

Sikh Summit Report 2013



UNITED
SIKHS

Recognize the Human Race as One

ISSUED BY:

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ABOUT UNITED SIKHS & INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY (ICHRA)

UNITED SIKHS is a UN-affiliated, international non-profit, non-governmental, humanitarian relief, human development and advocacy organization, aimed at empowering those in need, especially disadvantaged and minority communities across the world. UNITED SIKHS is a grass-roots organization with chapters in America, Asia and Europe that pursue projects for the spiritual, social and economic empowerment of underprivileged and minority communities. Our mission is to transform underprivileged and minority communities and individuals into informed and vibrant members of society through civic, educational and personal development programs, by fostering active participation in social and economic activity.

The International Civil and Human Rights Advocacy (ICHRA) project helps advance the economic, social and spiritual empowerment of minorities and other marginalized groups and individuals in need, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, social status, age or ability. We achieve this by protecting and enforcing the civil and human rights of minorities and marginalized groups in the Americas, Europe and Asia. The following sub projects are part of the ICHRA project: Civil and Human Rights Awareness and Advocacy, Hate Crimes, Racial Profiling, Minorities and Indigenous Rights, Right to Turban, Rights Under The Criminal Justice System (e.g. rights of prisoners and victims), Sikh Civil Rights Conference and the Sikh Summit.

ABOUT THE SIKH SUMMIT

Sikhs in United States can be traced back nearly 100 years when they came to California to work on the railroads. However, in the past and still ongoing, Sikhs have faced biased treatment, racism and xenophobia despite the fact that many in the community proudly identify themselves as Americans. The problem has been compounded by media coverage, policies and general public attitudes toward immigrants, and in particular, those who have a distinct external appearance post the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

As a civil and human rights advocacy organization, UNITED SIKHS organizes a yearly Sikh Summit for Sikhs across the country to unite and hold meaningful dialogue with their local and national lawmakers and to promote solutions on important Sikh civil and human rights issues.

SIKH SUMMIT 2013



From October 22-24, 2013, UNITED SIKHS gave the national Sikh community a rare opportunity to have one-on-one meeting with their United States Congressmen and various federal agency officials. Sikh activists and community members came together to share community concerns and express the need for change in our policies.

During the three-day Sikh Summit, community members joined UNITED SIKHS staff for meaningful dialogue with these congressmen and government agencies to promote education and solutions on important civil and human rights issues.

Issues:

- Hate and Bias Crimes
- Bullying in Schools
- Increasing Security and Vigilance at Sikh Temples in the U.S. after the Shooting Massacre at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin
- Right to Turbans at Airports and in the Military
- Employment Discrimination at the Workplace and in Armed Forces
- Racial and Religious Profiling
- Increasing and Correcting School Textbook Information about Sikhs
- Including Sikhs in the U.S. Census
- Stopping the Ban on Turbans in France

Congressmen and Agencies:

In April 2013, the American Sikh Congressional Caucus was launched with over 30 congressional members from both sides of the aisle. Being the first year of the Sikh Summit after the caucus' formation, we wanted to assure this new resource was properly utilized. UNITED SIKHS and Sikh community attendees met with caucus members to discuss ways in which the caucus can band together to push for the issues faced by the community.

The following congressional members, their staff, agencies, and organizations met with us for these important conversations:

Congressman Joseph Crowley

Congressman Patrick Meehan

Congressman Raul M. Grijalva

Congresswoman Jackie Speier

Congressman Chris Van Hollen

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky

Congresswoman Judy Chu

Congressman Gary Peters

Congressman Frank Pallone

Congresswoman Doris Matsui

Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren

Congressman Frank Wolf

Congressman Jeff Dunham

Congressman Jerry McNerney

Congressman Tom McClintock

Congressman David Valadao

Congressman George Miller

Congressman Rush Holt

Congressman Doug LaMalfa

Congressman John Conyers

Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division

Department of Justice, Community Relations Service

Department of State

Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

The Leadership Conference of Civil and Human Rights

Commitments and Planning:

- Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division committed to continuing to assist UNITED SIKHS with ongoing cases including the case of four Sikh boys denied access to go carting due to their patkas at Boomers! Amusement Park.
- Civil Rights organizations committed to working with us to contact major school textbook companies to change any false statements on Sikhi and Sikh history.
- Members of American Sikh Congressional Caucus committed to helping with profiling issues by TSA.
- Several congressmen committed to supporting Sikhs in the Military and Sikhs in police forces.
- A congresswoman committed to assisting us with a uniform religious accommodation in federal courts, to assure Sikhs are not asked to remove their turbans in some courts.
- Department of Justice, Community Relations Service will be working with us to train Mississippi law enforcement officials to assure they are aware of Sikhism sensitivity practices. They will also work with us to train more states in the future.
- A congressman has committed to connecting us with appropriate Census Bureau representatives to assist us in getting Sikhs counted in the Census.
- Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration heard our concerns on harassment and illegal detention at the airport of Sikhs traveling from Pakistan. They will look into the individual cases.

CELEBRATING A JOURNEY FROM INSPIRATION TO SUCCESS BANQUET



In addition to these meetings, a banquet dinner was held in honor of the Sikh Summit on the evening of Wednesday, October 23, 2013, at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Washington D.C. with food provided by Punjabi Junction. The theme of the evening was "Celebrating a Journey from Inspiration to Success."

Honorary speakers of the evening included:

Congresswoman Judy Chu (co-chair for American Sikh Congressional Caucus)

Congressman David Valadao (co-chair for American Sikh Congressional Caucus)

Congressman Mike Honda (member of American Sikh Congressional Caucus)

Congressman Jerry McNerney (member of American Sikh Congressional Caucus)

Mr. Jeffrey Woodrum (Staffer for Rep. Joseph Crowley)

Mr. Hilary Sheldon (Director of NAACP)

Mr. Paul Monteiro (Associate Director for White House Office of Public Engagement)

Ms. Susan Herman (President of the American Civil Liberties Union)

Mr. Daniel Mach (Director of ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief)

Along with numerous members of the Sikh Community including Gurudwara management, and dedicated Sikh activists nationwide.

The Summit concluded with an invitation to the White House to be a part of President Barack Obama's announcement and support of immigration reform legislation which was headed to the House of Representatives for a vote.

Despite the government shutdown, this year's annual Sikh Summit brought more meetings than ever before with congressional members. Over 100 Sikh community members from around the world attended our banquet dinner. It was an honor to have both chairs of the American Sikh Congressional Caucus, Rep. Judy Chu and Rep. David Valadao, speak to our community. Their words of support and encouragement reassured our community that having these dialogues is imperative as we work together to push for change for the betterment of the Sikh community. A very humbling close to the summit was a visit to the White House to hear President Barack Obama speak on his support for the current immigration reform legislation.

QUOTES AND PICTURES



"I congratulate UNITED SIKHS on a very successful Fifth Annual Sikh Summit," said Congresswoman Judy Chu, co-chair of the American Sikh Caucus (pictured in the middle with members of UNITED SIKHS). "UNITED SIKHS has led the effort to address TSA's inconsistent search policies, addressed hate crimes against the Sikh community, and pushed for the creation of an American Sikh Congressional Caucus. Although we have made great strides together, there is still much to be done. As Co-Chair of the Sikh Congressional Caucus, I look forward to working with United Sikhs to ensure America remains true to religious freedom, acceptance and tolerance for all."



"I was honored to participate in the UNITED SIKHS Annual Sikh Summit this year. I represent a district that is home to one of the largest Sikh populations in the United States," said Congressman David Valadao, co-chair of the American Sikh Caucus (centered in the picture with members of UNITED SIKHS). "American-Sikhs have a very strong presence in our community and their impact on American society is significant. I am proud to provide the Sikh community with a voice in Washington and will continue to work with my colleagues to address the unique issues this community faces."



Susan Herman, President of the American Civil Liberties Union, added, "At the UNITED SIKHS' Summit I was honored to accept the award to the ACLU for our extensive work on behalf of Sikhs -- and to express my thanks to UNITED SIKHS for standing with us and supporting our work toward the goal of religious freedom and equality for all."

To view more pictures, please click [here](#)

YOUNG SIKH LEADERS WORKSHOP



Sikh youth were invited for an amazing opportunity to meet with community leaders for a rare lesson in leadership and advocacy rights on Capitol Hill. The UNITED SIKHS Young Sikh Leaders Workshop (YSLW) provided students of undergraduate universities to gather at our nation's capitol to build their leadership and advocacy skills. They met with Sikh activists and leaders to learn about issues that affect the Sikh American community and discovered possible actions that may be taken to make a difference in the community.

Guest speakers included American Idol Fame Gurpreet Singh Sarin, Economic Policy Advisor to Senator Chris Coons JJ Singh and Journalist Anju Kaur.

With the creation of the American Sikh Congressional Caucus and the increase in hate crimes against Sikhs, we felt the need for advocacy on behalf of our community was more essential than ever before. We wanted to create a program in which our youth can develop their advocacy skills, learn from important Sikh leaders about leadership and career development, and become knowledgeable on current Sikh issues.

Attendees had the chance to do all this and more: they met a successful journalist, congressional advisor, and American Idol contestant while partaking in mock congressional meetings and engaging in important dialogue about bullying in schools.

Through the workshop, young leaders became aware of social issues, expanded their knowledge on strategic solutions, built relationships and gained mentors with leaders

from the community, and developed confidence to advocate for Sikh rights. YSLW focused on exploring post-9/11 xenophobia and hate crime increases, bias-based bullying among youth, and tools to advocate for change and address misconceptions.

Angad Singh, a young Sikh leader participant reported; "I did not know what to expect when I signed up for the workshop since I did not have any previous experience working on Sikh issues or doing any kind of advocacy. But I was amazed at how much I learned. I had no idea there were so many cases UNITED SIKHS worked on around the world which resulted in policy change. I also really enjoyed hearing Gurpreet speak about leadership. Since I am finance major and the skills he discussed will apply to my career."

To view pictures of YSLW, please [click here](#).

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK

For UNITED SIKHS to continue its advocacy efforts and host our annual summits, we need your support and assistance. Please click here to [donate](#) online today.