26/04/2006

EXTREMELY URGENT
FAO Sir Ian Blair
Metropolitan Police
New Scotland Yard
10 Broadway,
London,
SW1

cc:
Kashmir Singh
Coordinator
National Council of Gurdwaras

Sewa Singh
Birmingham Gurdwara Council

Council of Gurdwaras Bristol

Sadhu Singh
Council of Gurdwaras Coventry
c/o Guru Nanak Parkash Gurdwara

Surinder Singh
Council of Gurdwaras South East

Dr Sadhu Singh
Wolverhampton Gurdwara Council

Gurmukh Singh
Secretary
British Sikh Consultative Forum

Dr Indarjit Singh
President
Network of Sikh Organisations

Dabinderjit Singh
Sikh Secretariat
Sikh Federation (UK)

Harmander Singh
Sikhs In England

Dr Jasdev Singh
Sikh Human Rights Group

See full cc list below:

Dear Sir Ian

Knife Detection Equipment at Train Stations in the UK

We write in relation to the above and the implications of this proposal for the Sikh community.

Under Operation Shield we understand that knife detection equipment has already been placed in some train stations across the country, with a view to install them at all train stations.

UNITED SIKHS (www.unitedsikhs.org) is concerned that such knife detection may indirectly discriminate Sikhs using these public services.

This issue has also been raised by Dabinderjit Singh of the Sikh Federation (UK) at a meeting with Transport for London (TFL), the GLA and the Sikh Alliance of TFL held at City Hall on 6th April 2006.

Initiated Sikhs are required to wear a sheathed sword namely the “Kirpan” at all times as a tenet of their faith. Please refer to the enclosed DVD entitled ‘Sikhs We Are’ and a power point presentation available for download at the following URL: http://unitedsikhs.org/downloads/30oct05_united_sikhs_slideshow_on_sikh_religious_rights.ppt. Both resources provide further information about the Sikh faith, particularly explaining the importance of the Kirpan for Sikhs.

As you are aware, Sikhs are lawfully permitted to wear the Kirpan by virtue of s.139 (5)(b) and (c) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which permits people to be in possession of a blade or a point in a public place provided this is for religious reasons or as part of a national costume. Sikhs are further permitted to wearing this article of faith by virtue of Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam 1999 and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) as incorporated by the Human Rights Act 1998 which protects the right of individuals to practise their chosen religion. Article 9 (1) of the ECHR states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either
alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

In light of this we are confident that you will ensure that Sikhs are not discriminated against through these search and detection methods currently undertaken by your officers at train stations.

UNITED SIKHS urges you to issue a public assurance to the Sikh community, to ensure that they will not suffer from any form of prejudice as a result of these methods.

We also ask that you inform us of all courses of action taken to ensure that Sikhs wearing a Kirpan are not unduly discriminated. This includes information regarding:

- The procedures and policies implemented by the Police in relation to knife detection methods.
- Awareness and training given to Police officers regarding the Kirpan and knife detection.
- Guidance given to officers regarding searching Sikhs wearing a Kirpan.

Should you require further information or resources, especially for the training and education of Police Officers, please do not hesitate to contact us for any material you may need.

We have every confidence that you will address this issue with due decorum and ensure that the Sikh community are treated fairly and are not unwitting victims in the campaign for a safe society, which the Sikh community fully recognises and supports.

We are also writing to the British Transport Police, West Midlands Police and the Association of Chief Police Officers regarding this issue.

We look forward to hearing from you soon with the above mentioned assurances.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact on the number below, Rishipal Singh, who is monitoring the effect of Operation Shield on the Kirpan wearing members of the Sikh community.

Yours sincerely

Mejindarpal Kaur
Director
International Civil and Human Rights Advocacy
UNITED SIKHS
Tel: 07841 142 103
Full list of Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations that have been notified of this letter by public advertisement:

National Council of Gurdwaras
Birmingham Gurdwara Council
Wolverhampton Gurdwara Council
Council of Gurdwaras Bristol
Council of Gurdwaras Southeast
British Sikh Consultative Forum
Network of Sikh Organisations
Sikh Secretariat
Sikhs In England
Sikh Human Rights Group
Sikh Federation (UK)
Sikh Care Society Heathrow
British Sikh Women Organisation
Sikh Women’s Association
Young Sikhs (UK)
National Council of Gurdwaras
Young Sikhs (Derby)
Sikh Federation (Birmingham)
Awaze Qaum International
British Sikh Consultative Forum
Khalsa Human Rights
Young Sikhs (Coventry)
Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara, Gravesend
Young Sikhs (Southall)
Sikh Youth Association, Leicester
Young Sikhs (Bedford)
Ladies Federation, Leicester
Nanak Parkash Gurdwara, Coventry
Leamington Sikh Federation
Oadby Sikh Women’s Federation
Wolverhampton Young Sikhs
Southampton Sikh Welfare Association
Southall Sikh Federation
Sikh Welfare Association UK
Young Sikhs (East London)
East Midlands Sikh Women’s Federation
Gurdwara Guru Hargobind Ji, Coventry
Sikh Federation (Gravesend)
Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester
Bhai Amrik Singh Shaheed Fund
Leicester Sikh Federation
Sikh Resource Centre, Leicester
Leicester Young Sikhs
Ladies Sikh Federation
Guru Nanak Sikh Temple, Wolverhampton
Walsall Sikh Federation
Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Willenhall
Sikh Federation (Coventry)
Khalsa Youth Club
Council of Sikh Gurdwaras Coventry
Young Sikhs (Nottingham)
Stafford Sikh Federation
Singh Sabha Sikh Temple, Bristol
Warwick Sikh Federation
Young Sikhs (Birmingham)
Gravesend Sikh Education and Youth Group
Sikh Federation (Bedford)
Dashmesh Darbar Gurdwara East London
Sikh Federation (East Ham)
Gurdwara Nanaksar, Walsall
Young Sikhs (Gravesend)
Khalsa Satsang Jatha, Southampton
Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester
Young Sikhs (Southampton)
Federation of Sikh Organisations (Leicester)
Gurdwara Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji, Tividale
Sikh Federation (Slough)
Singh Sabha Maidenhead
Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Stoke on Trent
Luton Young Sikhs
Leicester Sikh Centre
Huddersfield Sikh Federation
Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Bristol
Sikh Arts and Cultural Association
Young Sikhs (Slough)
Sikh Parents Association, Leicester
Gurbani Sangeet Centre
Leamington Young Sikhs
Sikh Education Council, Leicester
Nanaksar Gurdwara, Stafford
Guru Nanak Gurdwara Sports, Leicester
Walsall Sikh Forum
Bristol Young Sikhs
Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Slough
Sikh Education & Voluntary Association (SEVA)
Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Scunthorpe
Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Newcastle
Sikh Recreation and Learning Centre
Guru Nanak Gurdwara Youth Club, Leicester
Guru Nanak Sikh Temple, Telford
Sikh Heritage Society, Leicester
Kingston Young Sikhs
Sikh Community Centre, Leicester
Guru Nanak Sikh Museum
Punjabi Radio Listeners Club, Leicester
Sikh Resource Centre, Bristol
Sikh Federation (Wolverhampton)
Sikh Federation (Derby)
Panjab Times
Des Pardes Newspaper
The Sikh Times
Walsall Young Sikhs
SikhLionz.com, West Midland
Sikhstudent.org
BOSS
Akash Radio
Punjab Radio
Sukhsagar Radio
Amritbani Radio
Sunrise Radio