



World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR)

A representative body of Sikh institutions of America founded under the patronage of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib

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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. Guru Nanak Foundation of Jackson, MS
13. Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, NC
14. Garden State Sikh Association, Bridgewater, NJ
15. Guru Nanak Sikh Society of Delaware Valley, Sewell, NJ
16. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Glenrock, NJ
17. Sikh Sabha of New Jersey, Lawrenceville, NJ
18. Sikh Cultural Society Inc., Richmond Hills, NY
19. Sikh Cultural & Edu. Society of Western NY, Buffalo, NY
20. Sikh Religious Society of Dayton, Dayton, OH
21. Guru Nanak Found. of Greater Cleveland, Richfield, OH
22. Guru Gobind Singh Sikh Society, Bedford, OH
23. Guru Nanak Religious Soc. of Central Ohio, Columbus, OH
24. Tristate Sikh Cultural Society, Monroeville, PA
25. Mid South Sikh Sabha, Memphis, TN
26. Sikh Center of Gulf Coast, Houston, TX
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28. Sikh Gurdwara of North Texas, Garland, TX
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Other Sikh Institution Members:

1. Siri Guru Granth Sahib Found., Anaheim, CA
2. Sikhs Serving America, Topeka, KS
3. Sikh Youth Federation of North America, White Plains, NY
4. Sikh Educational & Religious Foundation, Dublin, OH
5. Sikh Youth Federation of USA, Toledo, OH
6. Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Arlington, TX

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Nomination of Siri Darbar Sahib as UNESCO world heritage site not withdrawn by Government of India despite rejection of nomination by SGPC; WSC-AR calls upon Sikh community worldwide to organize peaceful protests starting June 1, 2005

The World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) is extremely disappointed and concerned to learn from UNESCO's World Heritage Centre that to date the State Party of India has not withdrawn the nomination of Siri Darbar Sahib for world heritage status despite the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) decision one month ago (of April 21, 2005) that the proposal should be immediately withdrawn.

“WSC-AR calls upon Sikhs organizations across the world, especially in Punjab and the rest of India, to act without delay and organize massive peaceful protests if the Government of India does not withdraw the nomination by June 1, 2005. The Sikh community needs to mobilize so that the Government of India withdraws this misleading and mischievous nomination”, said Mr. Amolak Singh, Chairperson of WSC-AR.

Dr. Anahat Kaur, Vice-Chairperson of WSC-AR added, “It seems that the Government of India is dragging its feet on purpose on this issue and is continuing to interfere in the religious affairs of the Sikhs. This misadventure must end.”

The WSC-AR has been in weekly contact with the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO for the last month. WSC-AR has been advised by the World Heritage Centre that only the State Party of India (Government of India through its Permanent Delegation to UNESCO) has the authority to withdraw this nomination.

WSC-AR also continues to call upon Sikh organizations across the world to urgently contact their respective country's UNESCO delegation and request they vote no for world heritage status for Siri Darbar Sahib, prior to the July 2005 potential vote at the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in South Africa.

The World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) has reviewed the nomination dossier and communicated over the last several months with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. It is the considered opinion of the WSC-AR that the request to nominate Siri Darbar Sahib as a cultural symbol of Indian civilization by the Government of India is wrong and ill-advised.

The dossier submitted by the Government of India to UNESCO is misleading, has serious flaws, and is strongly objected to by Sikhs around the world.

The WSC-AR has written letters to the Prime Minister of India, President of SGPC, and officials at UNESCO as well as the US Mission to UNESCO requesting immediate withdrawal of this nomination.

The fundamental argument set forth in the nomination dossier that Siri Darbar Sahib represents the cultural heritage and uniqueness of Indian civilization is misleading and incorrect. Such claims undermine the religious importance of this site and are offensive. The status of Siri Darbar Sahib in the Sikh Religion is similar to that of the Kaaba in Islam and the Vatican in Roman Catholicism. Kaaba is not a Saudi Arabian cultural site but the center of Islam; the Vatican is not an Italian cultural entity but the center of the Roman Catholic faith. Neither of these two places are on the World Heritage List under Saudi Arabia or Italy. Siri Darbar Sahib is the heartthrob of a living faith; it is not an archeological relic or a symbol of Indian culture and it is not a cultural tourist site.

Since the overall responsibility for the protection of a world heritage site lies with the state party, the placing of Siri Darbar Sahib on this list would effectively cede control of the site to the Government of India. This is an affront to Sikhs everywhere. The Indian Government interference in Sikh religious affairs is already considerable. The experiences of the Sikh community worldwide over the last two decades have shown that the Indian State is attempting to extend not only its control of Sikh institutions and places of worship but to rewrite Sikh history and undermine the Sikh faith. Sikhs cannot forget the bloody invasion of Siri Darbar Sahib in June of 1984 followed by the attempted reconstruction of Siri Akaal Takhat Sahib and the construction of Galiyara (corridor) around the complex to ensure ease of armed intervention in the future.

Along with Siri Darbar Sahib, the Government of India has also nominated a railway project in North-East India for world heritage status. The Bombay Railway Station is another place already so designated by UNESCO.

Siri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, as center of the Sikh faith, already has an exalted status and any action to place it on any list alongside archeological sites or other buildings, complexes, structures, railway stations would be an insult to our most cherished shrine and to the entire Sikh community.

Three public statements issued earlier by WSC-AR on March 29, April 10, and April 21 can be accessed at www.worldsikhcouncil.org.

The WSC-AR is a representative and elected body of Sikh Gurdwaras and institutions in the United States. Its members include 37 Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) and other Sikh institutions across the nation.
