



# 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. New England Sikh Study Circle, Boston, MA
11. Sikh Gurdwara of Michigan, Rochester Hills, MI
12. Sikh Society of Michigan, Madison Heights, MI
13. Guru Nanak Foundation of Jackson, MS
14. Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, NC
15. Garden State Sikh Association, Bridgewater, NJ
16. Guru Nanak Sikh Society of Delaware Valley, Sewell, NJ
17. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Glenrock, NJ
18. Sikh Sabha of New Jersey, Lawrenceville, NJ
19. Gurdwara Baba Deep Singh, Las Vegas, NV
20. Sikh Cultural Society Inc., Richmond Hills, NY
21. Sikh Cultural & Edu. Society of Western NY, Buffalo, NY
22. Sikh Religious Society of Dayton, Dayton, OH
23. Guru Nanak Found. of Greater Cleveland, Richfield, OH
24. Guru Gobind Singh Sikh Society, Bedford, OH
25. Guru Nanak Religious Soc. of Central Ohio, Columbus, OH
26. Sikh Sadh Sangat, Easton, PA
27. Philadelphia Sikh Society, Millbourne, PA
28. Tristate Sikh Cultural Society, Monroeville, PA
29. Mid South Sikh Sabha, Memphis, TN
30. Sikh Center of Gulf Coast, Houston, TX
31. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Richardson, TX
32. Sikh Gurdwara of North Texas, Garland, TX
33. Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Fairfax, VA
34. Sikh Association of Central Virginia, VA
35. 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 Heritage Foundation, Long Island, NY
5. Sikh Educational & Religious Foundation, Dublin, OH
6. Sikh Youth Federation of USA, Toledo, OH
7. Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Arlington, TX

## WSC-AR Joins in 'Season of Prayer for Peace in the Middle East'; Sikh UN Peacekeepers Provide Help While Under Fire in Southern Lebanon

In response to the bloody conflict between Hezbollah and Israel as well as Palestine and Israel, the World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) has joined hands with sister national religious communities in the United States to engage in prayers for peace in the Middle East.

“We call upon the Sikh community to hold special prayers at Gurdwaras for peace in the Middle East and to partner with local inter-religious groups to pray for peace,” said Dr. Manohar Singh, Chairperson of WSC-AR. “We need to recognize the suffering of all those affected by this escalating conflict and pray for Sarbat daa Bhallaa (well-being of all). We also should pray for the safety of the brave Sikh UN peacekeeping soldiers currently helping in Southern Lebanon and the rest of the Middle East.”

Sikh UN peacekeeping soldiers in Southern Lebanon provided major assistance in the rescue efforts after the recent deadly shelling by Israeli defense forces of a UN observation post in which four UN military observers were killed. Hundreds of Sikh soldiers, serving as United Nations peacekeepers, are currently deployed in Southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights in the Middle East.



Photo Caption: Two Sikh UN personnel (wearing turbans) carry the body of one of the four UN military observers who was killed by an Israeli bombardment of the southern Lebanese town of Khiyam. (Photo courtesy of Lotfallah Daher/AP)

WSC-AR has developed the 'Season of Prayer for Peace in the Middle East' in collaboration with the National Council of Churches (NCC) – USA, Religions for Peace (RFP) – USA, and other Christian, Jewish, and Muslim organizations. Religious representatives of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities have currently signed on to this initiative. They have agreed to encourage their religious communities to participate and send in prayer resources from their communities that might be posted on a web site.

"Religious communities are good at praying for the suffering of our own," said NCC's Associate General Secretary for Interfaith Relations, Dr. Shanta Premawardhana. "But the best in our religious traditions call us to pray for the suffering 'other' and that's what we are asking our religious communities to do."

"We are encouraging religious communities to pray for peace as they gather in their own communities. We are also encouraging religious communities to join with others in common events of witness for peace," said Rev. Bud Heckman, Executive Director of RFP - USA.

In order to provide religious communities resources to do this well, the Interfaith Relations ministry of the National Council of Churches USA has launched a new Web site -- [www.seasonofprayer.org](http://www.seasonofprayer.org). The website compiles prayers, scripture texts, hymns, litanies, poems and other prayer aids from many religious traditions, appropriate to the current crisis in the Middle East. It includes prayers from Sikh, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and other faith traditions as well interfaith prayers.

This multi-faith coalition for peace in the Middle East issued the following statement:

*We, leaders of several religious traditions have come together to encourage you, our religious communities to engage in prayer for peace in the Middle East. We encourage you to do this as you gather for your regular worship or faith observances.*

*We also encourage you to engage with other religious communities in your neighborhood in events offering a joint witness to peace.*

*We will post prayers, litanies, scripture texts, hymns and other prayer aids on this web site. We also encourage you to send new and creative liturgical material that you have composed or used to post on this web site for others to use.*

*As religious leaders we are deeply concerned about the escalating violence in the Middle East. We pray for all those who are suffering, both those of our own communities and those we consider the 'other.' We pray for an urgent end to hostilities that will both save lives and lead to a just, lasting, and secure peace.*

*Pray like everything depends on God*

*Work like everything depends on you.*

Signed by:

*Bishop Dimitrios Couchell, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*

*Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar, General Secretary, National Council of Churches USA*

*Dr. Manohar Singh, Chairperson, World Sikh Council - America Region*

*Rev. Dr. Stan Hastey, Executive Director, Alliance of Baptists*

*Rev. Dr. Cliff Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA)*

*The Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, Moderator, Religions for Peace-USA and Ecumenical Officer, Orthodox Church in America*

*Rabbi Michael Lerner, Tikkun and the Network of Spiritual Progressive*

*Rev. Michael Livingston, President, National Council of Churches USA and Executive Director, International Council of Community Churches*

*Rev. William G. Sinkford, President, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations*

*Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, Secretary General, Islamic Society of North America*

*Rabbi Arthur Waskow, The Shalom Center*

*Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of United States and Canada*

Many of the Sikh soldiers in Southern Lebanon, who have come under fire from the Israeli defense forces, are a part of a battalion of a Sikh Regiment sent by India to this volatile region of conflict for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFL) along with Ghana Army forces. They are deployed at five "hotspots" in southern Lebanon near the border with Israel where the exchange of hostilities between Israeli defense forces and Hezbollah is taking place across their positions. Last week Rajinder Singh, a Sikh UN soldier of the 4 Sikh Regiment, was injured in the Israeli shelling of the border village of Houla, near the contentious Sheikh Abbad Tomb post in Shiite dominated southern Lebanon.

Some Sikh peacekeeping troops are also posted at the Golan Heights on the Israeli-Syria border since January of 2006. They are a part of the UN Disengagement Observers Force (UNDOF), a group of 185 officers and troops from India, Canada, Japan, Slovakia, Austria and Poland.

While some Sikh civilians of Indian origin have been evacuated from Lebanon, hundreds more still remain in the country trapped by the cross-fire between Israeli forces and Hezbollah.

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