

## Sikh Human Rights Group (Sikh in France)

Thank you. It's important for the state to ensure that the youth from a minority are not excluded from public life, public office and integration. I speak on behalf of the Sikh youth of France and the predicament they continue to face from an uninformed application of the Laïcité law. From the school to state jobs and public office, the youth of the Sikh community in France is obstructed from participation.

In fact, they are denied normal schooling and grow in isolation in the schooling system, made to appear as pariahs, away from their peer group. While we understand the French position on secularism and the exclusion of religious sites from the state system and public life, we are surprised that this country of philosophers hasn't been able to appreciate diverse concepts of philosophy and cultural concepts.

Its narrow interpretation of history based simply on its Abrahamic past is a little eccentric if not outdated and colonialist. At the World Conference Against Racism, it was appreciated that not all Sikhs are religious. Many Sikhs wear a turban not because they are religious, but because they are of the Sikh community. Although France was one of the first countries to agree to this at WCAR Durban. Interestingly, it chooses to see all Sikhs as religious and the turban as a religious sign despite different explanations.

Of the five reasons given by France to enforce Laïcité law, none apply to Sikhs and its officials concede that. It is irrational to apply a rule that fails the grounds. We urge France to show some plurality in its understanding of worldviews and philosophy. It should not unilaterally box people into a category even when they don't accept that categorization. Excluding children of the Sikh community from schools and public life because they wear turbans is a violation of human rights and a discriminatory practice, it is not what France agreed at WCAR.

We hope the forum will intervene to negotiate an end to this mistreatment and exclusion of the youth of a minority from proper integration. Thank you.