

# quarterly

Responsible for monitoring progress and strategic direction of the Sikh Manifesto over the next five years

**The Sikh Network marks 3 years since the launch of the highly acclaimed 10-point Sikh Manifesto published in January 2015, this past year in particular has seen significant progress on the manifesto priorities working with key stakeholders**

## UK Government and Mayor of London commit support to the permanent monument to Sikh sacrifices in World Wars at Parliament launch



The Sikh Manifesto launched by the Sikh Network in 2015 had as one of its priority demands, a permanent monument in central London to mark the sacrifice of Sikh soldiers in the World Wars. An issue that received unanimous support from cross party politicians in the general election 2015. This demand was further supported by the Sikh community through the UK Sikh Survey 2016 (the largest and most comprehensive survey of Sikhs in the UK) which found that more than 4 out of 5 Sikhs felt the government had not done enough to recognise the Sikh contributions to the Wars and also indicated that 22% and 34% of the community had a family member serve in World War 1 and World War 2 respectively, which saw over 83,000 turban wearing Sikhs give their lives and over 109,000 injured.

**Early Day Motion (EDM) 708: National Sikh War Memorial** sponsored by Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi was tabled on 19 December 2017 and has attracted massive cross-party support from over 260 MPs. No other EDM has attracted more than 200 MPs in the current session and only 10 EDMs out of 900 have had more than 100 signatories.

Leading on this issue for the APPG for British Sikhs, Tanmanjeet hosted the parliamentary launch of the National Sikh War Memorial Trust (NSWMT) in a packed parliament committee room on Tuesday 30 January 2018 with a number of senior politicians and leaders from all the parties and chaired by the Speaker Rt Hon. John Bercow.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid confirmed government support for the campaign to erect a Sikh war memorial in London and said *"The part played by Sikh servicemen really stands out – a contribution that's all the more remarkable when you consider that these brave men travelled thousands of miles to fight for a country that wasn't their own."*

*"We are indebted to all those servicemen who volunteered to serve and fought to defend the freedoms we enjoy today."*

*"That's why a Sikh war memorial in our nation's capital will honour their sacrifice and ensure that this part of our shared history is never forgotten. So I'm delighted to get behind this campaign and ensure its success."*

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London also added *"Britain owes a huge debt to the Sikh service men and women who fought alongside British troops in the First and Second World Wars."*

*"I look forward to supporting the work of the new National Sikh War Memorial Trust in lobbying for proper recognition of these courageous individuals."*

The Sikh Network have been instrumental and supportive of the newly formed NSWMT who will oversee the project from site allocation to statue design and unveiling as well as drive a national education programme. This Trust has brought together a multi-talented group to lead this historic project and has also appointed one of our board members as a Trustee to provide guidance, direction and community engagement.

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi and the All Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs should be congratulated on not only securing cross-party support, but pledges of £375,000 from the Sikh community at the launch.

Jas Singh of the Sikh Network said *"This is a massive step forward to deliver one of the ten items in the Sikh Manifesto - A monument in central London to highlight Sikh Sacrifices in the World Wars. The monument when built will be a tribute to the sacrifices over 100 years ago by Sikh soldiers in World War One who were affectionately known as the Lions of the Great War."*

*"The monument when built will attract visitors from across the globe and be a huge public statement in the heart of London regarding the distinct Sikh identity and contribution of the Sikh Nation."*

## Scottish Sikh man Jagtar Singh Johal (Jaggi) abducted, arrested and tortured in India

On 4 November Jagtar Singh Johal affectionately known as Jaggi, was out shopping with his wife he had just married, when he was abducted by plain clothes Indian policemen, his family in the UK immediately contacted the British High Commission in Delhi and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. However Jaggi was not seen or heard from even by his lawyer for over 10 days until his court appearance on the 14 November, where he made shocking allegations of third degree torture by the Indian police, including electric shocks to his sensitive parts and body separation.



The #FreeJaggiNow campaign supported by the Sikh Network and Sikh Federation (UK) contacted over 200 MP's to raise concerns about the continued human rights abuses of a UK citizen. With political and community pressure intensifying, a Foreign Office minister stated in Parliament when questioned about the mistreatment *"The UK Government find it unconstitutional and offensive...and would take extreme action if torture claims are true."*

Jaggi has faced extreme physical and mental mistreatment, and the FCO to date have been unable to secure a private meeting with him, or an independent medical examination, despite the international campaign including politicians, celebrities, mainstream media and mass community support, the Indian authorities continue to hold Jaggi without charge for over 3 months and already 24 court appearances.

For more information and the latest developments please follow the #FreeJaggiNow campaign on social media, and how to contact your local MP to raise the plight of Jagtar Singh.

## Sikhs and politicians mark Guru Nanak Ji Gurburb event in Parliament



Guru Nanak Ji's Gurburb (Birthday) was marked for the third year running with an inspiring event at the UK Houses of Parliament. The Sikh Network, the Sikh Federation (UK) and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs organised an evening of celebration and recognition. The event was particularly important to the Sikh community, as it was the first Sikh event in Parliament following the election of the first Sikh woman MP, Preet Kaur Gill and first turbaned Sikh MP, Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi.

The event was opened by Preet Kaur Gill MP, the chair of the APPG for British Sikhs, who welcomed all to the celebrations. Preet was supported by Jas Singh of The Sikh Network, who discussed the progress on key Sikh Manifesto issues like better representation, Sikh ethnic census category and the public inquiry into the UK governments role in 1984 Amritsar massacre.

This year's keynote speaker was Dr Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, head of Religious Studies at the University of Wolverhampton, who shared Guru Nanak Ji's key messages of equality, honesty, compassion, and sharing. The speech received moving admiration from those who attended.

Other speakers included John Clifton of the Salvation Army who touched on the fantastic work the Sikh community were doing in supporting their work and was grateful for the opportunity to attend and express his gratitude. John touched on the Malachi Project in Ilford.

The event could not have passed without the mention of the illegal detention of British citizen, Jagtar Singh Johal, by the Indian police. Dabinderjit Singh gave a detailed account of the case and what efforts had been made by UK Sikh organisations to secure Jagtar's release.

Jagtar Singh's brother, Gurpreet Singh Johal addressed the guests with a heartfelt gratitude to the Sikh community who had come together and supported his family in their hour of need. Gurpreet gave a powerful speech which had many guests moved. Gurpreet ended with a call for unity amongst UK Sikhs, as Jagtar was not just his brother, but now a brother and son of the whole community.

The event saw a beautiful rendition of shabads (Sikh hymns) by three young siblings from East London, Har Rai Kaur, Jaap Singh and Hazara Singh accompanied by Everton Bahadur Young. With guests taking part, the atmosphere was very uplifting and powerful.

The event ended with an award ceremony to recognise particular individuals or organisations, which had done incredible work over the last year. The following were awarded for their contribution in their own fields of work. Contribution to Politics - **Preet Kaur Gill MP**, Contribution to Sports - **Sanjeev Singh Sahota**, Contribution to Education - **Tasveer Singh & Mankamal Singh**, Contribution to Business - **Monty Wouhra** East End Food, Contribution to Media - **Punjab2000**, Contribution to Human rights - **Mejinderpal Kaur & Sun Kaur** (United Sikhs), Contributions in Charity Selfless Seva - **Randhir Singh** (MLSS), Recognised organisation - **Basics of Sikhi** (Late Bhai Jagraj Singh), Recognised International Contribution - **Harpal Singh Cheema** (Dal Khalsa Punjab) and the Recognised Lifetime achievement - **Late Seva Singh Mandla**.

### Code of Practice for 5K's & Sikh Turban updated

Another key Sikh Manifesto item was the demand for a Statutory Code of Practice for the 5 Kakaars and Sikh Turban, this would provide much need guidance and information to avoid or at least reduce the level of discrimination faced by Sikhs in public, schools and the work place. With

the worrying trend of increasing cases of discrimination, largely around the Kirpan, Kara and Turban, the need for updated and improved guidance is become essential to protect and respect the Kakaars and Sikhs.



The Sikh Network team have updated the existing guidance issued by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to include new legislation and best practice from various recent cases and examples. This new draft code of practice was shared with over 20 Sikh organisations for review and contributions and was discussed at a consultation meeting held in Birmingham on 16 December.

The draft will be shared with relevant government departments as well as with the EHRC for their input, before final review and official publication and launch later this year.

### Sikh Network partners with Royal Society for Public Health on faith and health survey

**RSPH** Recognising the efforts and quality of the UK Sikh Survey, the Sikh Network were delighted to support the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) on request, in research investigating how faith affects health. RSPH is the oldest public health body in the world and a leading UK health charity, and wishes to better understand the health of individuals of different faiths.

We would like to encourage member organisations within the Sikh Network to share the survey and encourage individuals to participate. The full RSPH survey is available [here](#).

The responses received will go towards helping organisations within different communities make decisions about which areas of health should be prioritised, such as smoking or alcohol services.

It will also provide guidance on how communities can support their own health, and enable us to highlight success stories where social ties are strong and health is good.

### Sikh Network's Preet Kaur Gill MP appointed Shadow Minister for International Development

The Sikh Network are delighted to congratulate Preet Kaur Gill MP on becoming the Shadow Minister for International Development. The Shadow Cabinet is the team of senior parliamentarians chosen by the Leader of the Opposition to mirror the Cabinet in Government.

Not only did Preet make history by becoming the first Sikh female MP, she is now the first Sikh female shadow Minister in the UK Parliament.

She was promoted to the post of shadow minister for international development in Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's New Year reshuffle of what he brands as a "government-in-waiting".

"We had no Sikh MPs prior to this election. So, Sikhs had no representation and we had no female Sikh representation. Parliament must reflect the people it serves," Preet Kaur Gill had said at the time of her election.

Since then, she has had a busy tenure, being elected to the influential Home Affairs Select Committee – the cross-party parliamentary panel that examines the workings of the UK Home Office. Preet is also the current chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs.

### Update on the demand for a separate Sikh ethnic tick box on the Census 2021

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) held a stakeholder event at the QEII Centre on 13 December attended by representatives from the Sikh Network, Sikh Federation (UK) and Sikh Council UK who are all supporting the campaign. ONS confirmed at the event they had reduced the calls for 55 new ethnic group categories down to four – Sikh, Jews, Roma and Somali.

Preet Kaur Gill MP has had several meetings and discussions with Ministers and Iain Bell, the Deputy National Statistician in the last three months and is hopeful of a positive outcome later this year when the Census White Paper 2018 is published.