

Sikh Human Rights Group

In the last two days, we have heard frustration of minority youth in many countries. They talk of barriers and marginalization that prevent the youth from realizing their potentials and enjoying their culture. I bring you a different experience where the state has been positively inclusive and reached out to minority youth, successfully integrating them in mainstream life without affecting their distinctive culture.

The United Kingdom needs complementing for the approach it took since 2002. It has shown a way of enabling minority youth to be agents of change for peace and stability. Following some riots in northern cities, the government realized that some minorities do not engage effectively in a rigid secular system, so they set up a Faith Communities Unit, which subsequently became Integration and Faith Division at the Department of Communities and local government. This has enabled both the older and the younger generations of minority communities to engage with government and diffuse problems and flashpoints before they get out of hand. Importantly, the division listens to younger voices and tries to change attitudes and policies across various government departments by arranging face-to-face meetings. There is notable change in the confidence with which youth of minorities have participated in various aspects of public life, such as standing for parliamentary elections, or high office in government sectors, and even in the private sector. The department has encouraged youth in anti-extremist dialogue, too, breaking down barriers between state, minority youth, and various communities. Alas, this is not seen across all sectors. For instance, in the diplomatic field, all the media, the public finance BBC is still run by a white middle-class cartel whose idea of diversity is accommodating race, but not the cultural diversity of the nation. It will gradually get there as minority youth demand accountability. We hope the UK will showcase its model as an example of best practice for reaching out to minority youth to become the agents of peace and stability.