

October 13, 2016

District Attorney Mark Peterson  
Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office  
900 Ward Street  
Martinez, CA 94553

Dear Mr. Peterson,

The undersigned advocacy, civil rights, community, and faith-based groups are deeply saddened and troubled by the tragic assault of Mr. Maan Singh Khalsa on September 25, 2016. We write to express deep concern about this incident, and urge you to file hate crime charges in this matter.

Mr. Khalsa, who resides in Richmond, California, is of South Asian (Punjabi) ancestry and is visibly identifiable as a Sikh because of his turban and unshorn hair and beard, which are religiously mandated articles of faith. On September 25, 2016, at approximately 9:00 P.M., Mr. Khalsa was driving home and stopped at a red light near Hilltop Mall Drive, when a man in a white Ford F-150 threw a beer can at his car wholly unprovoked. Mr. Khalsa rolled down his window to question the man who threw the beer can. There were five to six white males in their late 20s to early 30s in the vehicle, who then began cursing at him. One of the men exited the vehicle and started toward Mr. Khalsa.

At this point, the light turned green, and Mr. Khalsa quickly drove out of the intersection and called 911. At the next red light, the Ford F-150 stopped near him again, and this time, three men exited the vehicle and approached his car. They began attacking him through the open window, knocking off his Sikh turban and hitting his face repeatedly. His assailants shouted, "Cut his fucking hair," pulled his head out of the window by his hair, and cut a fistful of his religiously-mandated unshorn hair with a knife. As a result of the attack, Mr. Khalsa sustained cuts on his fingers and hands that required stiches, a swollen black eye, damage to his teeth, and deep humiliation.

Although we understand that two suspects have been arrested, we remain concerned that the other suspects have yet to be apprehended. We also are concerned that the suspects who have been apprehended have not been charged with a hate crime. We believe that Mr. Khalsa was targeted and assaulted because of his actual or perceived race/ethnicity, religion and nationality, given that the attack was unprovoked and the assailants intentionally targeted his articles of faith when they knocked off his turban and deliberately cut his unshorn hair with a knife. Their statement, "Cut his fucking hair," also demonstrate bias and hate. Targeting a Sikh's turban and hair is analogous to targeting a Jewish or Muslim person because of their religious garb.

As you may be aware, Sikhs were the victims of hundreds of bias-motivated crimes in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and often face a sharp uptick in hate crimes and violence following terrorist attacks and during election cycles. After September 11, 2001, Sikhs suffered verbal harassment, damage to property, beatings, and even murder. Hate crimes against Sikhs have unfortunately not abated. Relative to other vulnerable minorities, Sikhs are disproportionately targeted for discrimination because they wear turbans and maintain unshorn hair (including facial hair) in accordance with their faith. Even in California, Sikhs continue to be targeted for hate crimes and bias based harassment.

It is vital that hate crimes are appropriately investigated, documented and prosecuted. Failure to do so silences and further marginalizes communities that experience bias-motivated violence and discourages them from reporting acts of violence committed against their communities. The Richmond area is home to a large Sikh population. The gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) in nearby El Sobrante has a congregation of over 5,000 members, some of whom fear that they may be targeted because of their Sikh religious appearance. Mr. Khalsa' trauma is shared by the Sikh community, and the signatories below.

We respectfully urge you to ensure that justice is served for the victim and his family by filing hate crime charges in this matter.

Thank you for your consideration and attention. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact Harsimran Kaur by phone at 510-659-7908 or email at [harsimran@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:harsimran@sikhcoalition.org), or Pawanpreet Kaur by phone at 510-953-4544 or email at [pawanpreet@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:pawanpreet@sikhcoalition.org).

Sincerely,

Alliance of South Asians Taking Action  
American Arab Anti Discrimination Committee  
American Sikh Political Action Committee  
Arab American Institute  
Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area  
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Silicon Valley  
Center for New Community  
Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation  
Council on American Islamic Relations California  
Credo Action  
Islamic Networks Group  
Jakara  
Korean American Bar Association of Northern California  
Maitri  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
MPower Change  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Community Network  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans  
National Network of Arab American Communities  
National Religious Campaign Against Torture  
National Sikh Campaign  
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Sikh Coalition  
South Asian Americans Leading Together  
South Asian Bar Association of Northern California  
South Asian Network  
Take On Hate

Cc:

Deputy District Attorney Simon O'Connell, Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office  
Mayor Tom Butt, City of Richmond, California  
Chief Allwyn Brown, Richmond Police Department