority of Sikhs live in Panjab, India where they make up at approximately 60% of the population at around 16 million. Sikhism arose at a time of great ferment and creative activity in the world. Some remarkable events of those times include Columbus and his voyage to the New World in 1492, the discoveries of Copernicus who was born in 1473, the printing of the Gutenberg Bible in 1462. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, taught a message of love; of a Supreme Being or Waheguru at one with its creation -- gender-free; common to all mankind - not a Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, or Buddhist God, or one limited to any sect, nation, race, creed, color or gender. There were ten Gurus prior to the establishment of the Guru Granth Sahib, a compilation of Sikh scriptures, as the eternal Guru of the Sikhs. There are three important legs to the philosophical structure of Sikhism: earning a living through honest work;

sharing with others; and living life with constant awareness of the infinite within each of us. Human dignity and justice are a cornerstone of Sikh teaching.

The Ten Sikh Gurus were very critical of the tyrannical rulers of the time who were unjust to the common people, and the Gurus were also highly critical of the caste system which had held the downtrodden in unequal positions for generations, and the unequal treatment of women. The Sikh Gurus emphasized a commitment to justice, equality, and righteousness, and were committed against theories of offense. The Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Ji spoke against the tyrannical rulers of the time, and was executed; the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Ji, encouraged Sikhs to train themselves in the art of weaponry so that they could defend themselves, which they did during his time. Again, standing up against tyranny, Guru Teg Bahadur was executed after which the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh began maintaining an army. One of Guru Gobind Singh's famous quotations is: “when *all* means have *failed* it is *righteous* to pick up the sword.” So Sikhs believe in the right to self-defense.

#### Nuclear Arms Cannot Be Morally Used in Self Defense

So let us take a moment to analyze the use of nuclear arms within a concept of justice and self-defense, as I'll leave it to my colleagues to present to you from the theory of non-violence. Is there any way that nuclear arms could be used in a situation of self-defense? No, I do not think so. One of the most common arguments used to support the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan is that bombing of the two cities limited the later casualties and costs of the war – that the Japanese would never have stopped their onslaught, would never have yielded, and that more allies, primarily Americans would have died. Let us talk a little bit about the actual use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki – both were exploded in the air above the cities, somewhat limiting the fall-out. Approximately 80,000 - 100,000 immediately perished in Hiroshima, and 65,000-80,000 in Nagasaki. There are studies that show the effects even today, and while scientists debate as to the magnitude of the

effect, though there is no doubt that there still are measurable effects from those explosions that happened long before many of us here were born. This is the inherent flaw of the nuclear weapon. It does not discriminate between military and civilian. It does not differentiate between innocent and war criminal. It does not allow the other side to come to the table. It does not allow a population to escape. It does not allow the opportunity to defend oneself. Even in terms of a supposed “just war” it is impossible to use nuclear weapons in a justifiable manner; the use is too disastrous to ever be just or only defensive. The citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not allowed to have a single voice in the matter; men, women, children, just perished. The fear of the Sikh community in relation to India and Pakistan is the same.

### The Illusion of Conventional Conflict Deterrence

The most common argument used against the idea of having a nuclear weapons free world, and for India and Pakistan, is that in the absence of nuclear weapons, conventional conflicts are more likely and less restrained. We have to weigh actual conventional conflict – being invaded versus the use of nuclear arms. Supposing India invaded Pakistan, would it be rational or in Pakistan's interest to use nuclear weapons? Never. It is the same vice-versa. The use of nuclear arms cannot be rationalized. We cannot even properly estimate or quantify the fall-out effects yet. Yet the danger of nuclear war between the two is real, and that in itself is the argument against this theory of conventional conflict deterrence – is the risk associated with having an actual nuclear war worth deterring these conventional conflicts? No, absolutely not.

Additionally, in many ways, I think this argument of conventional conflict deterrence is a fantasy. How many wars and conflicts have we had since World War II? Many, and quite a few of them involving actors that are nuclear armed. Did nuclear weapons deter the horrors of Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Korea? How many nuclear scares did we face? One is too many, and we've had many more than

one. I will not be an idealist and state that a nuclear weapons free world would be easy to achieve or would easily stay nuclear free. As long as the materials exist, there is always the potential for the weapon to be made. [Referring to map in powerpoint] But think of the conditions today – I can only expect this map to become fraught with more nuclear weapons in the absence of decisive movement towards complete disarmament.

#### What can we, members of civil society, do?

In January 2009 this year, a broad-based coalition of leading Sikh organizations, based in Panjab and world-wide, formally asked India to remove all its nuclear weapons and facilities from Panjab, and called upon both India and Pakistan not to target Panjab in case of war. Sikhs also approached the UN and the UK government about their concerns. I would encourage every community to make their voices heard – if communities joined together, across borders, regions, and other boundaries to take a stand against nuclear weapons, maybe that statement would be heard and acted upon. Also, education about nuclear conflict is paramount – it is seriously disturbing every time a politician, military tactician, general brings up the use of nuclear weapons as an option. It is also disturbing that many people in the general public, when commenting after the Mumbai Attacks, or the 9/11 attacks state, we should just nuke them out of existence. There is an obvious educational gap regarding the result of nuclear war, and it is our duty as members of civil society to help in this educational role.

There have been numerous instances where troops have amassed on the border between India and Pakistan – sometimes reaching almost a million troops, many of whom amass on the border in Panjab on both sides. Even the use of nuclear weapons on military targets alone would be absolutely devastating for all the people in the region for decades to come, and would turn the fertile lands of Panjab into a wasteland. India and Pakistan are spending billions more on military and nuclear proliferation; it is well known that India has an advantage over Pakistan in terms of military might...so

imagine a situation that starts with conventional conflict where Pakistan begins to lose? Pakistan may opt for a nuclear strike...or imagine the fear of getting paralyzed by a first strike coming from Pakistan, fear that could prompt the Indian side to launch a preemptive nuclear strike. It is a situation that is sadly too easy to imagine. Those who believe that we cannot have a nuclear weapons free world and that nuclear arms deter conventional war must recognize that this is too reckless a method of deterrence.

### Conclusion

On behalf of UNITED SIKHS, the Sikhs in Panjab, and other citizens of the world who want peace and not conflict, love and not war, a future that is sustainable rather than a wasteland, we call upon leadership of both India and Pakistan and of all nuclear and non-nuclear countries and the global public to take heed of the irrational nature of nuclear weapons. While we are in favor of general and complete disarmament, I'll quote from Eminent Professor and now President Obama's science advisor John Holdren – “I do not think that prohibition of nuclear weapons needs to await or be followed quickly by general and complete disarmament...If chemical and biological weapons can be banned without waiting for general and complete disarmament - as they have been and deserved to be - then so can nuclear weapons. Of course a world that has renounced armed conflict as a means of settling disputes would offer the ultimate security against the remobilization of any of these kinds of weapons; but even in the interim before this desideratum is achieved, the world will be better off banning nuclear weapons than continuing to permit them.”