

Sikh Council UK Statement on restrictions imposed during Second Lockdown

Wednesday 4 November, 2020

Nanak Naam Chardikala. Tere Bhaane Sarbat Da Bhalla

"Through the Name of God may there be high spirits. Through the will of God may all flourish"

Sikhs begin and end their day with the above prayer for all humanity. This prayer forms the basis of our actions as a community. We continue to stand, support and protect society during the COVID19-Pandemic. We do so only through the teachings of our Guru.

We are deeply offended and disappointed by the Prime Minister's announcement and related guidance that infringes on the practice and expression of faith in the United Kingdom.

Whilst we are hopeful for members of this nation to be able to enjoy the festive season (of Christmas) we are equally troubled by the Governments' approach to Sikhs.

It seems the Prime Minister, who has frequented Gurdwaras on numerous campaigns, has ignored Bandi Chorch Diwas (Diwali) and the Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jee, the founder of our faith, in any considerations.

Faith communities such as ours, have displayed a high-level pragmatism by making considerable changes in their operation. Most Gurdwaras have become exemplary COVID-19 secure venues, and their contribution to society during these testing times has been disproportionately large. Therefore, it seems unreasonable to continue with the 'blanket' policy adopted by the Government.

We hoped the Government had learnt lessons on consultation from the controversy it incited due to the appointment of a 'Sikh Faith Leader', earlier this year. The Sikh community, like other faith groups, is not homogenous but has a range of organisations and institutions with diverse views and opinions. The majority of our community has viewed this as the Government's attempts to recruit agreeable voices in the guise of 'consultation'. Unfortunately, this continues to date.

Sikhs around the UK were dismayed that the first lockdown acted precipitously and impacted Vaisakhi. We have repeatedly urged the Government to broaden its approach and be more inclusive and aware of the faith practises of Non-Christians.

The Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jee is the most important event in the Sikh Calendar. It is clear that spiritual needs are paramount in times of stress, and they can continue safely in a lockdown if considered carefully with wider input. These restrictions, without sound reasoning, remind the Sikh Community of some of the darkest phases in history.

Politicians in the United Kingdom have always been welcome in Gurdwaras. Boris Johnson is amongst many who have used the Guru's Free Kitchen (*Langar*) during electoral campaigns. It seems, apart from 'photo-ops', no learning or inspiration was drawn from the Guru's Free Kitchen for all. If this approach of the Government continues, places of worship may also change their approach towards politicians.

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