



# World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR)

*A Representative Body of Sikh Institutions of America Working under the Patronage of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Member Gurdwaras:

1. Gurdwara Sahib Fremont, Fremont, CA
2. Guru Nanak Sikh Mission, Livingston, CA
3. Sikh Gurdwara of LA, North Hollywood, CA
4. Sikh Gurdwara Riverside, Riverside, CA
5. Colorado Singh Sabha, Denver, CO
6. Guru Singh Sabha of Augusta, Augusta, GA
7. Sikh Study Circle of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA
8. Sikh Religious Society of Chicago, Palatine, IL
9. Sikh Society of South, New Orleans, LA
10. Sikh Gurdwara of Michigan, Rochester Hills, MI
11. Sikh Society of Michigan, Madison Heights, MI
12. Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, NC
13. Garden State Sikh Association, Pluckemin, NJ
14. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Glenrock, NJ
15. Sikh Cultural Society Inc., Richmond Hills, NY
16. Sikh Cultural & Edu. Society of Western NY, Buffalo, NY
17. Sikh Religious Society of Dayton, Dayton, OH
18. Guru Nanak Found. of Greater Cleveland, Richfield, OH
19. Guru Gobind Singh Sikh Society, Bedford, OH
20. Guru Nanak Religious Soc. of Central Ohio, Columbus, OH
21. Tristate Sikh Cultural Society, Monroeville, PA
22. Mid South Sikh Sabha, Memphis, TN
23. Sikh Center of Gulf Coast, Houston, TX
24. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Richardson, TX
25. Sikh Gurdwara of North Texas, Garland, TX
26. Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Fairfax, VA
27. Sikh Association of Central Virginia, VA
28. Sikh Religious Society of Wisconsin, Brookfield, WI

## Other Sikh Institution Members:

1. Siri Guru Granth Sahib Found., Anaheim, CA
2. Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force, Washington, DC
3. Sikhs Serving America, Topeka, KS
4. Sikh Youth Federation of North America, White Plains, NY
5. Sikh Coalition, New York, NY
6. Sikh Educational & Religious Foundation, Dublin, OH
7. Sikh Youth Federation of USA, Toledo, OH
8. Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Arlington, TX

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## Sikh Community Across US Commemorates June 5 With Prayer Vigils in 16 Cities

The Sikh community of the US gathered across the country in 16 cities on the evening of Saturday, June 5, 2004 to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack by the Indian Army on Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) and other historical Sikhs places of worship in Punjab, and to remember the thousands of Sikhs killed in the brutal army action.

Over 200 persons from across the US attended the national prayer vigil, organized by World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR), on the evening of Saturday, June 5 at the steps of the California State Capitol Building in Sacramento, California. Mr. Kuldeep Singh, Chairman of WSC-AR addressed the gathering. Names of Sikh men, women, and children killed in June 1984 were read, by Sikh students of California State University – Sacramento and University of California – Davis, as carnation flowers were placed on the steps of the Capitol Building to remember and honor the Sikhs who died twenty years ago. The vigil ended with Ardaas (Sikh prayer) for the welfare of all humankind.

“The Darbar Sahib is the Vatican, the Mecca, and the Jerusalem of the Sikhs. The Indian Army’s brutal pre-planned attack on the heart of the Sikh faith was an attempt to defame and humiliate the entire Sikh community. The Indian Government’s consistent attempts to humiliate Sikhs have not succeeded. Today, we stand before God as a community committed to peace and justice.” said Mr. Kuldeep Singh, Chairman of WSC-AR. He further added, “The Sikh

community's appeals of transparency, accountability, and restitution to the Indian Government have been ignored as not being in the interest of peace. Justice for Sikhs in India has been denied.”

*Media photos of the national memorial service may be obtained by e-mailing <contact@worldsikhcouncil.org>.*

Mirror prayer vigils, coordinated by WSC-AR, were held at the following cities on the evening of June 5:

- Phoenix, Arizona
- Southington, Connecticut
- Fort Lauderdale, Florida
- Atlanta, Georgia
- Augusta, Georgia
- Des Moines, Iowa
- Shawnee, Kansas
- Carteret, New Jersey
- Lawrenceville, New Jersey
- Staten Island, New York
- Williamsville, New York
- Cleveland, Ohio
- Dallas, Texas
- Brookfield, Wisconsin
- Richmond, Virginia

On June 5, 1984, the Indian Army (with 15,000 troops supported by tanks, artillery and helicopters, and with 35,000 paramilitary forces in reserve) attacked the Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) and more than 40 other Sikh shrines throughout Punjab, India.

The full-scale military invasion of Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) was launched on the anniversary of the Martyrdom of Siri Guru Arjan Sahib, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. Thousands of Sikhs – men, women and children – who had congregated for prayers were brutally gunned down, under complete news blackout. The Akaal Takhat, the Sikh seat of sovereignty, was destroyed in the attack and the Sikh Reference Library and Museum were looted and burned to ashes.

“The army went into Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple Complex) not to eliminate a political figure or a political movement but to suppress the culture of a people, to attack their heart, to strike a blow at their spirit and self-confidence” wrote Dr. Joyce Pettigrew in her 1995 book titled *The Sikhs of Punjab*.

The attack on the Golden Temple was the beginning of a formal assault on Sikhs and their places of worship by the Indian Government. In the last 20 years, more than a quarter million Sikhs are reported to have been killed in Punjab and rest of India.

WSC-AR is the only representative and elected body of Sikh Gurdwaras and institutions in the US. Its members include 28 Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) and 8 other Sikh institutions across 17 US states. WSC-AR works to promote Sikh interests at the national and international level focusing on issues of advocacy, education, and well-being of humankind.

About 25 million Sikhs live across the world. Sikhs arrived in the US about a century ago and number about half a million today.

Media photos shown below of the June 5 national memorial prayer vigil can be obtained in electronic format by e-mailing <[contact@worldsikhcouncil.org](mailto:contact@worldsikhcouncil.org)>:



Photo 1: Dr. Anahat Kaur, member of Executive Committee of WSC-AR, addresses over 200 Sikhs gathered at the California State Capitol in Sacramento to remember June 1984



Photo 2: Sikhs place carnation flowers at the steps of the California State Capitol as names of Sikh men, women, and children killed in June 1984 are read by Sikh students



Photo 3: Over 200 Sikhs gather at the steps of the California State Capitol Building in Sacramento to remember June 1984