

## **URGENT COMMUNICATION TO PRIME MINISTER REGARDING INSULT TO SIKH COMMUNITY**

To the Prime Minister

### **Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations reject Government's Places of Worship Taskforce and their plans to open places of worship last**

On 11 May 2020, the government announced that places of worship would reopen in the third and final phase of the government's "COVID-19 recovery strategy", with 4 July earmarked as the earliest date this could happen.

Places of worship have shockingly been put into the same category as pubs, restaurants and cafes, hairdressers, libraries, museums and cinemas. This is totally unacceptable and shows a complete disrespect to places of worship and those that regularly use them.

In an attempt to silence those from faith communities the government announced the setting up of a Places of Worship Taskforce and to look into whether individual prayer might be permitted before places of worship fully reopen.

The 8-week lockdown period should have been used by government to work with Gurdwaras and other places of worship to prepare them to safely open with social distancing.

Instead Ministers have met individuals from the Sikh community that have little or no direct contact with Gurdwaras. Not surprisingly most of them have advised Gurdwaras should remain closed.

On Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May, the government set up a new Places of Worship Taskforce and lost all credibility by appointing a so-called Sikh faith leader who has never been involved in running a Gurdwara, is not a practising Sikh, is from a controversial organisation that is often critical of Gurdwaras and that has been forced to apologise for inappropriate and offensive remarks about the Sikh way of life on multiple occasions.

Gurdwaras have developed guidelines to open safely with limited numbers of the public, while adhering to social distancing that were sent to Ministers a week ago, through two large national Sikh organisations representing the majority of Gurdwaras.

**We ask you to take urgent action to restore some confidence among Sikhs that the Government is not completely lacking literacy about Sikhs and further values and respects the British Sikh community as any others.**

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