COMMISSION ESTABLISHED BY INTERNATIONAL DIRECT DEMOCRACY EXPERTS TO DEVELOP THE PROCEDURES FOR THE PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020

Saturday 6 June, 2020

Punjab Referendum 2020 seeks to gauge the will of the Punjabi people with regards to reestablishing Punjab as a nation state.

Washington, DC (June 6, 2020) – Today the formation of the COMMISSION FOR THE PROCEDURES FOR THE PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 was announced.

“The world is awash in uncertainty and turmoil. Peaceful resolution to conflict is paramount to the safety and security of the world and Direct Democracy, especially referendum, is the best means to open the dialogue necessary to bring peaceful resolution to the conflict consuming the world. PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 is an example of how Direct Democracy can be used to help foster the dialogue necessary to peacefully end conflict,” stated Dane Waters, Commission member and Chair of the Initiative and Referendum Institute and the University of Southern California.

According to the proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020, their objective “is to give the people of Punjab an opportunity to vote on their future political status.”

“There have been many referendums on independence. For example, in the former Yugoslavia, in the Former Soviet Union. Sadly, most of these were held without any regard to the internationally recognized standards pertaining to a proper registry of voters, the supervision of the count, and all the other details that are essential for the vote to be a free and fair representation of the will of the people. It is to be welcomed that the proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 recognize the importance of following established norms and good practice for democratic referendums,” stated Commission member Professor Matt Qvortrup of Coventry University.

The Commission was established under the auspices of Citizens in Charge Foundation, Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe, and the Initiative and Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California. The mandate of the Commission is to propose the procedures for the non-governmental PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 for it to meet the accepted protocols and best practices for referendums to be considered a legitimate instrument of public debate resulting in the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

“There are high hurdles for a referendum process to become both legal and legitimate. If you stick to a self-organized process it is paramount to be as educative, informative, and transparent as possible to build a participatory democratic culture for the future," Commission member Bruno Kaufmann and President of the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe stated.

The Commission was established based on a request from representatives of Sikhs for Justice and proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 and subsequent conversations with them regarding the referendum.

“Based on the strong commitment of the proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 to do all they can to conduct the non-governmental referendum within international norms and standards, the members of the COMMISSION felt that our participation would help protect the legitimacy of their effort,” stated Paul Jacob, Commission member and President of Citizens in Charge Foundation.

“A formal referendum needs a legal basis to lead to a decision, but also a non-governmental referendum can become a key tool for public discussion and political bargaining (even if not legally based). In doing so, the later should open room for a debate between different views and include different voices. Therefore, a fair campaign is important in a case such as Punjab and we welcome the opportunity to help develop a peaceful forum to facilitate this critical dialogue,” stated Dr. Yanina Welp, Commission member and Research Fellow, Albert Hirschman Centre on Democracy.

The five members of the Commission have collectively over 125 years of global experience with direct democracy campaigns and best practices – research and writing, participating in ballot campaigns, drafting implementing direct democracy legislation, advising on the proper rules and procedures to ensure the legitimacy of an initiative or referendum, and election monitoring.

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Participation by the organizations and individuals in this Commission does not in any way constitute support for PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 nor does it take a position on Sikhs for Justice or any of their underlying claims.

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