The Global Sikh Civil and Human Rights Conference serves as a platform to unite the global Sikh community and serves as a conduit for an annual gathering of Sikh leaders, advocates, human rights activists and delegates from all over the world to deliberate and implement strategies to empower and engage in matters which affect Sikhs in all parts of the world.

This year's conference saw over 200 attendees representing the following countries and the voices of their Sikh communities: Austria, Afghanistan, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Netherlands, Mexico, Pakistan, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, UK, USA, and UAE.

**Turban Ban in Europe**

Controversy surrounding the turban continue in Europe and was a prominent issue for European Sikhs in this year's conference especially since Manjit Singh GK, President, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC), was requested to remove his “hat” by security officers at Rome’s airport just a week ago. “I stated it is not a ‘hat’, it is an integral part of being a Sikh,” Singh proclaimed as he summarized the details on this deplorable incident. “UNITED SIKHS informed me that on or around the 25 February 2013, a UN Resolution was passed that you cannot check a Turban by taking it off.”

This incident is just a reminder why UNITED SIKHS has created the Right to Turban Campaign. Sikhs should continue to educate the French consulates around the globe to reverse the turban ban in France by having foreign relations committees from other countries to initiate a dialogue with the French Government. Sikh delegations should visit French Government dignitaries in their countries to express their concerns, as well as request DSGMC to setup a meeting with the Akaal Takht Jathedar and the Pope to address Sikh identity issues in Europe.

“The Sikh identity has to be defended like a nation defends its borders - with vigour and resources. UNITED SIKHS has set up a special Fund called "INSAAF" (International Sikh Advocacy and Awareness Fund). We ask every Sikh who receives this message to donate their dasvandh (tithe) to this Fund,” said UNITED SIKHS International Legal Director Mejindarpal Kaur in her video statement from Sangat TV's London studios.

Aymeric Guleria, French Advocate who worked on Ranjit Singh's ID Card Case in France: “The Sikh community arrived in France 30 years ago for their own political reasons and to escape persecution. The French Government promised to allow Sikhs to wear the Turban but now the situation has
changed. The French Government does not want the Sikh community to wear the Turban. The problem now, is to find a solution for the Sikh community in France.”

“The UN decision in 2011 stated that France is not right but the French Government has not done anything to change the law. This decision was further confirmed in the Bikramjit Singh Turban case at school. The Sikhs must pursue justice in France by using the key decision of the UN to contest and have justice in France by way of a solution”.

Jasvir Singh, UNITED SIKHS case, expulsion from school in France:
“No politician or school has taken responsibility for getting me expelled from school. A law has been made in the country which I was born and live but no one has taken responsibility. The teachers told me they are happy with me as a person and student but it is a management decision to expel me from school because I wear a Turban.”

Ranjit Singh, UNITED SIKHS case, refusal of ID card in France:
“There is no understanding by the French Government! They know who we are - there is a war memorial in the Commonwealth Cemetery Neuf Chapel with the names of Sikh soldiers that died in France - and what is being done is intentional!”

“When I was told to remove my Turban for my ID card, I said NO! Remove my neck, but not this Turban! It is a reward, a gift, it is my Crown!”

“On the walls of the Government builds throughout France are the words “Liberte (Liberty), Egalite (Equality) and Fraternite (Fraternity). These are the 3 basic principles which make up the motto of France; however these words are not in the hearts and mind of the French Government.”

“UNITED SIKHS took my case and helped us and we won the case in 2011, however the French Government has not accepted it and is trying to delay it”

Manjit Singh GK, DSGMC, Delhi, INDIA wearing a Turban in the UK:
“Thank you to UNITED SIKHS, who stressed that I need to attend as this is a tough topic in Europe.”

“7 to 8 security people stopped me on leaving the Italy after my attendance at another convention and said to me in a rude manner, “remove your hat, we need to check it!”. I stated it is not a “hat”, it is an integral part of being a Sikh.”

“Sikhs from Switzerland, Greece, Belgium, UK…European Sikhs called to ask where we were…it served as Turban awareness.”

“UNITED SIKHS informed me that on around the 20 February 2013, a UN Resolution was passed banning the inspection of a Turban by taking it off.”

“Support whichever party you want but when it is an issue of the community, we must be united…finish the blame game, identify the target for success. We all know what is happening in France, we all have to continue “our” fight!”

“DSGMC will, in either December or February, hold an international convention and invite European representatives with the support of UNITED SIKHS”.
Sukhwinder Singh Padda representing the Sikh Council UK:
“Sikh communities issues are the same and we need to define them in a way that they are understood by the governments all over the there we need a Global Assembly. Let’s make a framework based on Principles and have a virtual parliament.”

1984 Pogroms

The affliction of the 1984 Pogroms is still present today. Sikh Human Right Organizations were encouraged to continue to push for the prosecution of those who are guilty for the genocide against Sikhs. Sikhs around the globe should refer to the killings in 1984 as the Sikh Genocide and seek to have it recognised as a genocide internationally like the Jews were recognized in the unforgettable Holocaust.

Manjit Singh GK, DSGMC, Delhi, INDIA wearing a Turban in the UK:
Only 11 murder cases have resulted in 2 cautions
No one has received the Death Penalty
4 Cases pending Trial
4 Cases pending with ICB
50 Cases pending appeal
Carnage84.com was launched by DSGM inn 2002. It has been documented that 1984 was a “one sided” holocaust sponsored by the Indian Government and it was not a two sided fight.

Death Penalty

Sikhs were encouraged to continue to pursue their position for the death penalty to be abolished globally. Sukhwinder Singh Padda representing the Sikh Council UK led the discussion saying, “No internal discussions between Sikhs have lead to an inconsistent approach and therefore damage to our image. Our Delhi counterparts lobby for the Death Penalty and in the UK, we lobby Parliament against the Death Penalty.” He emphasized the need to use tactics and pressure India in condemning the death penalty.

“Delhi must apply pressure and we request that the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC), Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and Shiromani Akali Dal (Bandal) Delhi State pass a motion against the Death Penalty,” Padda insisted.

Sukhwinder Singh Padda representing the Sikh Council UK
“No internal discussion between Sikhs has lead to an inconsistent approach and therefore damage to our image. Our Delhi counterparts lobby for the Death Penalty and in the UK, we lobby Parliament against the Death Penalty.”

“We need to use tactics and pressure India. Delhi must apply pressure and we request that the DSGMC, SGPC and Shiromani Akali Dal (Bandal) Delhi State pass a motion against the Death Penalty.”

Preserving Sikh Heritage

Delegation encouraged the study of Sikh history through the preservation and conservation of old documents, Sarkar-e-Khalsa treaties through microfilming and by making material available online for data-mining. Preserving and conserving Sikh artifacts, buildings and traditions would teach new generations about the importance and significance of Sikhism.
Jasmine Kaur, wearing a Turban in the UK and Preserving Sikh Heritage:
“...at first I was apprehensive, what would my friends think? How would I be accepted? Would I get bullied? How would I look? .... My friend has been wearing a turban since she was 6 years old, but today she walks around with a bare head. She didn’t have the knowledge, and neither did other people, she did not stick up for herself and what was right and she gave up...”

“Together we can make Sikhs realize the importance of their unshorn hair. We can educate others to make them realize that we do not do anything for no reason. We can do this through educating them about the sacrifices of the Gurus and other sacred Singh and the reasons for why Sikhs are supposed to wear a Dastar or Turban. Together we need to teach them to be proud of who they are and inspire the confidence for them to be able to stand up and proudly say; yes I am a Sikh and I wear a Dastar because I want to!”

Manjinder Singh Sirsa, DSGMC, Delhi, INDIA
“I am thankful to be called to speak. UNITED SIKHS, we DSGMC invite you to join us and hold a Global Conference in Delhi. The Delhi people will understand what the Sikhs have achieved with a Global Conference of this magnitude.

Shingara Singh, said, "Things happened to worsen after 1984 as the identity related issues first surfaced in that year. In 2004, the law banning the Turban in French schools was passed, thus impacting the Sikh children in France. We are hearing reflections of this law in Belgium and in the fall this will impact the Sikh students in Belgium. We are seeing these draconian laws raising its head in other parts of Europe."

“I don't have medical insurance and don't have a valid driver's license. The French government is denying my fundamental rights by not complying to the decision of the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) that has concluded that France is in violation of the religious rights of its people."

"The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar, is highly committed to protecting Sikh Heritage in India. The SGPC is considering providing skills and technology to KAR SEWA teams, so that their seva at historic sites would ensure that our history is conserved and preserved,” said Kiranjot Kaur, a senior SGPC member and former General Secretary, who addressed the Conference.

At the conclusion of this year's conference, collaboratively, delegates have determined that Sikh issues need to be resolved locally with assistance from experts from Sikh communities around the world. "The Conference declared that a Global Sikh Alliance should be formed and that there is a need to have a Global Sikh Assembly every year, based on the concept of "Guru Granth, Guru Panth” and the tradition of “ Sarbat Khalsa”, said Sukhvinder Singh Padda, representing the Sikh Council UK and also a Senior Advisor to the Sikh Federation UK. He added, "It was great to see the President and General Secretary of the DSGMC present and their inclusion in the Global Sikh Alliance. The SCUK is committed to making the Global Sikh Alliance a success."

Hardayal Singh, Trustee and Executive Director of UNITED SIKHS-USA, said "There is a need for greater communication and networking between Sikh Organisations and Institutions that are working on issues affecting Sikhs globally, The Global Sikh Alliance will not only make best use of resources collectively, but also utilise and harness the great diverse skills bank we have within the Panth. It will be an opportunity to share our success and meet challenges together." The following organizations have agreed to take action in the creation of the Global Sikh Assembly (in alphabetical order): Dastaar Action Committee (France), Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC), Sikh Council (UK) and UNITED SIKHS.
You can read about our previous Global Sikh Civil and Human Rights Conferences by clicking here.