More Information

The information on RLUIPA in this pamphlet was provided by UNITED SIKHS. (To read more, please visit www.unitedsikhs.org/PressRel eases/PRSRLS-03-12-2010-00.html)

The information on The Prison Litigation Reform Act was provided by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). To read more, please visit (www.aclu.org/images/asset_ upload file79 25805.pdf)

If you feel that you, or someone you know has been a victim of religious rights violations, please contact UNITED SIKHS at <u>lawusa@unitedsikhs.com</u> or 1-646-688-3525 for more information or visit us on the web at www.unitedsikhs.org.

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UNITED SIKHS



Know Your Rights: Prisoners' Rights



Recognize the Human Race as One

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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Did You Know?

- Prior to the year 2000, prisoners' religious rights were not well protected.
- The **Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act** (RLUIPA), passed in 2000, provides added protections against state and local governments from imposing burdens on the free exercise of religion in prisons.
- Although the passage of RLUIPA has helped protect religious freedoms, the rights of Sikh prisoners to maintain their identity is often threatened by prison policies.
- Only five states permit any prisoner to have uncut hair if they choose to and less than a quarter of the fifty states have a faith/religious exemption that would allow Sikh prisoners to keep uncut hair. On the map to the right, the states shaded in blue permit uncut hair, the states in red do not permit uncut hair, the states in yellow make a faith/religious exception, and the states in gray have vague policies regarding grooming of hair.



• As you can see from the map, a change is needed. This is precisely why UNITED SIKHS has advocated for changes to these prohibitive policies.

The Prison Litigation Reform Act

- The Prison Litigation Reform Act, or PLRA, was a law passed in 1996, making it more difficult for prisoners to file lawsuits in federal court. It was created with the intention of reducing what the courts thought to be "frivolous" lawsuits by prisoners. In reality, PLRA often denies justice to victims of civil rights violations.
- In order to file a lawsuit, a prisoner is subject to restrictions which create problems for prisoners trying to seek redress for civil rights violations, including religious rights violations.

What has UNITED SIKHS done?

- In November 2005, a Sikh prisoner was unjustly put in solitary confinement for refusing to shave his beard; his religious scriptures were desecrated, and his religious articles of faith were confiscated. UNITED SIKHS filed a lawsuit to enforce his right to practice his religion.
- In 2008, a Sikh inmate at Duval County Jail in Jacksonville, Florida repeatedly had his hair forcibly cut and face shaved by guards. UNITED SIKHS rallied behind him, staging peaceful demonstrations in Jacksonville to end these violations, and wrote an action letter to Governor Charlie Crist, explaining the importance of these articles of faith.
- In March 2011, UNITED SIKHS visited Sikh detainees at the Port Isabel Detention Center in Southern Texas and delivered turbans, prayer books, and various Sikh literature.

What can you do?

UNITED SIKHS has advocated for changes to these prohibitive policies, and you can too! Go to <u>www.house.gov/writerep/</u> and tell your representative you want your state to protect the religious rights of Sikh prisoners and to allow Sikh prisoners to maintain uncut hair.