



# 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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**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. 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. Gurdwara Baba Deep Singh, Las Vegas, NV
19. Sikh Cultural Society Inc., Richmond Hills, NY
20. Sikh Cultural & Edu. Society of Western NY, Buffalo, NY
21. Sikh Religious Society of Dayton, Dayton, OH
22. Guru Nanak Found. of Greater Cleveland, Richfield, OH
23. Guru Gobind Singh Sikh Society, Bedford, OH
24. Guru Nanak Religious Soc. of Central Ohio, Columbus, OH
25. Sikh Sadh Sangat, Easton, PA
26. Philadelphia Sikh Society, Millbourne, PA
27. Tristate Sikh Cultural Society, Monroeville, PA
28. Mid South Sikh Sabha, Memphis, TN
29. Sikh Center of Gulf Coast, Houston, TX
30. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Richardson, TX
31. Sikh Gurdwara of North Texas, Garland, TX
32. Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Fairfax, VA
33. Sikh Association of Central Virginia, VA
34. Sikh Religious Society of Wisconsin, Brookfield, WI

## 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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## **Sikh Community Participates in National Gathering of Religious Leaders in Chicago; Meeting Calls for Building Deeper Relationships Among Senior Religious Leadership**

(Photos suitable for publication are available upon request from [interfaith@worldsikhcouncil.org](mailto:interfaith@worldsikhcouncil.org).)

The World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) participated in the first National Gathering of Religious Leaders held January 23 – 25, 2006 in Chicago.

The meeting was organized by Religions for Peace (RFP) – USA for the primary purpose of bringing together senior leaders representing national religious organizations to build relationships amongst them and their communities for fostering societal progress.

The highlight of the national event was the langar (Sikh community meal) served on the evening of January 24 by the Sikh Religious Society of Chicago at Palatine (member organization of WSC-AR since 1996). Volunteers from the Palatine Gurdwara Sahib prepared the langar meal and served it with utmost reverence to the religious leaders in attendance who sat cross-legged on white sheets on the floor with their heads covered with scarves. The langar served at the gathering emphasized the inherent equality of all human beings irrespective of religious affiliation, creed, race, ethnicity, gender, etc.

Mr. Surinderpal Singh, Vice-Chairperson of WSC-AR, who led the Sikh delegation at the meeting reflected, “This landmark gathering was an opportunity to build deep and long-lasting relationships among the senior representatives of national religious organizations so that we can work towards developing closer collaborations among our diverse national religious organizations.”

Dr. Anahat Kaur, Chair of the WSC-AR Education Committee, facilitated a discussion group focusing on concerns and priorities of religious leaders in the US. Dr. Kaur remarked, “The beauty of the event was the sincere attitude of collaboration expressed by so many religious representatives. We prayed and laughed together. This first gathering has helped us to get to know each other better and work towards building bridges for healing this imperfect world of ours.” She further added that “without justice the world will not know peace.”

Dr. Tarunjit Singh, Chair of the WSC-AR Interfaith Committee and a member of RFP-USA’s Executive Council was a panelist on the evening session of Jan 24 after the langar on the theme of “Role of US Religious Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” Other fellow panelists were Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick (Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church – USA), Rev. William Sinkford (President, Unitarian Universalist Association), and Dr. David Elcott (US Director, American Jewish Committee). Dr. Singh emphasized in his remarks that “our roles as faith representatives are complimentary to one another and not in competition with each other” and challenged the religious leaders of the present and future to be “more transformational and less transactional.”

About 50 organizational representatives from nearly a dozen faith traditions participated in the gathering. More than a dozen of these were the most senior religious leaders of their traditions / organizations. Some of the organizations represented at the conference included the National Council of Churches, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Presbyterian Church – USA, Armenian Church in America, Unitarian Universalist Association, Orthodox Church in America, Focolare Movement, Union for Reform Judaism, American Jewish Committee, Islamic Society of North America, The Mosque Cares, American Muslim Alliance, American Muslim Council, Sokka Gakkai International, Rissho Kosei-kai, Buddha Light International Association, International Society of Krishna Consciousness, Federation of Jain Associations in North America, National Spiritual Assembly of Bahai’s, and World Sikh Council – America Region, among others.

The World Sikh Council – America Region has been a member organization of Religion for Peace –USA since 2003. During the conference, Faith and Values Media showcased a publicity commercial for RFP-USA which includes Mr. Harpreet Singh, a member of the WSC-AR governing board from 2003 to 2005. The commercial will be broadcast repeatedly in the next few months on the Hallmark Cable Channel.

Religions for Peace (RFP) - USA is a coalition comprised of leaders from over 50 U.S. religious communities and is one of 55 national chapters of Religions for Peace International. RFP-USA operates on the conviction that multi-religious cooperation and common action can be powerful instruments in the quest for constructive social development, justice, reconciliation, and peace.

The World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) is a representative and elected body of Sikh Gurdwaras and institutions in the United States. Its members include 40 Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) and other Sikh institutions across the nation. WSC-AR works to promote Sikh interests at the national and international level focusing on issues of advocacy, education, and well-being of humankind.

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The following photos in jpeg format, suitable for publication, can be obtained by e-mailing <interfaith@worldsikhcouncil.org>:



Photo 1 Caption: Mr. Surinderpal Singh of WSC-AR leads the attendees in Ardaas (Sikh supplication) before the langar (Sikh community meal) *(Photo courtesy of WSC-AR)*



Photo 2 Caption: Langar being served by Sikh volunteers of Sikh Religious Society of Chicago *(Photo courtesy of WSC-AR)*



Photo 3 Caption: Dr. Tarunjit Singh of WSC-AR serving langar to Very Reverend Leonid Kishkovsky, Moderator of Religions for Peace – USA *(Photo courtesy of WSC-AR)*



Photo 4 Caption: Rev. Bud Heckman, Executive Director of Religions for Peace – USA and Rev. William Sinkford, President of Unitarian Universalist Association eat langar being served by Sikh volunteers *(Photo courtesy of WSC-AR)*

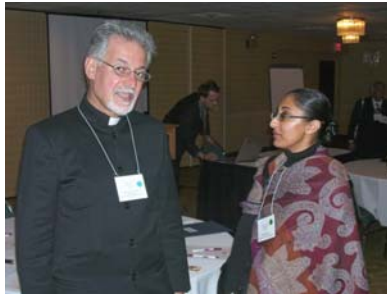


Photo 5 Caption: Dr. Anahat Kaur, Chair of WSC-AR Education Committee shares thoughts with Bishop Vicken Aykazian, President Elect of the National Council of Churches (*Photo courtesy of WSC-AR*)



Photo 6 Caption: Dr. David Elcott of American Jewish Committee, Father Francis Tiso of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Dr. Anahat Kaur of World Sikh Council – America Region discuss the bridges that need to be built between religious communities (*Photo courtesy of WSC-AR*)



Photo 7 Caption: Father Francis Tiso, Associate Director of US Catholic Conference of Bishops and Mr. Surinderpal Singh, Vice-Chairperson of WSC-AR discuss the lighter aspects of Sikh – Catholic relations (*Photo courtesy of WSC-AR*)



Photo 8 Caption: Dr. Danny Nagashima (General Director of Sokka Gakkai International – USA), Dr. Tarunjit Singh (past Secretary General of World Sikh Council – America Region), Bishop Vicken Aykazian (President Elect of the National Council of Churches), and Rev. John Pawlikowski (President of International Council of Christian and Jews) discuss the role of US religious leaders in building a pluralist society that promotes peacemaking. (*Photo courtesy of WSC-AR*)