



## **Sikh Coalition's Policy Principles Regarding Civil Rights and Law Enforcement**

*The Sikh Coalition's policy principles regarding the intersection of civil rights and law enforcement are designed to provide clarity and transparency into our organizational positions regarding police violence against Black Americans and members of other minority communities. We will continue to assess and readdress these principles on a regular basis in our ongoing efforts to educate others (and become better educated ourselves) in the fight to end systemic racism and inequality in the United States.*

*Below, please also see a list of Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Sikh Coalition's work on accommodations for Sikhs who wish to serve in law enforcement agencies.*

- The Sikh Coalition endorses policies to demilitarize law enforcement agencies with respect to equipment, training, and culture.
- The Sikh Coalition endorses policies to require de-escalatory behavior by law enforcement in all encounters, including policies that hold officers accountable for the use of excessive force against individuals or groups.
- The Sikh Coalition endorses policies that end profiling of specific communities at all levels of policing, including improper surveillance, "stop and frisk," and technological tools that automate or enhance predictive policing. We also endorse increased documentation and public reporting on the disparate impact of policing on particular communities in order to eliminate institutional bias and racism throughout the justice system.
- The Sikh Coalition endorses policies that end the use of qualified immunity by police officers to escape liability in cases of excessive force and other misconduct, as well as policies that introduce independent third party prosecutors to review and charge criminal cases involving officers.
- The Sikh Coalition endorses policies and new structures--including citizens' review boards with independent and binding authority--that meaningfully increase oversight and transparency into both individual cases of police misconduct and the broader systems that enable law enforcement to act in improper and criminal ways.
- The Sikh Coalition endorses reallocating specific funds away from law enforcement agencies in order to bolster evidence-based, early-intervention social programs at the local level. These kinds of programs, which should better serve underrepresented and marginalized communities, may include but are not limited to: mental health crisis response, domestic violence counseling, education, and work infrastructure.
- While the Sikh Coalition recognizes the importance of specific cultural competency training to help law enforcement better serve the Sikh community and encourage the prosecution of bias-motivated crimes, we also know that implicit bias training alone is not sufficient for changing the way that law enforcement interacts with underrepresented groups. Accordingly, we will continue to evaluate training for law enforcement on a case-by-case basis.



## Sikh Coalition's Law Enforcement Engagement: Frequently Asked Questions

*The Sikh Coalition values community questions and engagement on all of our advocacy work. In our effort to provide clarity and transparency, we want to directly answer some of the most frequently asked questions regarding our work involving law enforcement. Please note that this information is not intended as legal advice. If you are in need of specific and immediate legal assistance, please contact the Sikh Coalition directly at <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/legal-help>.*

*Above this FAQ, please find a series of guiding principles regarding how the Sikh Coalition approaches policy questions regarding civil rights and law enforcement.*

- 1. Why does the Sikh Coalition work to ensure that Sikhs can serve in law enforcement?**  
We believe that the right to work in the field of one's choice without compromising the practice of one's faith is a basic constitutional right for everyone. Today, thousands of law enforcement agencies across the United States continue to maintain outdated standards and discriminatory policies that prohibit Sikhs from serving with their articles of faith (e.g. turbans and unshorn hair/beards).
- 2. Why has the Sikh Coalition dedicated resources to this campaign?** As a civil rights organization, the Sikh Coalition is committed to ending religious discrimination in every sector of the American workplace. Effectively advocating to end religious discrimination in an employment sector that disproportionately discriminates against Sikhs remains a component of our employment discrimination work because when law enforcement agencies reverse their policies, it further establishes precedent for all Sikhs to practice their faith fearlessly while pursuing any chosen career path.
- 3. How does the Sikh Coalition choose when to engage on law enforcement accommodations?** The Sikh Coalition does not proactively look for clients who want to enter law enforcement agencies. Like all of our legal intakes, our work on law enforcement accommodations is undertaken on a case-by-case basis. When we do take on a client who is being denied the right to maintain their articles of faith while serving in law enforcement, we pursue an individual accommodation with the understanding that it may be used as the model for a permanent policy change. A permanent policy change further ensures that we are ending religious discrimination for all minorities who choose to go into this employment field.
- 4. Why does the Sikh Coalition focus on Sikhs serving in law enforcement with their turbans and unshorn hair?** The Sikh Coalition values every Sikh contribution across the spectrum of potential career choices. The reason why our organizational focus is on Sikhs who want to serve with their articles of faith intact is because prohibitions on those articles of faith is the discriminatory practice against which we are fighting. Sikhs who serve in law enforcement without turbans and beards do not face the same challenges to equal access to employment based on their articles of faith.
- 5. Some in the Sikh American community are proud and excited to serve or see Sikhs serve in law enforcement; others are deeply critical of law enforcement agencies. How does this difference of perspectives affect your work?** As the largest Sikh civil rights organization in the United States, the vast majority of our work with law enforcement is



not focused on securing religious accommodations for Sikhs, but instead centers on holding law enforcement agencies directly accountable when they fail to adequately protect and serve the Sikh community. The Sikh Coalition has and continues to advocate on issues regarding better protection of Sikhs against hate crimes, religious rights violations, and police profiling issues. The vast majority of this engagement over 20 years organizationally positions us to demand that elected officials and law enforcement agencies better protect the civil rights of Sikhs and all impacted communities. To learn more about our policy positions on civil rights and law enforcement, please read the principles above.

*We hope that everyone can find a career path that they are inspired by. The decision to join law enforcement, like all career choices, is a very personal one; naturally, our clients who wish to serve in law enforcement are passionate about their choice. We recognize that every individual has his or her own perspective on service in law enforcement. Organizationally, we do not judge whether one should or shouldn't join law enforcement or any other profession, and we respect each individual's right to make their own career choices. We do, however, insist that all Sikhs across all employment sectors be allowed to do so while practicing their faith as they see fit.*