



Sikh Federation (UK)

Never flinch from performing righteous deeds

Sikhs strongly condemn secret visit of head of RSS to Gurdwara in London

London – 6 September 2026

Dozens of Gurdwaras, Sikh organisations and individuals have contacted us to express their outrage at the secret visit of Mohan Bhagwat, head of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), to Khalsa Jatha British Isles Gurdwara Sahib in London.

No apology or explanation from those responsible for running the Gurdwara, including the Trustees can undo the damage caused by welcoming the head of the RSS to a small, private gathering without the presence of the Sangat. Such a decision represents a serious breach of trust and a profound failure of stewardship.

Gurdwaras are meant to serve the Sikh community openly and transparently; using that sacred space for a secretive and politically charged meeting is unacceptable and has deeply offended many Sikhs. The visit confirms those that have a friendly relationship with the Indian High Commission have undue influence on those running the Khalsa Jatha British Isles Gurdwara.

The RSS has a long and deeply controversial history in India. It was banned by the Indian government in 1948 following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, in the aftermath of violence and unrest surrounding the Partition period.

Over the decades, it has repeatedly faced criticism for promoting majoritarian Hindu nationalist ideology and for its proximity to campaigns that have contributed to communal polarisation. Its ideological roots have also drawn comparisons with European fascist movements of the 20th century, including aspects of authoritarian symbolism and exclusionary nationalism.

The RSS has long been associated with exclusionary, majoritarian politics and rising hostility towards religious minorities in India and is widely regarded as the ideological parent of India's ruling Hindu nationalist movement. Its politics have helped normalise a climate in which Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits and other minorities face intimidation, discrimination and threats to their safety and dignity.

For many Sikhs, the visit is particularly upsetting given the RSS's long-standing attempts to assimilate Sikh identity, history and political distinctiveness into a broader Hindu nationalist narrative. The RSS and its affiliates have repeatedly promoted the idea that Sikhs are part of a wider Hindu civilisation, a position Sikhs reject as a denial of the Sikh faith's separate religious identity, scripture, institutions and lived history. This assimilationist approach is an effort to dilute Sikh sovereignty, erase community memory, and weaken the distinct status of Sikhi in public life.

This is not a matter of "religious engagement" but of legitimising an organisation whose politics have caused deep harm and division. For Sikhs, the issue is not merely theological but political and historical: repeated efforts to subsume Sikh identity have often gone hand in hand with hostility to Sikh autonomy, Sikh representation, and the right of Sikhs to define themselves on their own terms.

In recent years, concern has intensified over the growing influence of hard-line Hindu nationalist forces in public life, including the use of inflammatory rhetoric, pressure on independent institutions, and repeated attempts to present a narrow religious-national identity as the basis of Indian citizenship. Human rights defenders have also warned about an alarming rise in intolerance, hate speech and persecution of dissenters under the wider ideological umbrella linked to the RSS.

Bhai Amrik Singh, the Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) Strategy Board said:

"The RSS is not a normal religious or cultural organisation. It is a political and ideological movement whose influence has repeatedly fuelled division, intimidation and hostility towards minorities.

"Secretly hosting the RSS leader at a Gurdwara when Sangat were not present who would express opposition sends the wrong message to Sikhs in the UK and to vulnerable communities in India."

Bhai Amrik Singh added:

"Our Gurdwaras should be places of refuge, dignity and unity, not platforms for organisations associated with exclusionary politics and intolerance. Sikhs in Britain will not stay silent when the institutions of our faith are used to legitimise those who have harmed or threatened our community."

The visit comes amid ongoing concerns about the treatment of minorities in India, attacks on freedom of expression, and the shrinking space for dissent. The Sikh Federation (UK) call on all UK-based religious and civic institutions to exercise caution and avoid providing legitimacy to groups linked to religious polarisation or extremist majoritarian politics.

We urge public figures and community institutions to stand with those affected by hate, repression and political intimidation, rather than normalising organisations associated with such harm.

ENDS

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