

# ANNUAL

# REPORT

**2023**





# FOREWORD: LETTER FROM OUR CEO (GURPREET SINGH)

The word gratitude captures but a modicum of the profound emotions that go out toward every single donor and supporter that has stood with us since UNITED SIKHS was founded in 1999. UNITED SIKHS, its staff, and volunteers consistently – every year – receive one or another form of accolade or recognition for their selfless work in service of humanity and the Sikh Community speaks of our commitment to uphold every precious ounce of the trust you have reposed in us.

While wars and conflicts bring the worst of humanity to the fore, you let the spirit of goodness triumph when you stood by us, as we served the people suffering in Ukraine, Armenia, and Gaza. Every time a natural disaster struck, you enabled us to rush to the rescue of victims, on all sides. It didn't matter which part of the world it was – you lent hope to the despairing, be it in Panjab, Turkey, Morocco, Kiev or Hawaii.

There was no lack of effort when it came to empowering the Sikh community either. Through Project Kirti in India, you helped generate incomes; enabling households languishing in poverty restore their dignity and livelihood. In Pakistan, you made sure the bereaved families of victims killed in despicable hate crimes didn't have to struggle on their own. Likewise, the UMEED (hope) helpline in the United States allowed the despondent and helpless to reach out, ensuring they had someone to listen and help in possible ways to alleviate their pain.

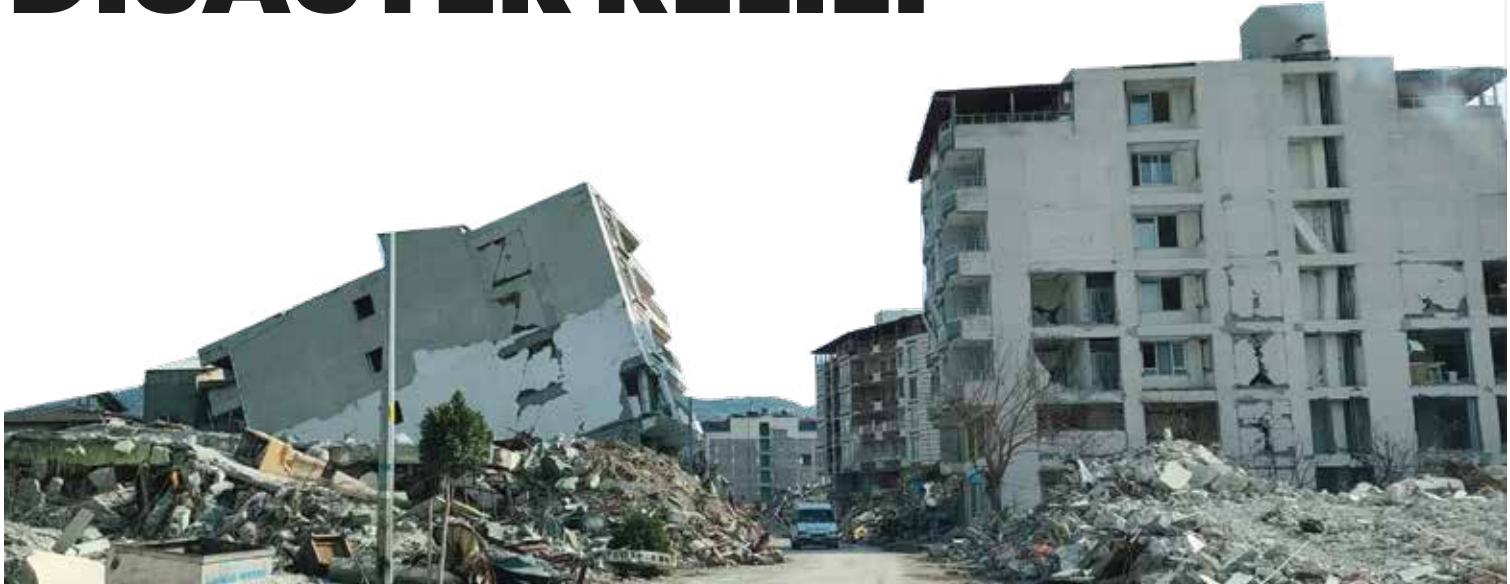
Thanks to you, 2023 proved to be yet another year in which minority civil and human rights received a major boost. From bringing justice to hate crime victims to organizing another successful Annual Humanitarian Aid and Advocacy Academy (AHAA) and Sikh Summit, the year saw several notable achievements. In a year that witnessed a sudden surge in hate crimes, we provided casualty and emergency medical response trainings, as well as provided legal resources via our confidential 24\*7 UMEED helpline. This year also saw the formulation of an unprecedented report on the global state of Sikh civil rights across the world. Last but not least, our legal team was able to help several individuals facing workplace discrimination, travel restrictions, and visa-related obstacles among others.

We are infinitely and incessantly grateful to our volunteers who never tire of exploring ways to make the world a better place. And to donors like you who have entrusted us with their dasvandh, a tenth of their hard-earned earnings, our gratitude knows no bounds.

In 2023, UNITED SIKHS has grown to over 1.6 million followers across social media platforms including 40k+ registered volunteers around the globe, becoming the largest nonpartisan nonprofit in the world. The road ahead looks bright! In this journey, your trust and generosity are the lifeblood of UNITED SIKHS; we humbly solicit the same support in order that we may enhance and expand our good works in the years to come. May humanity continue to thrive through donors like you!



# SIKH AID: GLOBAL DISASTER RELIEF



One of the three pillars of UNITED SIKHS, Sikh Aid or Humanitarian aid is intended to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity during and after man-made crises and natural disasters. The Sikh Aid team provides non-partisan global humanitarian disaster relief services, including immediate aid while helping implement long-term rehabilitation plans.

## TURKEY

In the early hours of 6 February 2023, a catastrophic earthquake of 7.8 on the Richter scale hit Southern Turkey wreaking massive devastation across the provinces of Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman, Hatay, Osmaniye, Gaziantep, Malatya, Diyarbakır, and Adana. A second earthquake struck the region nine hours later, resulting in further death and destruction.



**With 59,259 deaths and losses amounting to over \$34.2 billion in damages to public infrastructure and buildings, the 2023 Turkey–Syria earthquake was estimated to be the deadliest in centuries.**

Amidst the unfolding nightmare in the wake of the earthquake – millions were rendered homeless, people faced acute food and water shortages, and fears of infections and epidemics mounted – teams of UNITED SIKHS volunteers flew in from Germany and Denmark, reaching the badly affected province of Adiyaman on Day 3 of the earthquake.



Teams from the U.S. and U.K. subsequently went on to serve at various affected spots across Adana and Hatay provinces.

As part of our relief operations, we distributed essentials such as food, water, medicines, and clothing and set up temporary shelters. Given the state of the wrecked gas pipelines, we began distributing portable cylinders. The old and indigent were offered cash assistance.

**Our volunteers set their personal comforts aside, and put up inside containers and makeshift shelters, faced the wrath of hungry crowds, and drove long distances down treacherous, debris-littered roads to reach affected towns and cities.**







Several local Turkish children volunteered with UNITED SIKHS.



A serpentine queue outside a UNITED SIKHS aid distribution center.



Turkish children enjoying a hot meal served by UNITED SIKHS volunteers.





**720,000+**  
Meals delivered to  
people in need



**10,000+**  
People clothed &  
provided with basic  
necessities



**540+**  
Individuals provided  
with temporary  
shelter



**100+**  
Families provided with  
grocery boxes filled  
with food & supplies  
to feed a family of  
8 for weeks



**100+**  
Children given  
access to education &  
learning materials



**100+**  
Days on the  
ground offering relief

Thanks to your valuable assistance, thousands of victims received life-saving support over the course of several months.



# MOROCCO



On 8th September 2023, a massive earthquake struck Morocco, killing nearly 3000 people and wreaking widespread devastation, primarily in the Al Haouz & Taroudant provinces. UNITED SIKHS was quick to respond to the catastrophe, mobilizing dedicated emergency relief teams in the worst-affected areas. Despite the isolation of badly-hit rural towns Amizmiz and Ijoukak in Al Haouz province, our volunteers rushed in to help, distributing food, clean water, hygiene items, blankets, & medication to victims, and setting up tents and shelters.



**We worked round the clock to provide vital humanitarian supplies to earthquake victims in Morocco.**



# HAWAII



In August 2023, deadly wildfires broke out and spread throughout the town of Lahaina on Maui Island in the U.S. state of Hawaii. The inferno, attributed to low humidity, fierce gusts of wind from Hurricane Dora and drought conditions, caused colossal devastation.

**The Hawaii wildfire prompted U.S. President Joe Biden to approve a federal major disaster declaration, ordering the mobilization of "all available federal assets" to assist in the island's recovery.**

There were over a 100 deaths, thousands were displaced, swathes of land were reduced to ruins, and infrastructure damage was estimated at billions of dollars.



**The suffering of local people and tourists was exacerbated by power outages, lack of shelters, overcrowded hospitals, and snapping of cell phone services.**





Amidst the backdrop of mass evacuations and travel advisories discouraging visitors from making non-essential trips to Maui, the UNITED SIKHS emergency response team remained undaunted, and was quick to land in Hawaii. The team hit the ground running, distributing essential humanitarian aid – food, water, over-the-counter medicines, tents, clothing, and sanitary supplies – to locals and non-locals impacted by the wildfires.



**UNITED SIKHS became the first humanitarian organization to reach Hawaii.**





# ARMENIA

Fears of genocide in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in the South Caucasus sparked an exodus of ethnic Armenians toward the end of September 2023. Thousands fled the region, pouring into various parts of neighboring Armenia including, Yerevan, Syunik, Kotayk, and Ararat. Consequently, a grave refugee crisis began unfolding with thousands of women, children, and elderly in dire need of emergency humanitarian aid.

UNITED SIKHS was the only global organization that ventured into the region, spearheading relief efforts and making a difference to the lives of refugees.

**Trauma and fear was palpable among the refugees, many of whom had lost loved ones and suffered multiple displacements.**

Our volunteers set up a camp at Tatev in the Syunik region, which was hosting about 90 families.



**Many were extremely vulnerable - women, children, elderly, pregnant women, infants, and people living with chronic illnesses.**





We distributed warm clothing – gloves, overcoats, parkas, electric heaters, bedding, blankets, medical supplies, and wood for heating to the refugees. Furthermore, we closely communicated with the people, with the help of a local translator.

We listened to their stories in an attempt to identify their psychosocial needs, accommodation anxieties, and employment aspirations.



Heaters and blankets were given to families in view of the upcoming winter.





The Middle East was plunged into a vortex of violence after Palestinian militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, leading the latter to retaliate with air and artillery strikes. Since October, the crisis in Gaza has resulted in over 31,000 deaths.



**Nearly 70% of the dead include women and children.**

Furthermore, a complete siege of the Gaza Strip has resulted in water, fuel, and electricity cuts, and severely restricted delivery of food, drinking water, and medical supplies, causing unimaginable human suffering.



**With widespread displacement, a collapsing health system, and lack of sanitation and hygiene causing a spike in infectious diseases, the situation is nothing less than catastrophic.**

UNITED SIKHS volunteers arrived to provide essential assistance and relief including medicines, food, water, sanitation kits, and clothing to the needy in the midst of this humanitarian crisis.



**We arrived at the Gaza-Egypt border to deliver essential aid.**



**A volunteer arranges packets containing food, drinking water, and other essential provisions for distribution in Gaza.**



# MANIPUR



In May 2023, ethnic tensions in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur between Kukis – a predominantly Christian minority tribal community – and Meiteis – the largely Hindu dominant ethnic group – snowballed into a full-blown conflict, resulting in violence that saw churches and temples being destroyed, and villages razed to the ground.



**At least 170 people were killed and more than 70,000 people displaced from their homes as a result of the ethnic riots.**



**Despite the intervention of the Indian Army, paramilitary troops, and police, the violence raged for months on end.**



On the request of local NGOs, a team of UNITED SIKHS volunteers reached the strife-torn state, putting up at volatile Churachandpur and surrounding areas. Despite facing difficulties such as inclement weather, treacherous journeys through dirt roads, zero access to mobile network, and a fraught atmosphere, we managed to reach some of the worst-affected areas and actively disbursed humanitarian aid including ration & food supplies, and medical assistance to displaced people.



**A UNITED SIKHS truck carrying essential supplies toppled due to poor road conditions in far-flung areas.**



**Despite the obstacles, UNITED SIKHS volunteers remained steadfast in their resolution to serve the Manipur victims.**



**UNITED SIKHS volunteers at work in Manipur.**





# PANJAB

The July 2023 floods in the Indian state of Panjab wreaked unimaginable havoc, taking lives, ruining infrastructure, destroying homes, submerging farmlands, & upending thousands of lives in its wake.

The figures, albeit alarming, are only partly indicative of the magnitude of devastation and human suffering:



**1473+**

Villages across 19 districts affected



**150,000+**

Acres of farmland submerged under flood water



**27,000+**

People displaced from their homes



**300+**

Homes devastated



**40+**

People reported dead



**200,000+**

Livestock lost



**6,000+**

Farmers lost their crop



**US \$1billion**

In economic loss for Panjab



**Our volunteers worked across scores of villages in the flood-affected districts of Patiala, Ropar, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, and Ferozepur, among others.**

Timely and generous donations from our supporters enabled us to:

- a) Provide food, water, clothing, tents, medical supplies, and other essential goods to flood victims
- b) Execute immediate rescue operations
- c) Set up medical camps across affected villages and towns to address and treat water and vector-borne diseases
- d) Distribute cash assistance to indigent families, helping them buy rations, pay children’s school fees, and carry out immediate house repairs

Given the massive scale of destruction, and consequent slow recovery of the state, we at UNITED SIKHS sought the sustained support of our donors to help expedite the process of rebuilding Punjab. Furthermore, we drew up a phased plan for utilizing recurring donations to overcome the short and long-term challenges caused by the floods.



## Phase 1:

**Immediate Rescue & Relief**

Carry out rescue operations, provide emergency relief supplies, shelter, & medical care to flood victims

## Phase 2:

**Step-by-step Reconstruction**

Rebuild homes, purchase livestock lost in the floods, run free medical camps for addressing post-flood disease outbreaks

## Phase 3:

**Long-Term Recovery**

Distribute seeds & fertilizers to affected farmers and support alternative means of income under Project Kirti





**Our work on the ground in Panjab has taken on the form of a continual, positive, engagement at the grassroots level that sees our volunteers painstakingly identify potential beneficiaries, stay in constant touch with existing beneficiaries, and maintain a steady line of communication with village heads and influential persons within village communities.**



**More than 5 months after the floods, our continued flood relief efforts under Phases II and III included running free medical camps across towns and villages.**

Furthermore, we provided diesel to farmers for operating tractors to extract sand accumulated in their fields in the aftermath of the floods. Diesel was also supplied to power tractors for building embankments around their fields (as a flood control measure).

Following the monsoon season, we distributed wheat seeds - nearly 1000 sacks of seeds - to farmers, ushering in the all-important Rabi crop season.





### **UNITED SIKHS' unique Seeds of Hope initiative serves a dual purpose.**

Given the ubiquitous problem of lack of access to potable drinking water, the UNITED SIKHS team has been identifying needy families that require water pumps and motors for extracting clean drinking water.

The UNITED SIKHS team facilitated the speedy completion of a Gurdwara in a village in Firozpur district, purchasing and arranging cement, sand, and iron rods. Village residents had pooled in money to build the village's first Gurdwara when the floods played havoc, stalling construction.

### **The Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha was subsequently inaugurated on Guru Nanak Sahib Ji's Gurburab.**

In adherence to Phase III of our flood relief and rehabilitation plan, we joined hands with the Panjab Agricultural University to organize seminars or knowledge programs across villages, for spreading awareness & information with regard to generating alternative additional means of income such as apiculture, and production of jaggery candies.



**The effort to rebuild Panjab has to be collective – your continued, stable support is critical for fortifying the impact and sustaining the pace of our initiatives.**



# YOUR IMPACT IN PANJAB



**160,000+**

Patients Benefited  
from Medical Aid



**1,000+**

Acres of Farmland  
Revitalized



**120,000+**

Meals Delivered



**1,000+**

Villages Received  
Aid Post Floods



**1,500+**

Cattle Supplied  
with Fodder



**500+**

Mattresses Distributed  
for Emergency Housing



**1,100+**

Small Farmers  
Received Seeds for  
the Sowing Season



**300+**

Areas Treated with  
Fogging to Prevent  
Disease



The impact you helped us make in Panjab has been no less  
than extraordinary!



# UKRAINE



Right from the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, our donors stood by us, enabling our volunteers to spearhead relief efforts within and around combat zones. The year 2023 was no different, and saw us stay committed towards serving the civilian population on the ground in the best possible ways.

**Multiple teams of UNITED SIKHS volunteers have been continually serving in Ukraine since February 2022.**

We saved thousands of vulnerable lives, setting up bomb shelters, and pitching heated tents for war refugees.

UNITED SIKHS' food trucks traveled to several affected villages, serving hot and nutritious meals to civilians enduring inclement weather, loss, and trauma.





**Hundreds of thousands of people in Ukraine have been recipients of our hot meal initiative, ongoing since the outbreak of the war.**

Our volunteers set up camps in the Shehyni & Kharkiv regions, distributing essential aid including hygiene & sanitation kits, groceries, medicines, and warm clothing to thousands of people in need.



### **Volunteers distributing relief materials at our camps in the Shehyni & Kharkiv Region**

In November 2022, UNITED SIKHS launched a first-ever 'train-the-trainer' program in which Ukrainian civilians are given military-grade first aid and emergency medical training (EMT).

The program was designed with the idea of enabling civilians to offer basic treatment to other civilian victims of war, thereby saving precious lives in the nick of time when there is no access to professional medical facilities.

**By training ordinary civilians to deal with sudden medical emergencies, the emergency medical program, Project Braveheart, has already helped save thousands of civilian lives in Ukraine.**

The training program includes, but is not restricted to:

- a) Arranging the correct medical equipment
- b) Treating fractures & wounds
- c) Clearing airways
- d) Giving protection against hypothermia
- 5) Demonstration of blood transfusion
- 6) Evacuating the injured





The year 2023 saw 50,000+ civilians undergo training, addressing the ever-present need to act quickly in response to the threat to innocent lives.



Our efforts in Ukraine garnered praise from representatives of states, including Governor Phil Murphy of New Jersey.

Additionally, launched in early 2023, Project Braveheart boosted the medical training program, calling upon doctors, paramedical professional volunteers, ex-servicemen, and even regular able-bodied men and women to teach basic emergency medical skills to civilians.



Project Braveheart is a testament to the stupendous power of community. It demonstrates how people can unite and support one another when a catastrophe strikes.



A session of the emergency medical training in progress.





# ICHRA

## International Civil & Human Rights Advocacy

The second pivotal pillar of work at UNITED SIKHS, ICHRA is dedicated to advancing the civil and human rights of minorities the world over. We are engaged in strategic litigation, trial observation, legislative reform, and policy advocacy in order to ensure equality, fairness, and human dignity as rooted in the Sikh tradition. The ICHRA team also engages in building the cultural competence of federal and State government agencies. In its pursuit of these goals, ICHRA represents Sikhs' voices before Federal and State governmental agencies in North America and Intergovernmental organizations internationally.

### **When we Fought & Won against the NYPD**

Giani Harmel Singh, granthi & head preacher at New York's Gurudwara Bhagati Ghar was framed-up in an incident which involved a violent unprovoked attack on him by a trespasser at the Gurudwara. Inexplicably, not only did the NYPD fail to arrest the culprit, they went on to detain the senior preacher, harassing, starving, & shackling him.

### **What did we do?**

The UNITED SIKHS' legal team took up the case of Giani Harmel Singh, bringing all facts to the fore. In September, the Queens Criminal Court, New York, dismissed all charges filed by the NYPD against him. Additionally, we have filed a Notice of Claim (a prerequisite to instituting a lawsuit) against the NYPD for its ill-treatment of the respected preacher.





**Giani Harmel Singh (right) with Japneet Singh, UNITED SIKHS Activist**

## **Fighting for Sikh Rights**

Indiana-based Sikh medical doctor Maninder Singh\* (name changed) suffered blatant discrimination at the hospital he worked for due to his ethnicity. Refusing to bow down or 'move on', 36-year old Maninder decided to fight back. He sued the hospital authorities, submitting a case before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Meanwhile, UNITED SIKHS was happy to give him the legal counseling he needed. We also helped him find employment as a resident doctor in New York City.

**In keeping with our unwavering commitment to the Sikh principle of Sarbat da bhala (welfare of all), all of ICHRA's legal services are provided pro bono to victims.**

Rated as an excellent worker at the Texas-based organization he worked for, 31-year old Inderjit Singh\* (name changed) was quick to climb up the corporate ladder, only to spark the jealousy of some of his colleagues and supervisors. They soon ganged up against him, dismissing him from the workplace ostensibly on grounds of 'underperformance'. UNITED SIKHS was quick to submit a legal memorandum on Inderjit's behalf which resulted in his prompt reinstatement at work. However, Inderjit chose to quit anyway. His case is currently proceeding to the EEOC.

California-based federal employee Ranjit Kaur\* (name changed) recently returned to work following a long bout of COVID-related illness only to be reprimanded by her supervisor for wearing a Kirpan (a small dagger and essential Sikh article of faith). Ranjit reached out to UNITED SIKHS and we lost no time in filing a legal memorandum. Her supervisor immediately stopped bothering her, allowing her to continue wearing her Kirpan.



**ICHRA is constantly working to combat the scourge of racial and religious discrimination at the workplace.**

In a shocking incident, Satwinder Singh\* (name changed), a Vegas-based high school student was suspended from his school after he was found carrying a Kirpan. As soon as we learnt of the incident, an ICHRA team of attorneys began working on the case with the community chapter in Vegas, the Nevada Governor, and the School Principal. The student was subsequently re-admitted to school.



**Thousands of Sikh children & adolescents in the United States continue to be bullied or harassed by peers, or suffer discrimination at the hands of school authorities owing to their outward appearance. ICHRA has been relentlessly fighting any kind of harassment meted out on the basis of racial and religious identity.**

In a rightfully publicized incident, a 15-year old Sikh soccer player Gurpreet Singh was humiliatingly asked by the referee to remove his Patka (under-turban) during a football (soccer) match in Spain. Luckily for young Gurpreet, his soccer companions, including the rival team members, the coach, and the families that attended the game wholeheartedly supported him. In a remarkable gesture of solidarity, both the teams left the field as a mark of protest against the referee's ruling. UNITED SIKHS wrote to FIFA President Gianni Infantino and requested Spain's Soccer Federation to initiate disciplinary action against the referee.



**According to a FIFA ruling, male football players are permitted to wear turbans during matches.**

Young Sikh Deputy Sheriff Jasbir Singh\* (name changed) successfully underwent training at the Police Academy in California. However, he was subsequently terminated on account of the grooming policy which disallowed the wearing of his beard and turban. Jasbir Singh reached out to us for help. The ICHRA team promptly launched policy reform advocacy at the Sheriff's Department, California. Soon afterwards, the authorities decided to change the grooming policy and even invited the UNITED SIKHS ICHRA team to provide policy (the kirpan has also been accommodated!).



Preet Kaur\* (name changed\*), a Sikh mother, wished to travel to the United States to donate a kidney to her son, a medical student who was forced to discontinue his studies on account of renal ailure. However, her visa was inexplicably revoked.



**The iniquitous decision could not have come at a worse time – her son's condition was rapidly deteriorating, even as his fate hung in the balance.**

Our ICHRA team took swift action to advocate her case, opening a channel of communication with the U.S. State Department, including a face-to-face meeting with the Department of Homeland Security. Talks resolved the issue and the mother was subsequently granted a visa to travel to the U.S. to donate her kidney and save her son's life. 35-year-old Simranjeet\* (name changed\*) from India faced abandonment and an uncertain future when her husband decided he wanted a divorce. With no work and no valid visa status, she got in touch with the UNITED SIKHS' UMEED helpline in desperation and distress. The UMEED manager evaluated the case & subsequently put her in touch with the ICHRA team. Our team collaborated with relevant firms that worked on her case pro bono, helping her gain the proper visa that allowed her to stay on in the United States.





**Simranjeet found all doors closed – except one.**

Simranjeet was afterwards able to enroll at a college for earning future work rights and building a stable future in the U.S.



**The UNITED SIKHS leadership at a meeting to discuss the surge in hate crimes against Sikhs with Gregory Meeks, Congressional Representative from New York's 5th congressional district.**



In November 2023, in New York City, a driver was indicted with a hate crime charge in the death of 66 year-old Jasmer Singh whom he pummeled in the head and called a "turban man". The hate crime charge was prompted by a series of advocacy works by the ICHRA team.



**66 year-old Jasmer Singh and his wife, Jaswinder Kaur were planning to visit their hometown, Hoshiarpur, Panjab, just days later.**

Earlier in the month of October, a Sikh teenager wearing a turban and face mask was assaulted on an NYC bus. The attacker allegedly kept punching the boy, tried to forcibly remove his turban, and screamed "We don't wear that in this country!" We met NYC Mayor Eric Adams to discuss security measures for safeguarding Sikhs.



**Mayor Eric Adams of New York City at a video conference with the UNITED SIKHS leadership; UNITED SIKHS has been making efforts to make sure every hate crime incident is investigated as a hate crime.**

In the Jasmer Singh case, we advocated with the Queens District Attorney Office & NYPD Office, presenting the necessary facts as well as the relevant cultural & religious context to help officials attribute the killer's mens rea (motive) to hate. The NYPD did not initially investigate the case as a hate crime, but afterwards charged the NYC driver with 20 counts taking "new information" into account.

### **Why Reporting Every Hate Crime as a Hate Crime Counts**

A hate crime – any criminal incident motivated by racial, religious, or ethnic bias – is a federal offense. Every such crime gets recorded in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Hate Crimes Statistics. This could potentially attract the attention of legislators in the U.S. Congress, ensuring greater stringency of hate crime laws. Additionally, the penalty for hate crimes in the U.S. justice system is typically more severe and enhanced, thereby deterring such acts in the future.



The UNITED SIKHS' leadership maintained constant contact with Subeg Singh (on the left, son of Jasmer Singh, lending support to the bereaved family.

In addition, we have ramped up our Community Empowerment & Education (CEED) efforts across the U.S., providing self-defense training and access to legal resources – via our confidential 24\*7 UMEED helpline – to help community members deal more effectively with potential attacks motivated by bias and hate.



Hate crimes against Sikhs – often a case of mistaken identity – saw a sharp rise in the last quarter of 2023, following the Middle-East Conflict.



### Self-Defense Tips:

- Be Aware:** Pay attention to your surroundings at all times.
- Carry a Personal Alarm:** A small device can deter attackers and alert others.
- Learn Basic Self-Defense Techniques:** Join self-defense classes to build confidence and skills.
- Stay Connected:** Walk in groups or let someone know your whereabouts

The UNITED SIKHS' Safety guidelines and self-defense tips poster

# Standing Up Against Transnational Repression

In a collaborative effort with other Sikh NGOs, UNITED SIKHS presented a detailed paper to authorities in relation to the increasingly alarming instances of transnational repression and threats posed to citizens in the United States and Canada. Our initiative underscored our unwavering commitment to uphold the safety and rights of those impacted by cross-border threats, highlighting the pivotal role of non-governmental organizations in fostering global peace and security. Additionally, we noticed an unexpected issue arise on Meta platforms: the word "Sikh" was inexplicably banned. This incident sparked concern and confusion within the community. In response, UNITED SIKHS promptly reached out to Meta for clarification. After discussions,

Meta acknowledged that the ban was the result of an error in their automated moderation systems, not a deliberate act of censorship.



**UNITED SIKHS remains committed to vigilantly protecting the rights and representation of Sikhs and other ethnic minorities across digital platforms**

Under ICHRA directives, a team of 10 researchers conducted research on the global state of Sikh civil rights across the world. Focused on 15 different countries, mainly the U.S., Canada, U.K., Australia, Panjab, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mexico, Kenya and Ukraine, the report shed light on the challenges Sikhs around the world are currently facing.





This unprecedented, one-of-a-kind report will provide a bird's-eye view of where Sikhs stand in terms of human and civil rights in the world today.

Relying on both qualitative and quantitative research methodology, the report is intended to be utilized for further advocacy purposes. It will be shared with the United Nations, foreign dignitaries, and respective governments with an aim of influencing international and domestic policy-making toward Sikhs in the homeland and in the diaspora.

## **Shaping a New Generation of Lawyers, Activists, & Policy-Makers**

Held since 2014, the Annual Humanitarian Aid and Advocacy Academy (AHAA) & Sikh Summit hosted by UNITED SIKHS is designed to give students and young professionals the skills, experience, and knowledge they need to pursue careers in areas such as law, human & civil rights advocacy, healthcare & education, international humanitarian aid work in disaster and conflict zones, & social justice causes.



**UNITED SIKHS Programs Director, Hardayal Singh, speaking to AHAA 2019 students at an interactive humanitarian aid workshop.**

AHAA affords participants a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to listen to and interact with acclaimed civil rights advocates, federal government agency officials, representatives of reputable civil rights organizations, professors, UNITED SIKHS leadership, and members of the U.S. Congress.

**Attendees are made aware of the major issues faced globally by Sikhs and taught ways to empower the community, helping them transform their passion into an abiding commitment.**



Held from 10-14 July in 2023, the annually-held training program took place via ZOOM as well as in person in Washington DC.

Involving lectures, interactive workshops, and networking events, the event is designed to forge partnerships and foster a meaningful exchange of ideas.

## At AHAA 2023, the attendees gained valuable insights into such subjects as:

- Sikh Religious Liberty & Articles of Faith
- Workplace Harassment & Discrimination
- Transnational Aggression Against Minority Communities
- International & National Litigation of Civil Rights – Evidence, Documentation, Recordings, & Proof
- Hate Crimes – Statistics & Documentation
- Fair Housing Rights
- Giant Tech & Free Speech
- Interfaith & Inter-Communal Alliances

AHAA 2023 saw experts like Congresswoman Judy May Chu, United States Attorney Ms. Dena J. King; U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain, and Director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Mindy E. Weinstein, speak at length on various issues.







**United States Attorney Ms. Dena J. King speaking at the AHAA & Sikh Summit**



**Ambassador-at-Large Rashad Hussain from the Office of International Religious Freedom engages with participants**

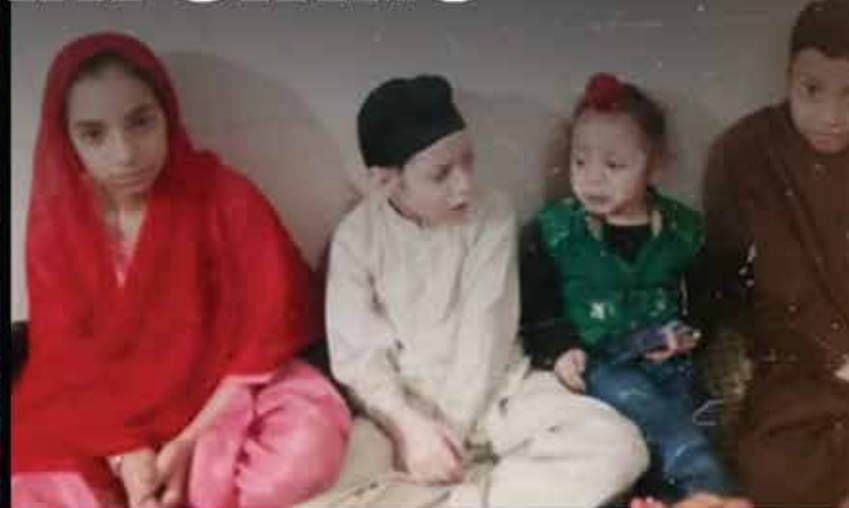


**Participants at the 2023 AHAA and Sikh Summit**



**Congresswoman Judy May Chu discusses legislative priorities with participants**

# Taking up the **CUDGELS FOR** **PAKISTANI SIKHS**



Pakistan's close-knit Pashto Sikh minority community has long since been under attack, with several Sikhs having become victims of targeted assassinations in the last few years.

On 31 March 2023, 45-year-old Sikh shopkeeper Dayal Singh was shot dead by an unidentified gunman inside his grocery store at Peshawar's Dir Colony market in broad daylight. He left behind a grieving widow and four young children aged 3 years, 6 years, 9 years, and 11 years.



**Dayal Singh's murder marked the fourth targeted killing of a Sikh in Peshawar in the last two years.**

Only the previous year, on 15 May 2022, Sikh shopkeepers Ranjit Singh and Kuljeet Singh were killed by unidentified gunmen at Batta Tal Chowk bazaar near Peshawar.





**Both Ranjit Singh (42) and Kuljeet Singh (38) left behind young children, aged between 4 and 13 years.**

Thanks to the contributions of our donors, we provided steady monetary support to the families of Dyal Singh, Ranjit Singh, and Kuljeet Singh, paying for their household expenses and children's education.



**Dayal Singh and his family solely depended on the income from his grocery shop to make ends meet.**

Additionally, the UNITED SIKHS chapter in Pakistan coordinated with the authorities –submitting paperwork, making rounds of various ministries, following up with government officials and so on – to get a relief package of 3 million PKR sanctioned each for the families of Ranjit Singh and Kuljeet Singh. Likewise, a relief package of 1 million PKR was announced and subsequently disbursed to Dyal Singh's family.



### **Sikhs are vulnerable 'soft targets' in Pakistan.**

Shortly after the cold-blooded murder of Dayal Singh, Manmohan Singh, owner of a shop in Rashidgarhi Bazaar of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was returning home on the evening of 24 June in an auto-rickshaw when two motorbike-borne assailants followed him and opened fire, killing him on the spot. Manmohan Singh is survived by his parents, wife, son and a disabled younger brother.

Just a day earlier on 23 June, Pakistani Sikh shopkeeper Tarlok Singh was targeted by assailants who shot at him multiple times and fled the spot. Tarlok Singh, however, survived, with an injury in his leg.



**The murder and attempted murder of Manmohan Singh and Tarlok Singh respectively indicate the mindless, incessant pattern of killing religious minorities in Pakistan.**

Meanwhile, our volunteers in Pakistan submitted government paperwork on behalf of Manmohan Singh's family. We worked to provide monthly monetary assistance to help sustain the family. Afterwards, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province handed over a compensation of 0.5 million PKR each to the families of slain Manmohan Singh and injured Tarlok Singh.





**UNITED SIKHS unequivocally condemns the hate-filled, religiously motivated killings of Ranjit Singh, Kuljeet Singh, Dayal Singh, Manmohan Singh, and many others in the past.**

Last but not least, UNITED SIKHS along with other Sikh representatives scheduled a meeting with the Pakistan consulate to seek the state department's intervention on protecting minority rights in Pakistan. We have officially called on the Government of Pakistan to ensure the safety of all its citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, and on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USIRF) to take note of the unmistakable pattern of targeting religious minority groups in the region.



**Children of Dayal Singh (above); UNITED SIKHS Director in Pakistan, Hardayal Singh, remains in close contact with the victims' families.**

# COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT



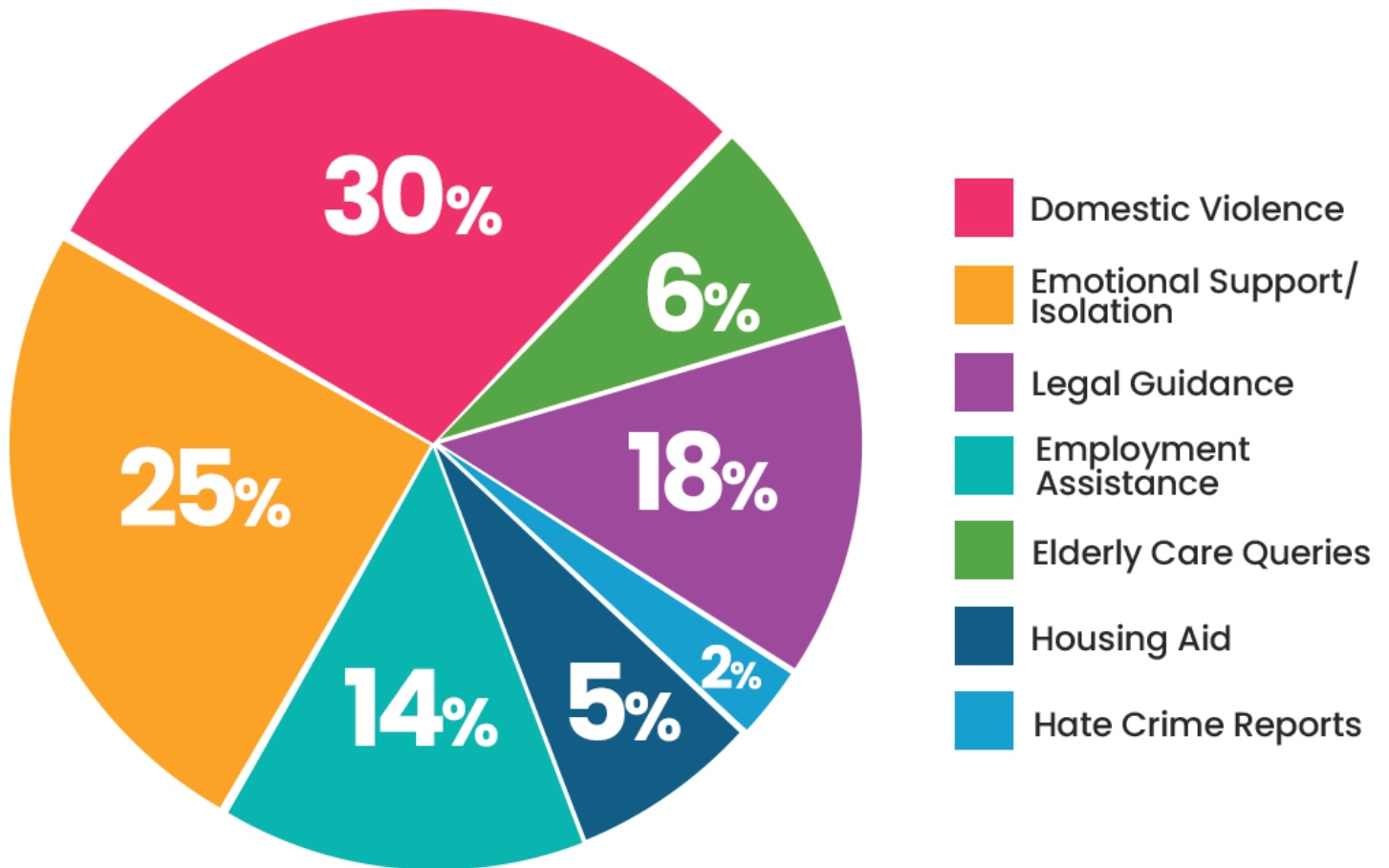
The third pillar of work at UNITED SIKHS, CEED, is about empowering individuals and groups such that they may attain their full potential and become active participants in society. Empowerment occurs largely through education, training, and community development projects. UNITED SIKHS also aims to encourage people to participate in the decision-making processes in their local community as well as take their place in the international arena. CEED also focuses on health promotion and disease prevention initiatives such as diabetes prevention education, nutrition workshops, and assisting community members in getting the right health insurance.

## UMEED Helpline

Launched toward the end of 2022 by UNITED SIKHS, UMEED, the 24/7 helpline is intended to provide any kind of help – social & emotional support, prevention strategies, coordinated services information – or resources to individuals embroiled in personal crises. It could be resources related to – but not restricted to – mental health support, senior care services, substance abuse counseling, domestic abuse counseling, and social support services.



# Analysis of UMEED Helpline Call Categories



The pie chart above breaks down the categories of calls UMEED received in 2023.

We're here to help find you the resources you need

**100% FREE | CONFIDENTIAL | 24/7**

# YOU ARE NOT ALONE



**Given the stigma surrounding personal crises, UMEED extends assistance with 100 percent confidentiality intact.**

The year 2023 saw diverse individuals reaching out to and getting the help they needed from UMEED.

**We can help you find professionals & resources for:**

- Senior Care Services
- Distress Counseling After A Disaster
- Domestic Violence Counseling
- Social Support Services
- Substance Abuse Counseling
- Mental Health Support & Counseling

**UMEED is intended to help beleaguered community individuals access the channels of support they need and deserve to get out of difficult life situations.**

New mom 31-year-old Ritu\* (name changed) was saddled with baby caretaking and domestic responsibilities, but constantly worried about her parents and elderly grandparents who lived all by themselves, far away from her. Ritu's father was single-handedly looking after Ritu's ailing mother and his own elderly parents, leaving him feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. Having spotted the UMEED card at a Gurudwara, Ritu decided to call the helpline to seek support for her family.





**UMEED, which helps people find resources & professionals for 'senior care services' promptly addressed Ritu's problem.**

UMEED put Ritu in touch with a lady who would cook, carry out household chores, and help out the elderly couple with their everyday tasks. As luck would have it, this lady had lost her breadwinner husband a year before, and was delighted at the opportunity to earn a livelihood, just as Ritu was overjoyed to have finally found someone trustworthy to assist her family.

# HELPLINE

[umeed-canada@unitedsikhs.org](mailto:umeed-canada@unitedsikhs.org)

**1-855-US-UMEED OR**

**1-855-878-6333**

**Confidential And Free 24/7 Services**

**UMEED is a wholly community-driven program that runs on donor support & participation of community members through volunteership.**




Hi love ❤️. I don't know where to begin but I'll say- thinking of you! Through Umeed Helpline and you/your team I was able to pinpoint 2 different points of contact that my family is now using during our challenging situation! My heart goes out to you all for helping us during such a hard time. The services we found were able to help us through the adversities and for now we have found a temporary fix. Because this was through seva, you never mentioned payment or any sort of payback. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart at how mindful you were to our situation and also how hard you worked to help us get through this. My heart goes out to you! Thank you again. Just know, you have helped change an entire family's life.

**Ritu expressed her gratitude in this heartfelt message.**

Language Support

34-year-old Preet\* (name changed), a naturalized U.S. citizen, visited India to get married but had to return to the U.S. to give birth to her baby even as her India-born & raised husband's U.S. immigration process hung fire. As someone not very fluent in English and completely unacquainted with the complex and challenging process of U.S. immigration, Preet was at a loss, not knowing whom to reach out to.

# We will connect you to professionals & resources for :

-  Legal Aid
-  Social Support Services
-  Distress Counseling after Disaster
-  Substance Abuse Counseling
-  Domestic Violence Counseling
-  Mental Health Support & Counseling

The services are available for Peel Region only (Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon)

**It could be anything that's not listed on the card but makes for an uncomfortable, stigma-inducing conversation.**

Preet opted to seek UMEED's help. Preet was provided the free services of a professional translator for corresponding with and speaking to officials from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Today, Preet has all the support she needs to understand the legal nitty-gritty, enabling her to even guide her husband to navigate the immigration process better. UMEED made her family reunion possible!

## Domestic Abuse and Legal & Immigration Support

Abandoned by her husband and in-laws, 23-year old Bani\* (name changed) was left to fend for herself. Having newly immigrated to the United States following her wedding, Bani was suddenly confronted with the enormity of the situation – she was completely alone in an alien country, didn't know a soul, and had nowhere to go. Her parents, back home in India, were in no position to support her financially even if she were to go back. Her spouse-dependent, legally gray status in the United States only made matters worse. Lonely and afraid, she reached out to UMEED. The UNITED SIKHS legal team explored all options for fortifying her legal status, so as to enable her to gain rights to work in the United States and achieve financial independence.





**With UMEED, people in personal crises can get the professional support & resources they need, free of cost.**

The case of 35-year-old Simranjeet (name changed\*) has already been elucidated under the ICHRA section. While she had grown used to suffering domestic abuse at the hands of her husband, matters spiraled out of control on one occasion, resulting in him being sent to prison and her being left alone with her two young children, aged 6 and 3 (the latter is a special needs child). Although subsequently released on bail, her husband refused to support her, declining even to sign the soon-to-expire lease deed of their apartment.

With the prospect of homelessness looming large on the one hand, and a bleak legal future in the U.S. – she was a dependent L-2 visa holder – on the other, Simranjeet called Umeed which subsequently helped find her a co-signer from the community with a sound credit profile for renewing her apartment lease.

Afterwards, our legal team helped her obtain the visa she needed, allowing her to stay on in the United States.



**For South-Asian communities, domestic abuse is the elephant in the room. But UMEED is here to listen – even if no-one else will.**

Simranjeet subsequently applied to enroll at a reputed nursing college for earning future work rights and a stable, financially secure future in the U.S. for herself and her children.

Unfortunately, Simranjeet encountered another roadblock. While she did receive some state support, it didn't cover the full course fee. Simranjeet once again reached out to UMEED. Sure enough, UMEED put her in touch with a grassroots organization that was able to quickly do the needful, raising a

substantial amount of money for her educational fee. Needless to say, her reference by UNITED SIKHS eliminated the need to verify the authenticity of her claims, smoothly facilitating the process.



**With her admission into a local nursing college, Simranjeet has begun a new chapter of her life.**

## Mental Health Support

Mr. and Mrs. Puri's\* (name changed) young college-going daughter, pursuing a teaching career, had been displaying erratic behavior, indicative of signs of mental illness. She had been verbally and physically abusive toward her parents and had to be hospitalized at one time. A prominent and well-educated Sikh family, Mr. and Mrs. Puri reached out to UMEED. We helped them find a mental health professional who addressed their daughter's mental health problems in light of the cultural beliefs and nuances of the family and community at large.

Depressed and lonely, 25-year-old Amandeep\* (name changed) dialed the UMEED helpline when he had no-one that would speak to or listen to him. In between sniffles and sobs, he recounted his story of lingering loneliness – of having grown up in a broken home in India, of coming to the United States all by himself, of his banal routine consisting of pursuing a degree by the day and working the graveyard shift by night. A relationship with a girl in the U.S. that fell apart acted as the final straw, plunging him into an excruciatingly deep depression.




**Amandeep continued to regularly call the UMEED helpline, savoring the simple comfort of having another human being listen and speak to him, as a friend or confidante would.**

Luckily for him, UMEED made him aware of how he could make use of his medical insurance to seek mental health treatment which he promptly did. Amandeep was subsequently prescribed medication by the psychiatrist.

Heartbroken over his failing marriage, 42-year-old Narinder\* (name changed) dialed the UMEED number. He had earlier spotted the helpline flier featuring the line 'you are not alone' inside the Gurudwara premises. He shared how he had been in dire straits ever since his wife had left him and taken their teenage son along. The double whammy of desertion and isolation was causing him to question himself – was he truly a terrible spouse? Had he never been a good father?



## Potential risk factors for depression among US South Asian older adults include\*:

-  **abuse and neglect**
-  **social isolation**
-  **intergenerational conflict**
-  **acculturative stress**

**#SouthAsianMH**



\*Sayegh et al. (2013). *Clinical Gerontologist*; Karasz et al. (2019). *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.

**Both Narinder and Amandeep bore deep emotional wounds, exacerbated by loneliness. But the cover of anonymity granted by UMEED allowed them both to give vent out their long bottled-up feelings without the fear of being judged or admonished.**

Luckily, Narinder found the support and validation he sought on that UMEED phone call and felt emotionally unburdened by the time he hung up, free of the blame and self-contempt crippling his conscience.

In the summer of 2023, a disheveled-looking thirty something Surinder Kaur\* (name changed) was spotted roaming the streets of California City by Indian-origin Muslim taxi driver Nasir Ali\* (name changed). Nasir Ali subsequently bought Surinder a meal and dropped her off at the Gurdwara Sahib in Walnut, California, knowing she would be in safe hands there.

Married to a truck driver, Surinder previously had a thriving career as a registered nurse in Southern California. Unfortunately, she fell victim to a mental illness a few years ago, and was subsequently diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She went back to Panjab, India to get away from it all for a while. When she returned to the United States a few months later, her husband had left without a trace. Estranged and alone, Surinder had no option but to live on the streets, exposing herself to potential dangers.

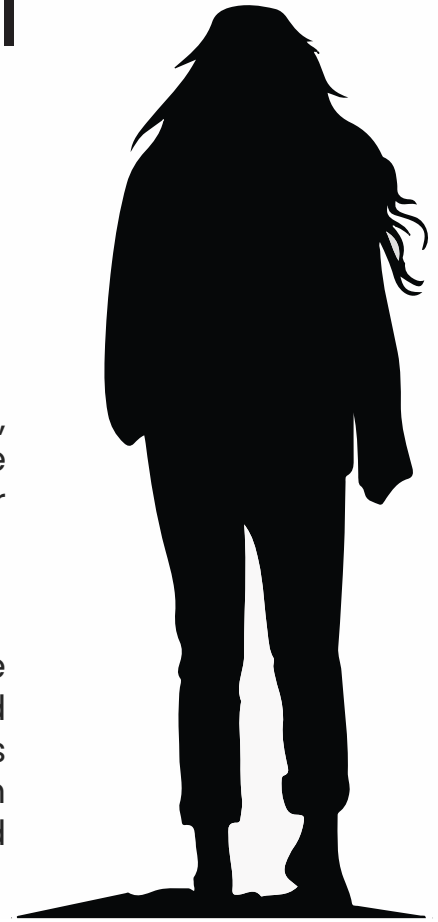
Surinder received adequate food and shelter at the Gurdwara where she spent the next few weeks. The Gurdwara committee later contacted UMEED and UMEED, in turn, reached out to an organization that specializes in helping South Asian survivors of abuse and abandonment in Southern California.

# UMEED became Surinder's final **RAY OF HOPE,** bailing her out of her troubles for good.

Surinder was finally placed at a shelter where she underwent treatment for her mental health. Furthermore, UMEED initiated the process of finding the resources she needed to renew her medical license so as to enable her to resume work in the near future.

## A Helpline for the Sangat

When the Indian Government enforced a statewide internet shutdown in Panjab in March 2023, the Umeed helpline served as a reliable bridge, answering hundreds of anxious calls and messages from diaspora families in the U.S. and Canada that wanted to find out if their loved ones were safe in Panjab.



**UMEED was flooded with phone calls when internet and cell phone networks were suspended in Panjab in March 2023.**

IMPROVING LIVES across the world!

In 2024, Umeed is all set to mark new beginnings in new places, and touch & transform many more lives beyond the United States.

In Australia, as a preliminary step in the process of launching the UMEED helpline, the UNITED SIKHS' director of the Australia chapter has been applying for grants. This is important for obtaining funding because the Australian Government provides grants to non-government organizations (NGOs) to deliver community service and development programs. Meanwhile, the team is also conducting precursory activities such as engaging with the Sikh and South-Asian community – mothers, adolescents, kids, and the elderly – to grasp their problems, and recruit volunteers to spread the word about UMEED among them. Additionally, a string of hybrid seminars on sensitive issues such as bullying at school, mental health, and domestic violence are also in the pipeline.

**HAVING TROUBLE  
REACHING YOUR  
LOVED ONES IN  
PUNJAB?**



642 likes

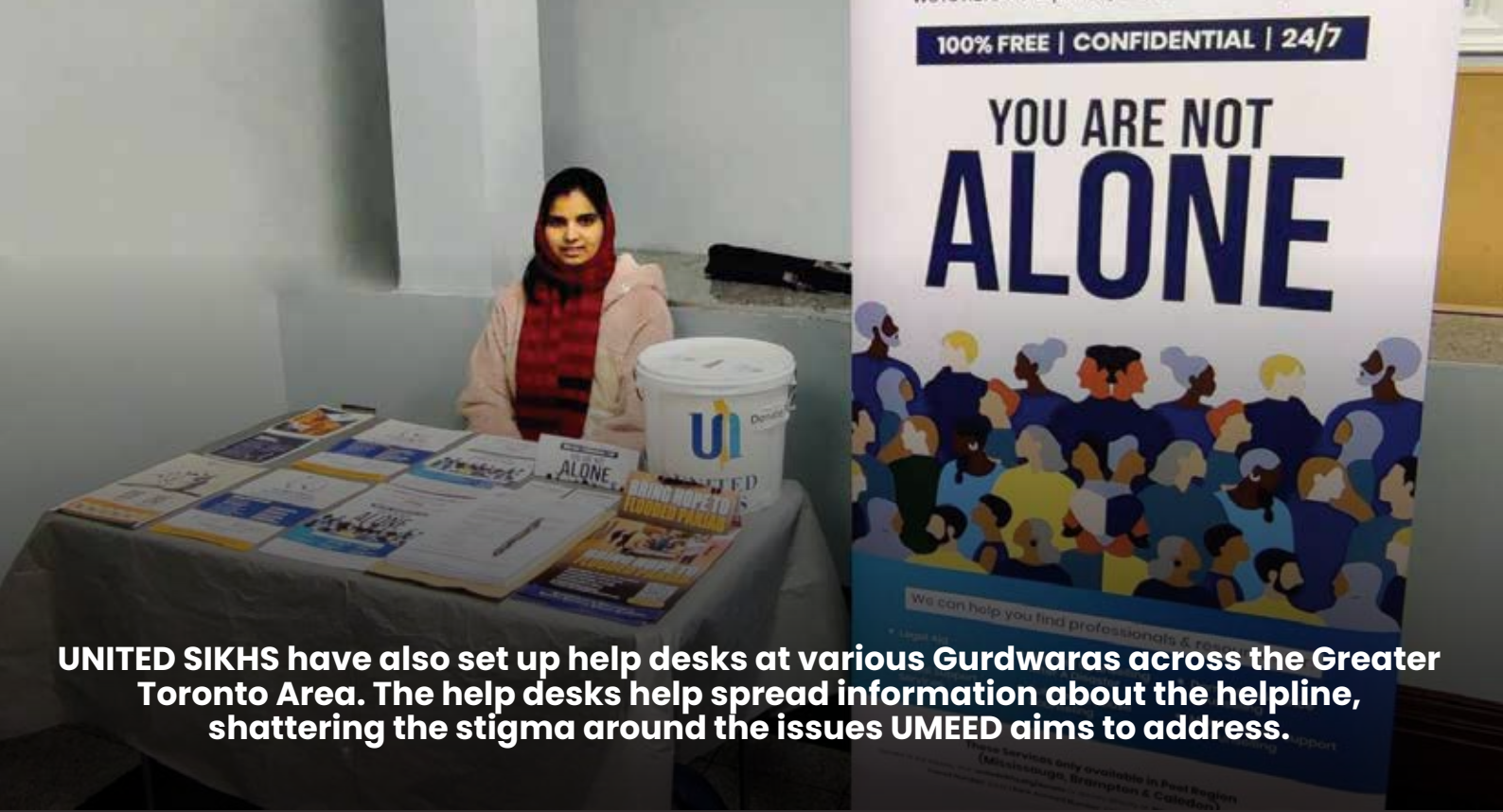
**unitedsikhs** Due to intermittent internet blackouts in Punjab, several families residing outside India have expressed concerns about their inability to communicate with their loved ones in the region.

If you are facing difficulties in connecting with your friends or family in Punjab, we kindly request you to fill out the form available with the link in bio. UNITED SIKHS will help in locating them to the best of our ability.

**#UNITEDSIKHS #ConnectingFamilies #Punjab #India**

[View all 12 comments](#)





**UNITED SIKHS have also set up help desks at various Gurdwaras across the Greater Toronto Area. The help desks help spread information about the helpline, shattering the stigma around the issues UMEED aims to address.**

Additionally, videos based on taboo subjects such as mental health, marital conflict, and substance abuse are being created and circulated across social media platforms to disseminate awareness regarding UMEED.

A UNITED SIKHS help desk in the United Kingdom – set up every Tuesday at the Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha at Park Avenue, Southall – is not an official extension of the UMEED helpline. Yet, it has been assisting people within and outside the community since as far back as 2008. Best known for facilitating the voluntary return of undocumented Indians and Pakistanis to their home country with dignity, the help desk is an official partner of the U.K. Home Office with a 2009 memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between UNITED SIKHS and the Government of U.K.



For more than a decade, Miss Narpinder Mann, Community Projects Coordinator of the UNITED SIKHS U.K. Chapter, has been acting as a crucial link between the Immigration Enforcement (IE) and migrants, counseling, taking care of paperwork, and making travel arrangements.



The help desk also attends to the wider social and psychological needs of community members.



# PROJECT KIRTI

Project Kirti was launched by the UNITED SIKHS India Chapter on 31st January 2023 in Ludhiana, Panjab, India. UNITED SIKHS' latest initiative to lift the poor out of abject poverty, Project Kirti has a key objective – to instill economic self-reliance by giving severely disadvantaged individuals access to tangible and sustainable income-generating resources such as Electric rickshaws, welding sets, sewing machines, and juice carts.

While UNITED SIKHS makes an initial down payment to the bank for obtaining their equipment, the beneficiaries are required to make the rest of the payment for the purchase from their earnings via EMI's.

With the COVID-19 pandemic having reversed progress in areas of decent work and employment, Project Kirti is in line with a key UN sustainable development goal as enumerated in its Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 – to promote sustainable economic growth and full, productive, and decent employment for all.

Panjabi celebrity actor and long-time UNITED SIKHS associate Gurpreet Singh Ghuggi participated in the launch event, which saw the distribution of equipment among selected individuals and families.

ਕਿਰਤ ਵਿਰਤ ਕਰਿ ਧਰਮੁ ਦੀ ਲੈ  
ਪਰਸਾਦ ਆਣਿ ਵਰਤੰਦਾ  
(Earn righteous livelihood & distribute  
hard-earned meal amongst the needy)  
**'Kirti Hon Te Maan'**  
Jan 31, 2023 | 4 to 7 PM  
Phase-1 Market Dugri, Ludhiana  
S. Gurpreet Singh Ghuggi will give a  
clarion call for this campaign

Since it was launched, Project Kirti has helped scores of indigent but industrious individuals across Delhi and Panjab earn an honest and honorable livelihood by giving them access to income-generating resources.





**In keeping with the Sikh ethic, the idea of Kirti – derived from kirat or hard work – is to encourage people to embrace diligence and dignity as a way of life.**

A survivor of the scarcely-remembered January 1989 Jammu anti-Sikh riots, 55-year old Jaskirat Singh\* (name changed) had long since been single-handedly shouldering the responsibility of two families – his own and that of his brother who had been killed in the riots. Unfortunately, his health had rapidly deteriorated in recent years, and he struggled to make ends meet.

**Despite nearing his sunset years, there was no way Jaskirat Singh could savor the luxury of retirement.**

Project Kirti came to his rescue, arranging a bank loan and a down payment to help him obtain his very own e-rickshaw – a battery-operated vehicle used to transport passengers. Although Jaskirat still has to go to work, he now enjoys the relative comfort of having a stable and less taxing source of livelihood.



A father of two, 33-year-old Harnam Singh\* (name changed) worked for a small private enterprise which closed down during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving him broke and unemployed. While Harnam received some help from UNITED SIKHS at the time, it wasn't easy as he had to work multiple odd jobs to try and cobble together a decent livelihood. Finally, UNITED SIKHS' Project Kirti lent a hand, taking out a bank loan in his name and making a down payment to help him obtain his own e-rickshaw.



**Today, Harnam is deeply thankful because he has a stable source of income. He is determined to work hard and pay off his EMIs.**

37-year-old Kawalpreet Kaur\* (name changed) and her family were going through difficult times. Following a debilitating spinal injury, her husband had been unable to work, leaving the family in dire straits. The mother of two school-going children finally received help through Project Kirti – two sewing machines she could use to earn a decent living for her family.

**Kawalpreet no longer has to worry about arranging money for square meals.**

In November 2023, the UNITED SIKHS team in Panjab found out about 34-year-old Resham Kaur\* (name changed), a mother of two, whose husband had died several months earlier from complications arising out of drug abuse. He had mortgaged off the only piece of land they owned, a 2-acre farm, forcing Resham to take out a loan from a local moneylender for funding medical procedures related to an ulcer in her stomach. Resham's loan was subsequently paid off, enabling her to secure the release of her land.



**Timely financial aid from Project Kirti saved Resham and her children from a life of potential destitution,**

In addition to empowering poor households through income-generating resources, several young women too have benefited from Project Kirti. Hailing from families that lack the wherewithal to pay for their children's education, these daughters are given access to education, educational materials, or both.

# PROJECT KIRTI EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE



**Project Kirti is aimed at breaking the cycle of generational poverty by giving the underprivileged access to education and income.**



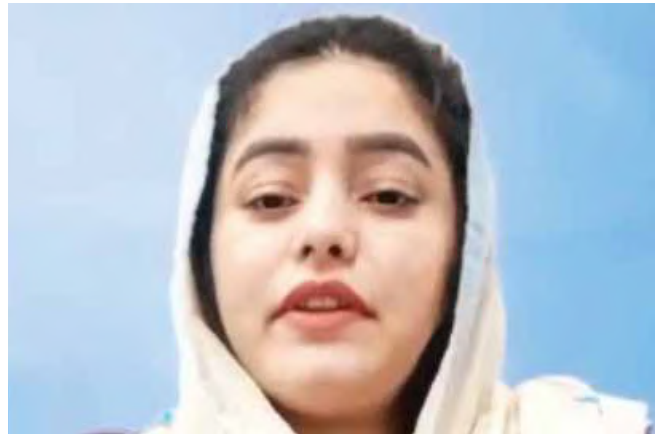
Be it young female civil service aspirants or deserving girl students desirous of equipping themselves with technical job-ready skills, Project Kirti has been helping them gain immediate, meaningful employment by funding:

- UPSC & other competitive examination coaching fees
- Vocational course fees (Diplomas, Google Certification Courses, and the like)
- Laptop
- Wi-Fi expenses
- Books & stationery

46-year-old Gurmeet Singh\* (name changed), a landless laborer and father of three, lost his right hand in a factory accident two years ago, plunging the family into desperate poverty. His wife works at a school, earning a meager salary of INR 3000 (US\$36) a month. On learning of the family's penurious condition, we immediately decided to sponsor the education of his daughter, presently in the 12th grade. Gurmeet was also provided with a tricycle cart to sell vegetables at the village square.

Daughter of a daily-wage laborer, 23-year-old Arshdeep Kaur\* (name changed) aspired to become a professional cosmetologist. But with her father's meager earnings & familial responsibilities – she has two other siblings including a physically challenged brother – she could not afford the steep course fees. Luckily, she came to know of Project Kirti and received the requisite financial assistance.

**Having enrolled in the course, Arshdeep now looks forward to a bright future.**



# Meet & Greet *with* Gurpreet Ghuggi

## Talk, Laugh & Be Inspired

Grab your chance to meet the one and only, Gurpreet Ghuggi, and support the fundraising activity for Project Kirti, a UNITED SIKHS initiative to bring economic self-reliance in Panjab!

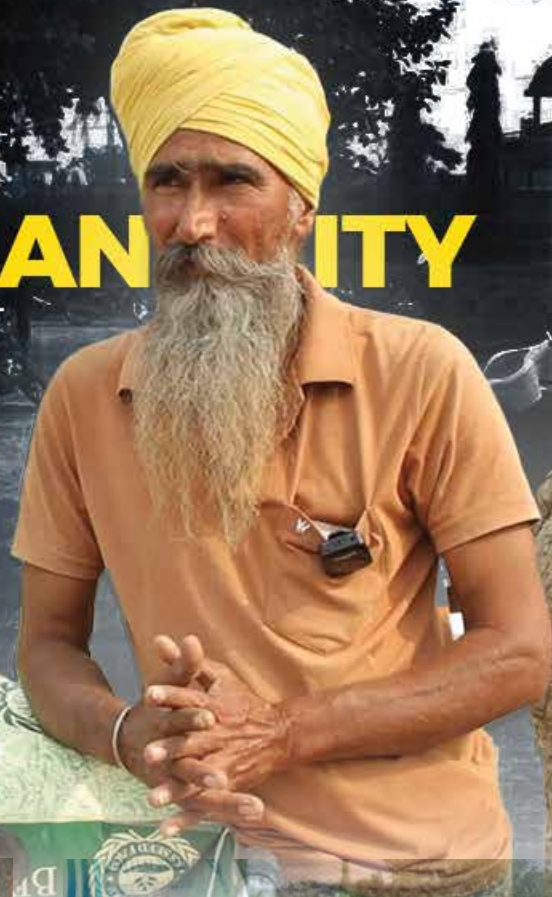


In April 2023, local supporters of UNITED SIKHS organized a string of fundraising dinners for raising funds for Project Kirti. Held in Florida, Dallas, and New York, each was an exclusive meet-and-greet event with the iconic Panjabi actor and comedian Gurpreet Ghuggi.

# YOUR IMPACT: SERVING HUMANITY

## SINCE 1999

A multitude of **impactful projects across the globe**, touching lives in the USA, Canada, India, Africa, Australia, UK, Kenya, Ukraine, & beyond.



**6,000,000+**

Lives impacted



**10,000,000+**

Meals served



**300,000+**

People served & impacted with legal aid & advocacy initiatives



**10,000+**

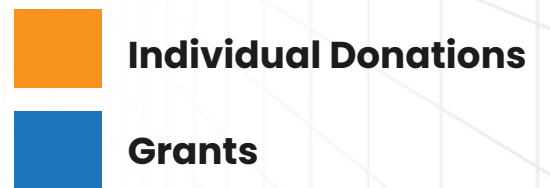
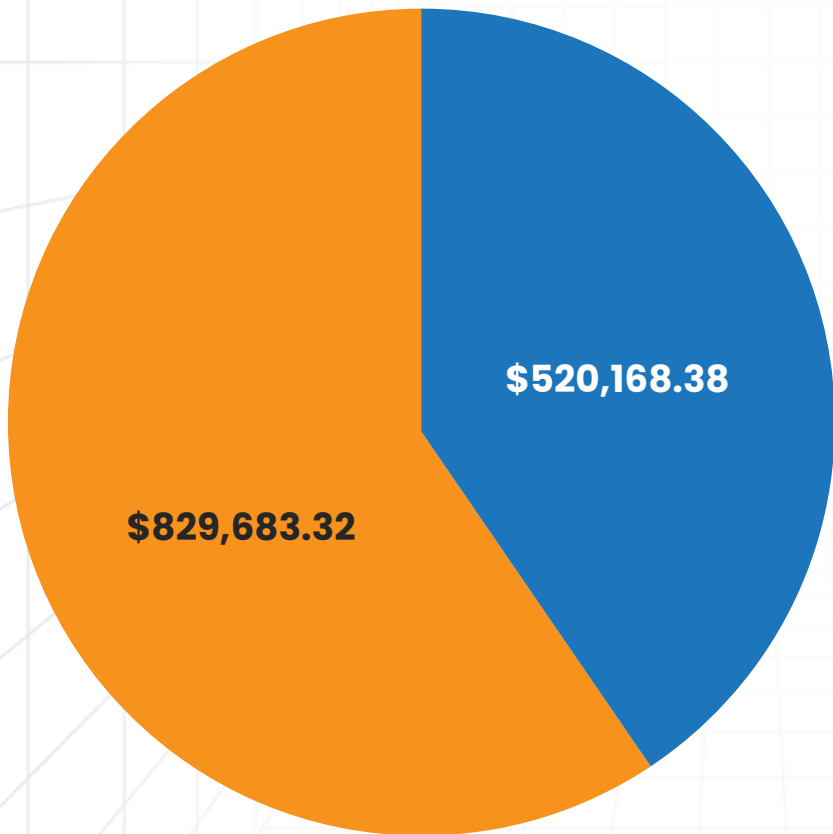
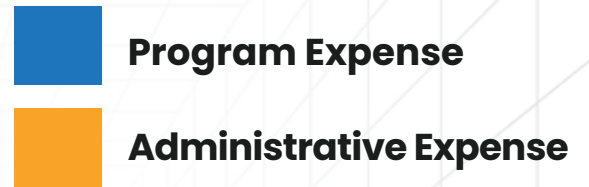
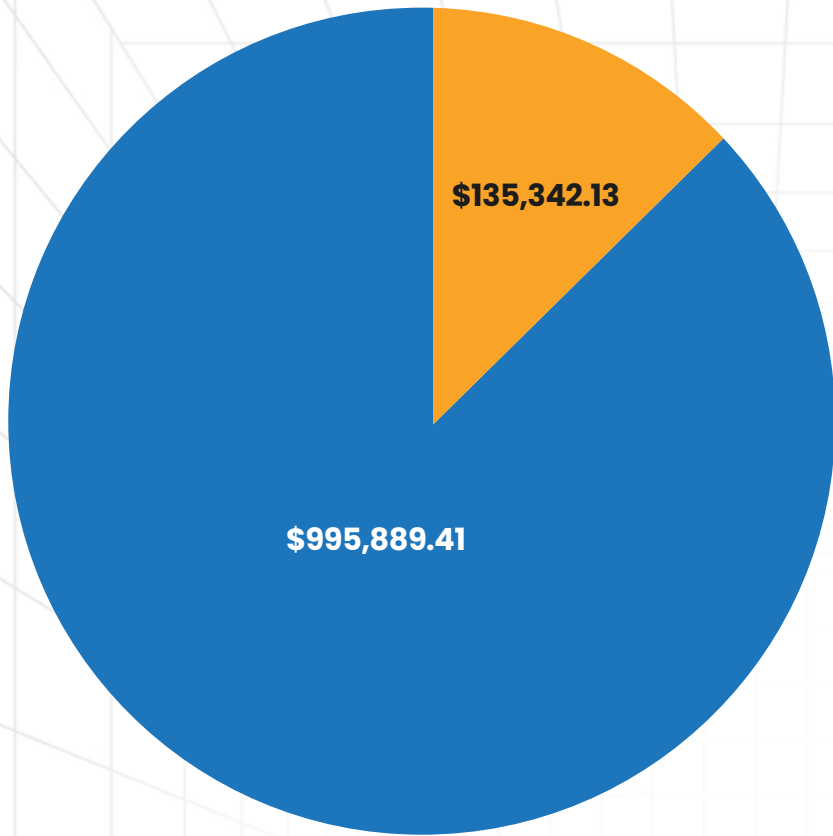
Patients treated in medical camps

## Our Chapters



It's been a long journey, strewn with both many challenges and many achievements.





After a decade of efforts by our legal teams, 2020 marked a turning point for Sikhs and the U.S. Census. For the first time ever, the U.S. Bureau of the Census updated its race and ethnicity code list to include “Sikh” as a population group within the Asian racial category, affording Sikh Americans an unprecedented opportunity to advocate for their own community.

That year was extraordinary for yet another reason. In 2020, the rampaging coronavirus prompted our most intensive & expansive relief efforts ever. We set up an emergency hotline in North America to serve the most vulnerable, distributed masks worth \$2 million, delivered 1.5 million meals across the U.S., set up free COVID-19 testing centers, and served at 100+ hospitals. Thanks to donors and volunteers stepping in, our sewa spanned several nations – India, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Malaysia – shaping a global coordinated emergency response unprecedented in scale, scope, and speed.

Our pandemic-related relief efforts continued through 2021, particularly when a second deadly wave inundated India. We then adopted a UN-recommended multi-pronged approach to tackle disease, hunger, and poverty.

In 2021, UNITED SIKHS also rescued and rehabilitated Afghan Minorities when the Taliban took over Afghanistan, plunging the country into turmoil, and imperiling the lives of minority Afghan Sikhs & Hindus. Our emergency response teams provided constant support to the fleeing Sikh & Hindu families, even as a 24/7 help desk was set up in India to assist arriving Afghan refugees with their immediate needs. UNITED SIKHS facilitated the evacuation of scores of families, eventually securing asylum for 141 Afghan minority refugees in Mexico following months of intense legal advocacy.

All of 2022 saw us spearheading an unprecedented humanitarian crusade in war-torn Ukraine. The same year, we restarted the UMEED helpline to give community members free access to resources and professionals for addressing taboo issues, from domestic violence to substance abuse.

And looking back on 2023, I can't help but mention the launch of Project Kirti by the UNITED SIKHS India chapter. Based on promoting economic self-reliance, Project Kirti embodies both a celebration and fulfillment of 'Kirat', one of the pillars of the Sikh faith. By meeting a key UN sustainable development goal on the one hand, and helping marginalized groups embrace the value of 'kirat' on the other, Project Kirti is uplifting lives every day!

As much as the optimism with which we usher in 2024, there is no telling how the months to follow will unfold. The world is already hurting – what with wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and Yemen – and millions of people continue to live in abject poverty and inhumane conditions. Much remains to be done towards minority civil rights. The sangat also needs help, be it flood-hit Panjab or elsewhere.

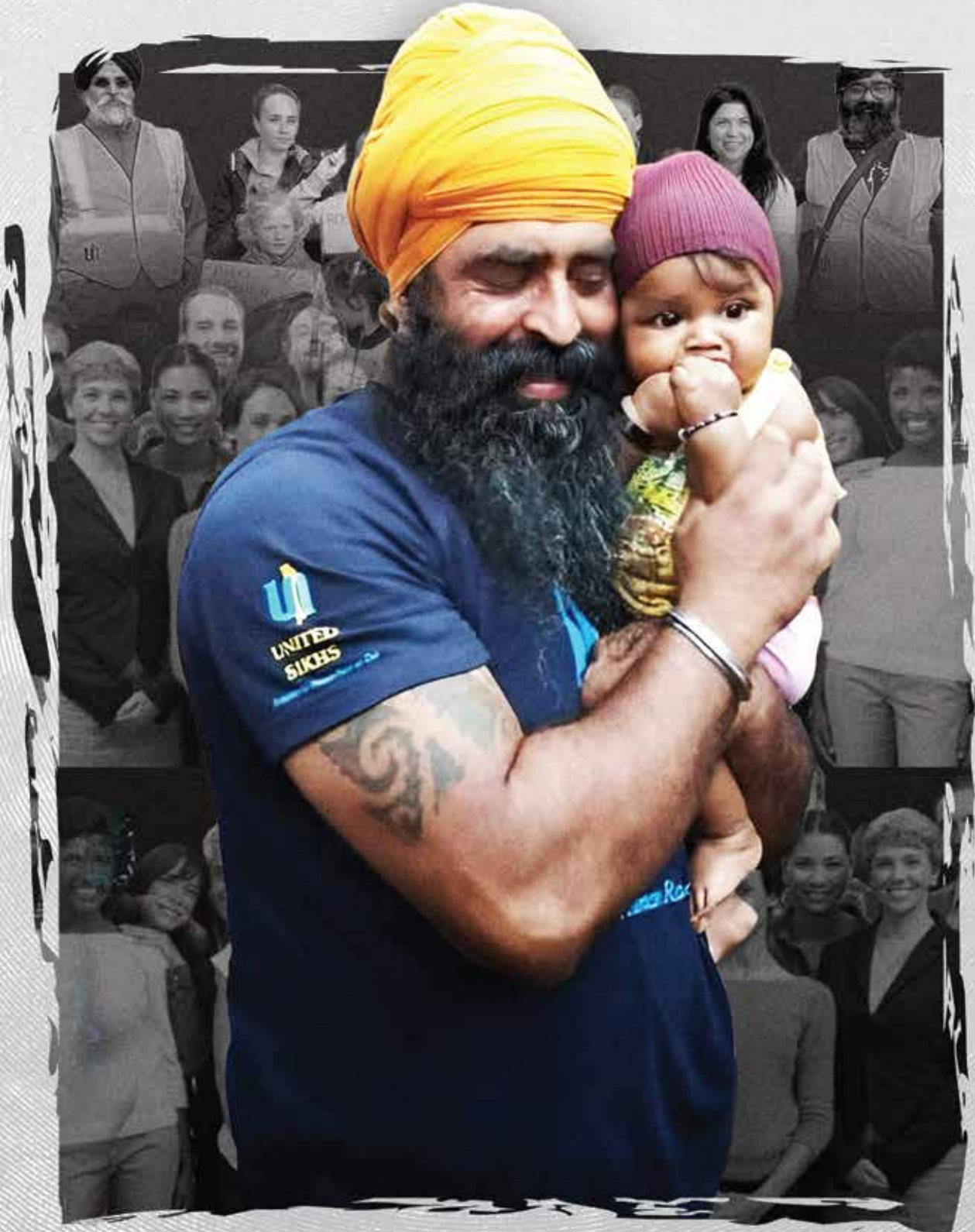
You, our donors, have made a remarkable journey possible and I earnestly hope and pray you will steadfastly stand with us in this 25th year, as well as the decades to follow! It is your collective goodness that has transformed so many lives and made so much healing possible over the years! Your support is indispensable if we are to enhance and expand our good works. You form the lifeblood of UNITED SIKHS – your generosity inspires us, sparking in us the desire to be the best we can be!

Gratefully yours,  
Gurvinder Singh, UNITED SIKHS



# Thank you

**for becoming a part of our  
transformative mission.**



**Together, let us continue to aid, advocate, educate, and protect underprivileged  
and minority communities worldwide through actionable compassion.**