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

Translation of the Relevant Part of the Admissibility Decision of the European Court of Human Rights in Shingara Mann Singh v France

According to the applicant the Sikh religion requires its members to wear a turban in all circumstances. It is considered to be not only at the heart of their religion but also the heart of their identity.

Accordingly, the Court observes that this is an act motivated or inspired by a religion or conviction. It follows that in the Court's opinion the regulation in question, which requires persons to appear with their head uncovered on identity photographs on the driving licence amounts to an interference with the exercise of the right to freedom of religion and belief.

The applicant does not dispute that the impugned measure was prescribed by law and that it pursued at least one of the legitimate aims listed in the second paragraph of article 9 of the Convention, that is, guaranteeing public security.

It remains for the Court to examine whether the measure in question was 'necessary in a democratic society' in the meaning of the second paragraph of article 9 of the Convention.

The Court recalls that as guaranteed by article 9, liberty of thought, conscious and religion represents one of the bases of a "democratic society" within the meaning of the Convention. It figures, in its religious dimension, among the most essential elements of the identity of believers and their conception of life, but it is also a precious right for atheists, agnostics, sceptics or those who are indifferent. It goes hand in hand with the pluralism, hard won over the centuries, which is an essential element of such a society. This freedom implies in particular, that of belonging or not belonging to a religion and practising it or not.

While freedom of religion derives first and foremost from the internal aspect, it also implies the freedom to manifest one's religion individually and in private, or collectively, in public and among those whose faith one shares. Article 9 enumerates various forms which manifestation of belief or religion may take, that is to say worship, teaching, practice and observance.

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However, Article 9 does not protect every act motivated or inspired by religion or conviction. Moreover, it does not always guarantee the right to behave in a manner dictated by religious belief and does not confer on people who do so the right to disregard rules that have proved to be justified.

The Court recalls that the Commission, dealing with the case of a Sikh applicant who challenged his conviction for breaches of the obligation on motorcyclists to wear a crash helmet, had considered that the compulsory wearing of a crash helmet was a necessary measure for motorcyclists and that the interference with the exercise of the right to freedom of religion was justified by protection of the health of the person concerned.

The Court also recalls that neither the obligation on a Muslim student to provide an identity photograph with the head uncovered for the purpose of the issue of a university diploma, nor the obligation on a person to remove their turban or veil for security controls at airports or in a consular setting constituted a breach of the exercise of the right to the freedom of religion.

The Court reaches a similar conclusion in the present case. It observes that the identity photograph with the head uncovered, affixed to the driving licence, is necessary for the authorities responsible for public security and protection of public order, in particular in the framework of checks carried out in relation to provisions of the highway code, to identify the driver and to verify his right to drive the vehicle concerned. Such checks are necessary for public security within the meaning of Article 9(2) of the Convention. The Court emphasises, in this respect that the impugned regulation has been shown to be more intrusive in this field because of the growth in the risk of fraud and falsification of driving licences. Moreover, the method of implementation of such checks comes within the margin of appreciation of the respondent state, all the more so since the obligation to remove the turban for this purpose, or initially, to obtain the driving licence is a one off [or occasional] measure.

Finally, having regard to the above, the fact that the applicant was authorised, in the past, to appear on his driving licence wearing a turban is insufficient to dispense him with the obligation of complying with internal rules in the matter.

In light of the above and taking account of the margin of appreciation of states in this matter, the Court concludes that the impugned interference was justified in principle and proportionate to the aim in view.

So far as concerns the complaints under Article 8 and Article 14 combined with Articles 8 and 9 of the Convention, having regard to all the material in its possession, and to the extent it is competent to consider the allegations formulated, the Court finds no appearance of a violation of the provisions relied upon.

It follows that the application is manifestly ill-founded and must be rejected in application of Article 35(3) and (4) of the Convention.

For these reasons unanimously declares the application inadmissible.