

Template last updated on August 11, 2021

[DATE]

To Whom It May Concern:

I wish to wear my Dastaar (turban) in a United States [PASSPORT / VISA] photograph. As a member of the Sikh faith, I wear a Dastaar for religious purposes. The Dastaar is part of recognized, traditional religious attire that is required to be worn continuously in public.

The United States Department of State allows persons of faith to wear religious head coverings worn continuously in public in United States passport or visa photographs.¹ This document constitutes my signed statement that my turban is part of recognized, traditional religious attire that is worn continuously in public.

For your information Sikhs wear an external uniform to unify and bind them to the beliefs of the religion and to remind them of their commitment to Sikh teachings at all times. These articles of faith distinguish a Sikh and have deep spiritual significance. They signify an individual's commitment to the Sikh faith and to the highest ideals of love and service to humanity. Unlike some other faiths where only the clergy are in uniform, all observant Sikhs are required to wear external articles of faith. The Sikh Code of Conduct, called the *Rehat Maryada*, outlines the requirements for practicing the Sikh way of life, including wearing the articles of faith. The *Rehat Maryada* explicitly instructs that a Sikh must wear a turban. See Ch. 10, Art.16(t), translated by W. H. McLeod: *Textual Sources For the Study of Sikhism*, Manchester University Press, 1984.

Unlike a hat, a turban must always cover a Sikh's head. Sikhs consider the turban to be a precious gift from their prophet and many wash their hands before they begin to tie it. The turban reminds a Sikh of their duty to maintain and uphold the core beliefs of the Sikh faith, which include working hard and honestly, sharing with the needy, and promoting the equality of all humankind. When a Sikh ties a turban, the turban ceases to be just a piece of cloth and becomes one and the same with the Sikh's head.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation in complying with United States Department of State rules, and allowing me to wear a religious turban required to be worn continuously in public in a [PASSPORT OR VISA] photograph.

Sincerely,

[NAME AND SIGNATURE]

¹ See <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html> and <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos/photo-examples.html>.