

PRESS RELEASE

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Tuesday 20th October, 2020

Sikh Council UK: Respect for *Anand Karaj* (Sikh Marriage) is paramount

On 14th October 2020, Sri Akal Takth Sahib, the highest spiritual and temporal authority of the Sikh faith conveyed a message to all Sikhs highlighting the sacrileges committed by a Canadian individual, Sarbjit Neel. Neel is also known by other names such as 'Freedom Singh' or 'Sikh Priest' to the media and general public.

Sri Akal Takth Sahib has instructed *sangat* in proximity of 'Freedom Singh' to work with local authorities and remove from his possession any *saroop* (published volumes) of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee. **Sikh Council UK welcomes this timely decision.**

There has been widespread outrage in the international Sikh community regarding 'Freedom Singh' and his wife Leela. They have violated many aspects of *Sikh Maryada* (Sikh practice) for several years. This includes:

1. Conducting *Anand Karaj* at 'destination-wedding' venues which is contrary to the '16th March 1998' *Sandesh* (edict) of Sri Akal Takth Sahib.
2. Conducting interfaith *Anand Karaj* against the 16 August 2007 *Sandesh* of Sri Akal Takth Sahib.
3. Transporting *saroop* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee in a suitcase to conduct destination weddings. **This is highly disrespectful** and does not meet even the basic criteria for the Sikh procedure that is used when Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee is transported.
4. Attempting to carry out the *Anand Karaj* of a same-sex couple defying the 16 January 2005 *Sandesh* of Sri Akal Takth Sahib.

SCUK continues to '*be guided by the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as interpreted by Guru Khalsa Panth through the institution of Sri Akal Takht Sahib Ji*'.

We remain respectful of the sexual orientation and marriage choices of all people. Sikhs believe the message and blessings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee are accessible to all of humanity.

However, the *Anand Karaj*, like other religious weddings, can only be performed for heterosexual couples adopting the Sikh faith. In the UK, *The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013* places 'no compulsion to solemnize' same sex marriages by religious organisations such as Gurdwaras. In fact, places of worship cannot register to conduct such weddings without the written consent of their governing body.

All *Anand Karaj* must take place in the Gurdwara, we condemn the transport of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee to inappropriate venues such as hotels, resorts and pubs.

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