

PRESS RELEASE

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The Sikh Community once again faces censorship on social media following the earlier blocking of the #Sikh hashtag

The Sikh Council UK has today received a swathe of reports from Gurdwaras (Sikh places of Worship), Sikh Organisations and Sikh Individuals that Facebook posts they have made going back over a period of many years have today been blocked and resulted in both permanent and temporary bans for reasons that don't appear to hold sway.

As the Sikh community pays its respects and remembers the thousands of Sikhs murdered in a targeted anti-Sikh genocide in November 1984 in India, they are finding that their posts on the matter are being censored. This is particularly painful as many Sikhs lost friends and relatives in that genocide and the censorship of our remembrance is to deny our history.

These reports comes on the heel of the blocking of the #Sikh hashtag on Facebook and Instagram earlier this year, two of the largest social media platforms. The incident came to light in early June during the run-up to the anniversary of the Indian army assault on the most popular Sikh religious centre in Amritsar in 1984.

We call upon social media platforms to establish a dialogue with the Sikh Council UK and other Sikh stakeholders to identify Sikh historical figures being reported for censorship. Social media platforms need to consider whether blocking posts is the suppression of freedom of speech and expression.

Where content is restricted, there must be a clear mechanism within social media platforms to appeal the decision and have it reviewed by a human moderator well versed in the nuances of this topic. Social media platforms need to be aware that they are open to mass abuse by organised elements seeking to silence whole communities, their mechanisms need to be resilient to avoid this abuse. It's abhorrent that the followers of a major world religion are facing this level of censorship.

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