



November 18th, 2024

Open Letter to Mississauga City Council

Re: Ontario Gurdwaras Committee Objection to Restrictions Around Places of Worship

The Ontario Gurdwaras Committee (OGC) wishes to express our deep concern regarding a recent motion passed by the City Council, seeking to ban peaceful protests outside places of worship. The OGC also condemns the motion's unsubstantiated claims of violence, rooted in misinformation spread by Indian right-wing media outlets. The motion was presented without any consultation with the Sikh community or the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Malton, the Sikh place of worship that was targeted by an angry mob. This is especially surprising given the motion was seconded by the local councilor, Natalie Hart.

The OGC seeks to highlight facts and context overlooked in this motion. The demonstration outside the Hindu Sabha Mandir was a lawful and peaceful protest aimed at the consular activities taking place within the facility, not an attack on the place of worship itself. Similar protests have taken place across Canada in response to consular programs being offered inside places of worship, with law enforcement informed and actively engaged at each event. The portrayal of this event as an "attack" on the Hindu Sabha Mandir misrepresents the intentions and conduct of the protesters, and distorts the actual nature of the gathering and what transpired.

Additionally, given the RCMP have publicly stated they have strong evidence against Indian government officials being involved in campaigns of violence and intimidation against our community, heightened vigilance is indeed warranted. Amidst these mounting concerns about foreign interference and divisive consular activities, the OGC respectfully requests that Council, the RCMP and CSIS investigate Councillor Dipika Damerla's potential connections with Indian government officials and intelligence agencies, as this motion and Councillor Damerla's past record aligns closely with their false narratives.

The OGC urges the Mississauga City Council to reconsider the language and implications of this motion. Such mischaracterizations not only stigmatize peaceful assemblies unjustly but also set a dangerous precedent for undermining Canadians' rights to lawful expression.

Background on Events leading up to Councillor Damerla's Motion

There has been misinformation and lack of clarity on the reason for ongoing protests against Indian Government Officials and specifically consular employees.

Recent revelations of foreign interference and expulsion of Indian diplomats from Canada have linked Indian Government Officials to violent crimes against Sikhs activists and the Sikh community at large. Sikhs for Justice and other groups have been protesting against this ongoing Indian interference and seeking justice and action to protect Canadian Sikhs.

In particular, they seek justice for Hardeep Nijjar, who was murdered in cold blood at his place of worship by assassins allegedly working on orders from the highest levels of the Indian government.

As Canada continues to investigate these matters, groups are protesting the continued interference of the Indian government in our communities. To be clear, they are not protesting any community, religion or place of worship. A small group of peaceful protestors (many seniors and women) were on public property on Sunday November 3rd, as Indian government officials were inside conducting "business" at a place of worship.

It is their position that these events are designed to gather intelligence, organize operations against Canadians, recruit foot soldiers, and plan other nefarious activities. Similar protests have been held at other venues including places of worship hosting these events regardless of religion. In fact, the protest on Sunday was friendly, in dialogue with temple officials and police, until a group of armed and hostile pro-India counter protestors arrived and unfortunately, instigated violence.

Sikhs have been peacefully protesting and holding referendums for many years without incident. However on Sunday, organized counter-protestors with the goal of violence started a scuffle that resulted in protesters defending themselves and spilling into the temple parking lot for a few moments. The protest continued without incident due to police intervention.

Further, many media reports fail to note that after the small protest concluded, the large mob of pro-India counter-protestors rallied at a local mall, where they fought with police, and arrests were made. They continued to march to a Sikh place of worship, where they attempted to storm the grounds, and further arrests were made. The violent and organized pro-India mobs continued to rampage the streets of Brampton the following day, until police dispersed the crowd deeming it a dangerous and unlawful gathering.

It is worth noting these events are happening as Sikhs are marking the 40th anniversary of the Sikh Genocide, which saw armed mobs hunting down and killing Sikhs with Indian government support.

Sikhs are calling on Canadians to speak out against foreign interference. We call on our government and authorities to act immediately against those who seek to disrupt the peace and unity of our country. We will continue to exercise our freedom of expression. The goal is to expose and hold accountable those that are terrorizing and harming Canadians.