

PRESS RELEASE

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Wednesday, 30 September, 2020

Sikh Council UK stands in solidarity with the farmers opposing the new Act passed by the Indian Parliament.

Farmers in the Sikh state of Punjab, and across India, are united in protesting against the agricultural legal ordinances instituted by the Lok Sabha and passed in the Rajya Sabha via a very questionable “voice vote” (which many of its members disputed and asked for a division vote which was not considered by the Chair).

Punjab Assembly with its foresights has already rejected this bill on state level.

The legislation that came into force on 24th September 2020 has been widely condemned by labourers, farmers, and over 30 farmers unions across Punjab and all over India. Opposition parties have called the laws discriminatory, placing the interests of capitalists and corporations above those of everyday farmers and labourers. Protests in Punjab, at hundreds of sites all over the state, have severely disrupted highways and railway lines emanating from New Delhi into Punjab and Haryana, blocking all transport since September 24th.

This new legislation is controversial for a number of reasons, it abolishes long standing agricultural subsidies known as the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and enabling corporations to dictate crop prices, disrupting the fragile balance of power between farmers and the market.

Farmers are also concerned that dictated crop prices will influence crop rotations and planting practices undermining ecological balance and further draining groundwater levels, a long standing contentious issue between Punjab and the Indian government. What has been unique about these protests is that farmers and labourers have rejected overtures from opposition parties for not acting in their interest.

This is unprecedented, yet even his radical step has not endeared the political elite to the Punjabi people. The protests have been led and organised at a grassroots level by the farmers themselves, becoming a watershed moment in the strenuous relationship between Sikhs and the Indian State. Sikhs all across the diaspora have been united in their opposition to these new laws.

The Sikh Council UK stands in solidarity with all farmers resisting these clear exploitative laws, which are detrimental to the livelihoods of all farmers and labourers. We urge the Indian government to immediately repeal these laws and respect its own constitutional requirements and process which has not been adhered to in the passing of these laws. We request Sikhs all across the world and other communities as well as human rights organisations to support the resistance of farmers and labourers in whatever way possible.

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