Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

Dear Sangat Ji,

Twenty years ago this September, the Sikh Coalition was created amid a crisis. In response to a wave of hate violence and discrimination threatening our community across the United States after 9/11, a group of sevadaars came together to safeguard the civil rights of Sikhs in need. Within a month, they had formally formed a nonprofit organization – the Sikh Coalition – to commit to this essential work.

Two decades later, pro bono legal support for Sikhs who face bias, bigotry, and backlash is still a cornerstone of our work to serve the community: we take on workplace discrimination cases in the public and private sectors, protect children from bullying in schools, fight fiercely for religious rights, and represent individuals who endure hate crimes and gurdwaras threatened by vandalism. But as the challenges and opportunities facing the sangat have evolved, so have we.

In 2001, our advocates walked the halls of Congress asking for meetings with any staff who would speak to them. Now, we have an advocacy team recognized by government officials at the federal, state, and local levels as the leading experts on efforts to counter and prevent both individual and institutional hate and discrimination.

For generations, our history and faith were absent from school curricula. Today, we have an education team who has ensured the inclusion of Sikhi in 14 states’ social studies curricula, reaching more than 45 percent of American public schoolchildren, and curated dozens of resources for Sikh parents to engage with teachers and administrators on Sikh awareness, bullying, and building inclusive classrooms.

Across the country, more than 280 gurdwaras were once independently working to engage their wider communities. Now, we have a community development team dedicated to amplifying and bolstering their efforts by training advocates, helping to build connections with local elected officials, and distributing a host of English and Punjabi-language resources about knowing your rights, sharing the basics of Sikh with others, and so much more.

And in this post-9/11 chaos, far too many Americans simply had no idea who their Sikh neighbors were. Today, we have a media and communications team committed to providing essential rapid response support in times of crisis and pursuing proactive features expressing the diversity, beauty, and resilience of the Sikh American experience.

It has been a privilege and an honor to spend these past two decades working on behalf of the sangat. Your collective decision to persevere with courage, strength, and unwavering resilience in the face of hate has guided the Sikh Coalition’s path forward.

At this milestone, we celebrate the progress we have made – while recognizing the work that we still must do. To continue pressing forward in 2022, it is critical that we maintain the spirit, the resources, and the talent to face the mounting challenges ahead and use our Sikh values to guide our actions. We need your continued support to help us achieve this, and we humbly ask for your continued investment in our collective work.

Chardi Kala,
The Sikh Coalition Staff and Board
A SNAPSHO T OF OUR WORK IN 2021

- 200+ free legal intakes processed
- 1st major federal hate crime legislation passed in 12 years
- 20,000+ messages sent to Congress on #FarmersProtest
- 20+ Sikh awareness presentations delivered to public and private sector organizations
- 6.1 million+ readers saw our front page story in the Sunday New York Times
- 12 states reached in legislative and policy initiatives
- 45% of all public schoolchildren can now learn about Sikhism
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On April 15, eight people were killed when a former employee opened fire at a FedEx ground facility in Indianapolis, Indiana, before turning his weapon on himself. The facility was well known for the extraordinarily high number of Sikh employees: Of the eight people lost, four were Sikh community members, and Sikhs were among those injured as well.

We honor the memories of those lost in this horrific act of violence: Matthew R. Alexander, Samaria Blackwell, Jasvinder Kaur, Amarjeet Kaur Johal, Amarjit Kaur Sekhon, Jaswinder Singh, Karl Ann Smith, and John “Steve” Weisert. We also continue to stand in solidarity with all those who were injured, lost loved ones, and must move forward with the memories and trauma of that day.

As news was breaking, the Sikh Coalition reached out to the Indianapolis sangat to support those impacted by the tragedy. Our immediate work included providing critical, free legal assistance on workers’ compensation and other issues; connecting sangat members with mental health resources; engaging with more than 70 local, national, and international reporters; coordinating a joint statement from area gurdwaras; making referrals for additional legal resources; and providing on-the-ground assistance with multiple community events.

In the subsequent weeks, the Sikh Coalition continued to work around the clock to collaborate with sangat members to call for a full and transparent investigation to determine if bias may have been a factor in the shooter’s attack; through regular communication with local, state, and federal law enforcement and elected officials. On July 28, however, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department and Federal Bureau of Investigation determined that the shooting was an act of suicidal murder.

We continue to support the Indianapolis sangat and reinforce why law enforcement did not sufficiently or conclusively address the shooter’s potential bias motivation; it is critical to recognize that crimes like these can have more than one motivation. As we continue to mourn the eight lives lost and support all those affected by the tragedy in Indianapolis, we remain committed to advocacy work to address the ongoing threat of hate against our communities.
In 2021, the Sikh Coalition continued to engage with policymakers at all levels of government to underscore how hate-based harassment, vandalism, and violence leave a deep impact on the lives of survivors, their families, and the communities in which they live.

In May, President Biden signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which includes the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act of 2021. In 2019, the Sikh Coalition was an original advocate for this bill – now, as law, it will improve how hate crimes are reported by law enforcement and better protect our communities. The Sikh Coalition joined President Biden, Vice President Harris, and civil rights leaders at the White House for the bill signing in May.

This year, we also updated Combating Bias, Bigotry, and Backlash: Sikh American Civil Rights Policy Priorities, our landmark policy guidance for federal and state engagement. The document details a series of policy prescriptions in all areas of our civil rights work, and the updates reflect advocacy victories in 2020 and new challenges for this year and beyond. Throughout the year, we have worked to advise the White House, Department of Justice, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, and other federal agencies on initiatives to combat and prevent hate crimes with a whole of government approach.

We also continued our fight for city and state level legislation, including by advocating for bills, engaging elected officials, fighting for Sikh inclusion on hate crime task forces, and joining coalitions of like-minded organizations in California, Massachusetts, Wyoming, and South Carolina. California saw two anti-hate laws pass in October, and Wyoming advocates continue to fight so that their state will no longer be one of the very few remaining without a hate crime statute. While many of these efforts have been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain engaged with sangats and interfaith communities to push for progress.

"The amendment named in honor of Khalid [Jabara] and Heather [Heyer] is now law to make sure that hate crimes are more accurately counted and reported ... It will provide resources to create specialized hate crimes units that will also help states create hotlines for hate crimes at state and local levels that will be accessible for people with limited English proficiency. And it provides resources for training for state and local law enforcement to identify, investigate, and report these heinous crimes."

President Biden at the signing of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act
FREE LEGAL AID PROTECTS SIKH AMERICANS NATIONWIDE

The Sikh Coalition received more than 200 requests for free legal aid between January and October in areas of bias-motivated hate, employment discrimination, religious rights, school bullying, and more. While we are often unable to publicize these cases due to ongoing litigation or client privacy concerns, there are key cases – beyond our representation of Indianapolis sangat members (page 6), Sikhs fighting for equality of opportunity in the military (page 21), Sikh medical professionals (page 16), and two vandalized gurdwaras (page 18) – that demonstrate the ongoing challenges Sikh Americans continue to face.

This January, Ishwinder Pal Singh applied for a position with a company that contracts security positions for government and private agencies. After passing all evaluations, Mr. Singh was denied a religious accommodation request by his employer, allegedly on the basis of a client’s policies. The Sikh Coalition clarified the relevant policies against religious discrimination and secured a religious accommodation on his behalf.

PURSUING A CAREER PATH AND PRACTICING YOUR FAITH FEARLESSLY

In December 2020, Paramjit Singh Sandhu, a Sikh truck driver, was instructed to report to a medical facility in Sachse, TX, for a routine drug test required by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Unfortunately, staff at the facility would not allow him to complete the procedure with his dastaar on. Mr. Sandhu rightly refused to remove his dastaar and contacted the Sikh Coalition; the following month, we secured a written accommodation for Mr. Sandhu.

BARRIERS FOR SIKH TRUCK DRIVERS: TEXAS DRIVER SECURES ACCOMMODATION

"[The Sikh Coalition] successfully argued that the client’s policies against religious discrimination would invalidate the prohibition against beards, and I was granted the religious accommodation I sought out for."

Ishwinder Pal Singh

"I knew that it was within my rights to keep my turban during a routine drug test... Thanks to the Sikh Coalition’s free legal advice, I was able to reach an amicable solution."

Paramjit Singh Sandhu

Number of Incoming Intakes from 2019 to 2021

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Nov and Dec 2021 data unavailable at time of print.
The Sikh Coalition also continues to serve as the leading source of legal aid for Sikh community members who encounter kirpan issues at school, work, or in public settings. In May, Simranveer Kaur was prohibited from using public transportation in the city of Cleveland, OH, due to her kirpan. After she contacted the Sikh Coalition, our attorneys sent a letter to the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA); in response, the GCRTA apologized to Ms. Kaur, granted her an individual accommodation for her kirpan, and requested that the Sikh Coalition provide a series of trainings for their staff trainers, service supervisors, security personnel, and all new employees.

Finally, the Sikh Coalition’s legal and community development teams continue to work together to deliver high-impact presentations that create lasting change. In April, we concluded a two-year engagement to provide trainings for Jefferson Health, a multi-hospital system that provides for nearly 1,000 patients and educates medical school students in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. This was just one of many such engagements with public and private sector organizations across the country.

Upon his incarceration with the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCCR) last year, Surjit Singh had his turban taken from him and his beard forcibly shaved. The Sikh Coalition, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the law firm WilmerHale submitted a formal written grievance on Mr. Singh’s behalf and secured him a religious accommodation to maintain his articles of faith. This May, we and our partners then filed a complaint with the Department of Justice asking for an investigation into ADCCR’s refusal to implement a policy change that would prevent further similar abuses of other individuals’ religious rights.

BEARD FORCIBLY SHAVED BY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

If you or somebody you know has experienced hate or discrimination, please fill out our confidential legal intake form:
www.sikhcoalition.org/legal-help
Phone: 212-655-3095
Our legal services are completely free and confidential. Attorneys are available to speak with you in English or Punjabi.
It is critical to recognize that, at the time of writing, these protests continue; the farmers persevere despite severe weather, disease, repression and brutality by the Indian government, and loss of life. We continue to support the protestors’ rights to demonstrate in defense of basic rights and human dignity.

The Sikh Coalition undertook multiple U.S.-based efforts to raise awareness and effect change regarding this historic movement throughout 2021, including:

- Mobilizing thousands of community members to send almost 20,000 messages to their members of Congress about this issue,
- Sending 6 letters from our organization to U.S. government leaders on the subject,
- Fighting for a congressional resolution to express support for the farmers,
- Facilitating and amplifying letters from more than 15 members of Congress to the executive branch and the Indian Ambassador,
- Providing draft resolution language for sangat members to approach their elected officials,
- Enlisting press freedom organizations to speak out about detained journalists and activists,
- Contacting social media companies about censorship and internet blackouts by the Indian government,
- Bolstering allied organizations’ awareness efforts,
- Fielding national and international media requests, and
- Providing media support to sangats organizing local protests and rallies.

It is critical to recognize that, at the time of writing, these protests continue; the farmers persevere despite severe weather, disease, repression and brutality by the Indian government, and loss of life. We continue to support the protestors’ rights to demonstrate in defense of basic rights and human dignity.
ADVOCATING FOR BETTER PPE FOR SIKH HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sikh Coalition has led the fight to protect the religious rights of healthcare workers. We continued this work in 2021.

In April, Sikh Coalition Legal Director Amrith Kaur Aakre testified before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on the civil rights challenges for Sikhs brought on by the pandemic – including the issue of personal protective equipment (PPE) accommodations for individuals who maintain kesh;

Following this testimony, the Sikh Coalition was asked by the EEOC and the Illinois Human Rights Commission to provide Title VII seminars and training specific to religious discrimination in the workplace, particularly those emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

In August, the Sikh Coalition provided policy recommendations to two federal agencies – the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health – on revising federal masking policies and calling for the availability and enforcement of alternative PPE to be worn by Sikhs, religious minorities, and other individuals as necessary.

NEW HIGH-IMPACT RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS

This year, the Sikh Coalition developed two new high-impact resources for professionals. These resources are available to download for free at www.sikhcoalition.org/resources.

Sikhism: A Healthcare Worker’s Guide
The Sikh Coalition has received many inquiries from Sikh patients expressing challenges they’ve faced in healthcare settings. Sikhism: A Healthcare Worker’s Guide includes information specific to Sikh patients and recommendations for healthcare professionals on caring for them in a culturally sensitive manner. The guide also includes recommendations for Sikh healthcare professionals on securing religious accommodations for PPE (see reverse page).

Well-Founded Fear: Understanding Legal Challenges and Best Practices for Sikh Asylum Applicants and Their Attorneys
Sikhs under threat of persecution face a complex legal process when seeking asylum in the United States; their legal representation, in turn, often lacks the historical, political, and religious context to fully understand their situation. The Sikh Coalition developed this comprehensive report in partnership with Stanford Law School’s Religious Liberty Clinic, Harvard Law School’s Religious Freedom Clinic, Legal Advisory Committee member Deepak Ahluwalia, and other immigration attorneys to address these urgent knowledge gaps.
The Sikh Coalition continues our efforts to ensure that gurdwaras are better protected and supported in the face of acts of vandalism. In August, Darbar Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji New York in New Hyde Park was damaged and vandalized with graffiti, including phrases like “this aint ya trap sandn*****” and “Trump 2024 Make America Great Again!” Then, in September, Khalsa Gurmat Center – a Sikh house of worship, school, and community center located in Federal Way, Washington – was vandalized and burglarized: Video surveillance showed a suspect breaking in, ransacking the divan hall, breaking windows and electronic control panels, and stealing equipment.

In both cases, sangat leaders retained the Sikh Coalition for free legal guidance. Local and federal law enforcement alerted to the crimes promised a full investigation, including the possibility of a bias motivation. We also engaged local media in an effort to help police find a suspect. While both investigations remain ongoing, we remain engaged with authorities and community leaders.

**RESPONDING TO VANDALISM AGAINST GURDWARAS**

In January, the Sikh Coalition published an expanded version of our Gurdwara Security Toolkit, which outlines resources and trainings provided by federal and state agencies to help places of worship minimize the risk of attacks and discusses security procedures, emergency preparedness, and recovery planning. You can download this latest version on our website; since 2017, the toolkit has helped almost 75 gurdwaras conduct security assessments.

Also in January, the Sikh Coalition moderated a virtual community forum specifically for sangats in California. Representatives from the FBI, the Department of Justice Community Relations Service (DOJ CRS), and the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services shared resources, tools, best practices, and financial support that exist for houses of worship. We then convened additional virtual community forums for sangats in Michigan, Virginia, and Washington in October. Attendees at these sessions had similar discussions with community leaders and representatives of the DOJ CRS, as well as region-specific representatives from the Department of Homeland Security.

**NEW TOOLS TO FURTHER SECURE GURDWARAS**

“At the Sikh Coalition’s virtual community forum, I heard from not only government experts on safety in houses of worship, but also sangat leaders who had successfully used available resources to help their gurdwaras prepare for potential security threats and emergencies. Sharing both experiences and resources is critical to making our communities safer.”

Mandheer Singh
After winning previous victories in the U.S. Army in 2017 and Air Force in 2020 that better enable nearly 100 Sikhs to serve with their religious articles of faith intact, 2021 saw the Sikh Coalition take on another landmark case in our 12-year campaign to end religious discrimination in all branches of the U.S. military.

In March 2021, the Sikh Coalition and our legal partners assisted First Lieutenant (1stLt) Sukhbir Singh Toor, who has served with distinction in the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) for more than four years, in requesting a religious accommodation to maintain his articles of faith. The New York Times featured 1stLt Toor’s story, including the historic partial accommodation that he was granted in June, on the front page of their Sunday edition. Unfortunately, 1stLt Toor’s accommodation remains incomplete at the time of writing; we are currently determining how to best continue fighting for his rights and the rights of additional USMC clients in the new year, while also still engaging with members of Congress, the White House, and civilian leadership of the military.

Though some parts of the military are slow to change, Sikh servicemembers continue to prove that maintaining a beard or wearing a turban poses no obstacle to capable military service. In May, we congratulated two former Sikh Coalition clients for being, to our knowledge, the first two male Sikh soldiers to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point while maintaining their articles of faith. As we keep pushing for branch-by-branch policy changes, we continue to believe that ending religious discrimination by the largest employer in the country, the Department of Defense, will have positive benefits for Sikhs across the public and private sectors.
Throughout 2021, the Sikh Coalition led Sikh awareness trainings for FBI field offices in Utah, Minnesota, and Missouri to equip agents with the tools to respond to unique challenges faced by Sikh Americans. In October, we also led a presentation on anti-Sikh hate and bias-motivated crimes for the Jefferson County District Attorney’s Office in Colorado.

We continue to pursue accommodations for Sikhs who wish to serve in law enforcement on a case-by-case basis. In these cases, we pursue an individual accommodation with the understanding that it may be used as the model for a permanent policy change in the future.

In October, a Houston area post office was formally named for the late Harris County Sheriff’s Deputy Sandeep Singh Dhaliwal. Deputy Dhaliwal was killed in action in September 2019 and widely regarded as a trailblazer for securing a first-of-its-kind accommodation to serve with his articles of faith in 2015. The Sikh Coalition was proud to work with Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher and the rest of the Texas congressional delegation to draft, support, and pass the legislation that made this honor possible.

In the final days of the Trump Administration, the Sikh Coalition fought last-minute changes to anti-discrimination policies that would profoundly affect Sikhs and other communities.

In November of last year, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) abruptly announced an overhaul of its guidance on religious discrimination in the workplace. In response, the Sikh Coalition rallied 50 organizations to speak out against the changes, submitted a public comment, called attention to the issue in media outlets like ProPublica and Bloomberg Law, and met with EEOC commissioners to urge a more inclusive process to revise the guidance. Unfortunately, the EEOC’s proposal was still pushed through days before President Biden’s inauguration.

While some of the changes the Sikh Coalition advocated for were included (e.g. providing certain Sikh-specific examples to guide employees and employers), we remain concerned that the new guidance could be harmful to many different groups in the long run. We will continue working with the EEOC to revise the guidance.

The Sikh Coalition has a long history of opposing discriminatory policies, both at the federal and state level. We have worked with a wide range of organizations to advocate for policies that protect the rights of all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs. In particular, we have been involved in the fight against anti-discrimination policies that disproportionately impact the Sikh community.

In order to ensure that these policies are inclusive of all religious communities, we have worked with organizations such as the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the National Council of Jewish Women to draft and support legislation that protects the rights of all Americans.

As we continue to work towards a more inclusive and equitable society, we will continue to monitor changes to these policies and advocate for the rights of all Americans.
In July, the North Carolina State Board of Education adopted new K-12 Social Studies Standards. Thanks to public comments and ongoing collaboration between the Sikh Coalition and the sangat dating back to 2016, the associated content and examples for these standards now include Sikhism. In August, the Sikh Coalition education team followed this victory with a webinar helping North Carolina parents and students learn how to engage their teachers so that this material makes it into classrooms.

In March, the California State Board of Education adopted the state’s Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, which included Sikh stories after months of advocacy. Beginning in March 2020 and through multiple rounds of public comment, the Sikh Coalition and the Jakara Movement rallied 52 gurdwaras, more than 1,200 petition signers, and a bipartisan group of state legislators to endorse our recommended additions to the curriculum. In October 2021, California also passed a bill – supported by the Sikh Coalition – to become the first state to require ethnic studies for high school graduation by law. The Sikh Coalition and Jakara Movement intend to continue helping California students and parents engage on ethnic studies: In July, we hosted a webinar with Punjabi Radio USA explaining how high school students and parents can highlight educational material about the Sikh community and Sikh history.

Work in other states remains ongoing. For more than a year, the Sikh Coalition and the Minnesota sangat have been engaging their state’s Department of Education by submitting several rounds of public comment regarding new social studies standards. In August, we worked with allied groups to produce an op-ed, youth video, and letter co-signed by 157 leaders from different faith communities to push for a full list of world religions to be included in the final draft of these standards. A similar effort is underway in Virginia, where the Sikh Coalition has been proud to work with sangat members to deliver testimony on new standards and is currently serving on an external committee of organizations to review an upcoming draft.

Finally, at the local level, in March, the Sikh Coalition and a group of interfaith allies produced a letter signed by more than 70 religious leaders, educators, and community organizations in support of Resolution 1257, which calls on the New York City Department of Education to provide age-appropriate religious literacy and diversity curricula and to offer relevant professional development for teachers. We have also helped area gurdwaras engage New York City Council Members directly on this resolution through joint letters.

FIGHTING FOR SIKHI IN CURRICULA AND CLASSROOMS

The Sikh Coalition continues our fight for safer, more inclusive schools – including by pushing for accurate information about Sikhism to be included in state social studies standards and taught in our nation’s classrooms.
As schools pursued online and in-person instruction this year, the Sikh Coalition continued creating, curating, and sharing classroom resources. As always, we continued to deliver Sikh awareness presentations to schools and teachers, and equipped parent sevadaars to do so as well.

In March, we released a Sikh Celebrations resource that includes lesson plans and activities for elementary school-aged children to learn about Vaisakhi, Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s Gurpurab, Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s Gurpurab, and Bandi Chhor Divas. We re-circulated this resource in October, along with an anti-bullying Instagram Live featuring Sikh parents and members of our legal and community teams.

The Sikh Coalition also partnered with the University of Pennsylvania and other organizations to help create a free multimodal curriculum for high school and college students addressing the ongoing impact of 9/11. Each module focuses on a year between 2001 and 2021; the module on the Sikh American experience, framed around 2012, was written primarily by the Sikh Coalition’s education team.

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In August, as U.S. military forces withdrew, the world watched the rapid deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan. Among the countless vulnerable populations under threat remain the country’s small community of Sikhs and Hindus. Once numbering in the tens of thousands, this vibrant community has been reduced to roughly 300 individuals following decades of discrimination and targeted violence.

The Sikh Coalition had previously advocated for the U.S. resettlement of Afghan Sikhs and Hindus following a series of attacks and threats of genocide from ISIS-affiliated terrorists in March 2020. Given the Taliban’s history of persecuting religious minorities and the ongoing threats from other extremists, we re-energized this work again this summer, coordinating with Sikh and non-Sikh partners – including international NGOs, governments, and other allies – across four different countries in an effort to secure safe passage out of Afghanistan for these families.

While some Afghan Sikhs were ultimately evacuated to India, others remain in-country and are still exploring options for resettlement. Our hearts break for the tens of thousands of Afghans from all faith backgrounds who remain in harm’s way, and we continue to advocate for the less than 300 Afghan Sikhs and Hindus remaining in Afghanistan as well as those who have been temporarily resettled to India so that they are not left behind or forgotten by the authorities and are able to make it to safety before it is too late.

FIGHTING FOR SIKHS AND HINDUS IN AFGHANISTAN

October 7, 2021
The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Harry S. Truman Building
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Vulnerable Afghan Sikhs and Hindus Require U.S. Resettlement

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We request that the State Department ensure that the Sikhs and Hindus that remain trapped or have fled Afghanistan in the past year be granted visas consistent with prior actions under the Humanitarian or Significant Public Parole Program. If this group cannot be provided visa designations under the Humanitarian or Significant Public Parole Program, we strongly urge the State Department to provide USRAP Priority designation to Afghan Sikhs and Hindus.

Sincerely,

The Sikh Coalition

Read the full letter at www.sikhcoalition.org
Since the Centers for Disease Control declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020, the Sikh Coalition adapted our priorities and has since been working with public health experts to share relevant information and recommendations related to the coronavirus so that our sangats and gurdwaras can make informed decisions about health and safety.

The Sikh Coalition – in collaboration with the North American Sikh Medical and Dental Association (NASMDA), the Sikh Family Center, and the Jakara Movement – is also working to ensure that all Sikh Americans have access to information and resources regarding FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccinations. While we are not a public health organization, we are pursuing this work so that we can all do our part to keep ourselves and our communities safe.

In addition to fact sheets and graphics, the Sikh Coalition worked with several Sikh medical professionals to produce video resources pertaining to the vaccines. These resources include FAQ videos on the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines, as well as our Vaccine Drive sessions: A series of Facebook and Instagram Live sessions to answer community questions about COVID-19 vaccination in real time.

All of our COVID-19 resources are free to access. Visit our website at www.sikhcoalition.org to download these resources and share them with your sangat.

Please email our team at community@sikhcoalition.org with any questions about this work, and always consult your doctor with specific inquiries about your personal health.
In September, the Sikh Coalition hosted its first-ever virtual legal conference, Realizing Justice For All, in partnership with law firms Winston & Strawn LLP and Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP. More than 100 legal professionals and law students joined to discuss the core civil rights issues facing Sikhs and other minority groups since 9/11 while acquiring professional development CLE credits.

The conference covered combating discrimination and encouraging solidarity based on the intersectionality of race, religion, and class; understanding immigration challenges and helping attorneys better represent clients seeking asylum; and whether the justice system adequately addresses bias crimes in a just way. We also honored our 2021 Pro Bono Sevadar Co-Counsel of the Year, Winston & Strawn LLP Partner and Sikh Coalition Legal Advisory Committee member Amandeep S. Sidhu.

Thank you to all of our sponsors for their generous support!

Composed of attorneys with years of experience in multiple litigation issue areas, the LAC will bolster the Sikh Coalition’s pro bono representation and support our legal team’s vital work through research, litigation assistance, and referrals. We are grateful to this group of outstanding attorneys for generously donating their time to the LAC.
PRACTICING SOLIDARITY THROUGH ACTION

In December 2020, more than 80 community members joined the conversation on social justice, activism, and allyship during our Social Justice Virtual Summit. Through the two-day summit, participants learned from leaders, activists, and national experts on a myriad of racial and social justice issues, and how this rising generation of Sikh leaders can build allyship with other communities. The intensive summit also featured workshops that examined voter suppression, structural racism in a COVID-19 world, lessons for movement building from the LGBTQ+ community, and sessions that explored how Sikh impacts activism and allyship. We are very grateful to every speaker who shared their time and expertise with us.

RAISING THE SIKH PROFILE THROUGH MEDIA

Throughout 2021, the Sikh Coalition pitched and fielded requests from reporters, TV and podcast producers, filmmakers, and others in the media space who were seeking to elevate Sikh stories.

Our high impact media work included coordinating local, national, and international interviews in response to the tragedy in Indianapolis (page 6); securing a front page story with the Sunday New York Times on our efforts to end employment discrimination (page 21); placing an op-ed by five faith leaders on religious education in the Minnesota Star Tribune (page 25); and elevating Sikh perspectives on the 20th anniversary of 9/11 (page 37) and the September 15, 2001 murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi (page 38).

“The continued elevation of Sikh stories in local, national, and international media is critical to raising the Sikh voice across our society.”

Dr. Navinderdeep Nijher, whose story of post-9/11 seva and discrimination was shared by the Washington Post due to the Sikh Coalition’s reporter engagement

In our effort to encourage respectful and responsible coverage of the Sikh community, we also updated our free resource, Sikhism: A Reporter’s Guide, to include greater context around Sikh history and new data about the demographics of the Sikh American community.
On August 5, our nation commemorated the nine-year anniversary of the tragic Oak Creek, Wisconsin, gurdwara shooting that ultimately took the lives of seven Sikhs and injured several others. We solemnly remember Paramjit Kaur Saini, Sita Singh, Ranjit Singh, Prakash Singh, Suveg Singh Khattria, and Satwant Singh Kaleka, who were killed on that horrific day. We also honor Baba Punjab Singh, who passed away in March 2020 due to complications related to the injuries he sustained during the attack. We remain inspired by the perseverance of those who were also critically injured at the time: Bhai Santokh Singh and Lt. Brian Murphy.

In the aftermath of the shooting, the strength of the Oak Creek sangat set a powerful example of resilience for the entire nation. While the sangat previously organized an annual Chardhi Kala 6K Memorial Walk and Run in the Sikh spirit of eternal optimism, they have since decided to host this event every five years. The next Chardhi Kala 6K in Oak Creek is tentatively scheduled to take place in 2022 around the 10-year anniversary; the Sikh Coalition plans to announce our commemoration efforts around this important anniversary in the early months of next year.

This year marked two decades since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the founding of the Sikh Coalition in response to the subsequent bias, bigotry, and backlash that targeted the Sikh community and many other Americans. Over a span of 20 years, our organization has grown from a small band of volunteers providing emergency relief to the largest Sikh civil rights organization in the country.

The Sikh Coalition was proud to support the introduction of a congressional resolution by Representatives Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), and Judy Chu (D-CA). Their resolution acknowledged the hate experienced by our and other communities, and proposed policy changes to help those who have suffered. We also reflected on the anniversary by distributing resources on reporting hate, facilitating seva work through the 911Day Coalition’s service projects, and ensuring that the Sikh American experience was discussed in top-tier outlets like the New York Times and the Associated Press.

"Sikhs and far too many other communities effectively suffered the trauma of 9/11 not once, but twice. First, we shared in the same horror as every American during the attacks – and then, we had to fear for ourselves and loved ones in the face of a wave of backlash, bigotry, and bias. In the 20 years since, we have continued to persevere against hate and discrimination through solidarity and advocacy."

Satjeet Kaur, Executive Director
September 15 marked two decades since Balbir Singh Sodhi was killed in the first deadly post-9/11 hate crime. On that day, the Sikh Coalition joined the Sodhi family and the Global Sikh Alliance to host an interfaith commemoration of Balbir Ji's life and legacy – recognizing him and all those lost to hate after 9/11, and uplifting the solidarity among Sikh, Arab, Muslim, South Asian, and other communities that has developed since.

The Sikh Coalition was deeply honored to lead in organizing this event, including handling all logistical details, securing a message from the White House and a proclamation from the governor of Arizona, facilitating Balbir Ji's daughter's visa to travel from India, arranging a program of speakers, and ensuring local, national, and international media coverage of the anniversary. We are grateful to the entire Sodhi family for welcoming us to be a part of this important commemoration, and thankful for the support of the Global Sikh Alliance, the Revolutionary Love Project, and numerous Arizona sevadaars.

“Thank you to all of the Sikh Coalition team for working to make the 20th anniversary of my brother’s passing so memorable. You made an amazing effort not just to honor him, but to pay tribute to all hate crime victims.”

Rana Singh Sodhi, brother of Balbir Ji

“It’s strange to be taught something as history when the members of my family and my community have experienced its effects first-hand. We’ve experienced the racism, the discrimination. We’ve experienced our loved ones who were hurt, killed, and discriminated against in the weeks, months, and years after 9/11.”

Aashwin Sodhi, granddaughter of Balbir Ji
After twelve years of incredible service to the Sikh Coalition – four of which she spent as Executive Director – the staff of the Sikh Coalition are deeply saddened to say goodbye to Satjeet Kaur in January 2022.

Throughout her tenure at the organization, Satjeet played an active role in nearly every aspect of the Sikh Coalition’s work, managing everything from fund development, education policy, hate crime advocacy, and legal victories to the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the farmers’ protest movement, and the tragedy in Indianapolis, Indiana. All told, she oversaw the largest staff growth in the organization’s history and sharpened her team’s ability to advocate at a high level while also developing our nationwide grassroots engagement.

More important than Satjeet’s professional achievements, however, is her relentless personal commitment to fighting for the panth – and the care and time she put into her individual relationships with staff, sevadaars, allies, and sangat members alike. We remain immensely grateful for and inspired by who Satjeet is and all she has done.

A NOTE OF GRATITUDE FOR OUR OUTGOING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SATJEET KAUR

The Sikh Coalition continues to recruit and train professionals with the skills and passion to serve the needs and interests of the nationwide sangat. This year, we were pleased to highlight two staff promotions: Aasees Kaur as Senior Legal Client Manager and Nikki Singh as Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager. Additionally, we were excited to welcome Harman Singh as our new Senior Education Manager and Nimarta Kaur Narang as our Media and Communications Manager. As well as new Board of Trustees members Gurpreet Singh Ahuja and Nitasha Kaur Sawhney. Finally, we are grateful to our previous Education Director, Pritpal Kaur; our Education and Community Engagement Manager, Harleen Kaur; and our Operations Manager, Harpreet Kaur – all of whom departed the organization for exciting new opportunities – for their years of service to the Sikh Coalition.

A GROWING AND CHANGING TEAM TO SERVE THE SANGAT

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Since the inception of the Sikh Coalition 20 years ago, we have endeavored to build an organization that exceeds the highest standards of competence and professionalism and remains committed to full financial transparency. The Sikh Coalition is independently audited each year, is a Better Business Bureau-accredited organization, and has received a 4 of 4 star rating on Charity Navigator and gold level on GuideStar.

The majority of the Sikh Coalition’s funding comes from generous donors like yourself. In addition, the Sikh Coalition receives competitive grants from foundations like Open Society Foundation, NoVo Foundation, RISE Together Fund, Emergent Fund Asian Americans Advancing Justice, the San Francisco Foundation, and Fight Back Collaborative Fund, a fund of Tides Foundation. This support is a testament to our sound financial practices and ability to deliver results.

**FINANCIALS**

**2020 Total Expenses:** $2,081,154
- **Fundraising:** 10% ($217,195)
- **Administrative:** 4% ($81,000)
- **Program Expenses:** 86% ($1,782,959)

*does not include donated services towards programs*

**2020 Total Income:** $2,414,379
- **Individual Donations:** 65% ($1,571,387)
- **Grants:** 23% ($562,000)
- **Interest & Dividends:** 1% ($18,991)
- **PPP Loan:** 11% ($262,001)

In addition to the income listed, the Sikh Coalition received $464,594 in donated services for programs in 2020.

**STAFF**

Satjeet Kaur, Executive Director
Mark Reading-Smith, Senior Managing Director of Programs
Amrith Kaur Aakre, Legal Director
Rucha Kaur, Community Development Director
Graham F. West, Media and Communications Director
Harsimran Kaur, Senior Counsel
Sim J. Singh Attariwala, Senior Manager of Policy & Advocacy
Avia Master, Senior Development Manager
Cindy Nabiit, Senior Staff Attorney
Giselle Klapper, Senior Staff Attorney
Rajanpreet Kaur, Senior Media and Communications Manager
Nikki Singh, Senior Manager of Policy & Advocacy
Asees Kaur, Senior Legal Client Manager
Harman Singh, Senior Education Manager
Inderpreet Kaur, Community Development Manager
Sahej Prat Singh, Community Development Manager
Nimarta Kaur Narang, Media and Communications Manager
Simran Jeet Singh, Senior Fellow

**BOARD**

Narinder Singh, Board Executive Chair
Prabhjot Singh, Board Treasurer
Manpreet K. Singh, Board Secretary
Gurpreet Singh Ahuja, Board Member
Harpreet Singh, Board Member
Nitasha Kaur Sawhney, Board Member
Suneet Singh, Board Member
Suneet Kaur, Board Member
PLEASE DONATE TODAY!

What is freedom worth to you? This full-time, high-impact organization is working day and night to protect your right to practice Sikhi. Your financial support will ensure that the Sikh flag continues to fly high!

THE SIKH COALITION

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New York, NY 10004