



GLOBAL SIKH COUNCIL

International Voice of The Sikhs

UK Registered Charity # 1186311

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GLOBAL SIKH COUNCIL URGES

- UNHRC and the Canadian Govt to urge Quebec to repeal its ban on the display of articles of faith.
- Says Quebec's discriminatory law undermines constitutional rights and religious freedom.
- Asks SGPC to challenge draconian law in international court of justice

Amritsar, September 16, 2024 – Strongly condemning the Quebec's controversial Bill 21, the Global Sikh Council (GSC), representing 30 national Sikh organizations, has urged the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and Canadian federal government to repeal this legislation which bans those in public sector on "positions of authority" from wearing religious symbols while at work.

The GSC highlighted that this law directly violates the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a commitment upheld by Canada and called for immediate action from the Canadian federal government and international human rights bodies.

The GSC president Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur, OBE, emphasized that the Canadian constitution guarantees all citizens the freedom of religion, and Canada has ratified UN treaties protecting ethnic and religious rights. "This Quebec legislation legitimizes discrimination against its citizens based on their religious beliefs, violating their fundamental constitutional rights," said Dr. Kaur.

She said "It sets a dangerous precedent by allowing the provincial dispensation to dictate what its residents can or cannot wear and infringing on religious expression."

Dr. Kaur called upon the UNHRC, civil liberties organizations, Canadian MPs, and human rights groups to rally against this assault on religious freedom in Quebec. She also urged the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) to join the opposition against Bill 21 and challenge the same in international court of justice to get due justice for the Sikhs residing in the state.

Stressing the global implications, she noted, "Sikhs around the world are allowed to maintain their religious identity, including wearing turbans and keeping uncut hair, as part of their faith. It is unacceptable that Quebec state is enforcing exceptional laws that erode these basic rights."

Mentionably, under the guise of secularism, Quebec's Bill 21 prohibits teachers, police officers, lawyers, and other public sector employees from wearing religious symbols, such as Muslim

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headscarves, Sikh turbans, Jewish yarmulkes, and Christian crosses.

The GSC argues that this law not only curtails freedom of religion but also creates an environment of exclusion, disproportionately affecting ethnic and religious minorities in Quebec.

"Bill 21 infringes upon the freedoms of expression and religion enshrined in Canada's constitution. It restricts individuals who wear religious symbols from pursuing essential careers, diminishing their role in public service and stifling opportunities for professional growth," Dr. Kaur stated.

She further highlighted the adverse social and economic impact of Bill 21, pointing out that many talented professionals have left Quebec to seek opportunities elsewhere in Canada. "This law is driving a brain drain from Quebec, as individuals committed to their faith are forced to move to provinces that respect their rights."

The Global Sikh Council calls for the immediate repeal of Bill 21 and demands that all public employees, regardless of their religion, be granted the same rights to religious expression as members of Quebec's National Assembly and provincial legislature.

"This draconian law must be overturned to restore the rights of all communities and to ensure that the principles of equality, religious freedom, and inclusion are upheld across Canada," Dr. Kaur concluded.

Lady Singh, Dr Kanwaljit Kaur OBE
President

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Chairman Media Affairs

Global Sikh Council is a confederation of National Level Sikh Organisations worldwide, working together for the advancement of the Sikh religion guided by the Guru Granth Sahib and the socio-economic development of the Sikh community.

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