

# WORKING TOWARDS A PLURALISTIC FUTURE

NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP  
NGO WITH SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

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# WELCOME TO OUR JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER

## DIRECTORS NOTE

BY DR JASDEV SINGH RAI (SHRG DIRECTOR) (LONDON OFFICE)

The Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) is now engaged in a wide range of activities and fields. The common factor in all of them is a SHRG perspective to global, national and local issues, encapsulated in the words, Pluralism, Dignity and Ecodiversity.

In the last few months the Sikh Human Rights Group has participated in the 52nd and 53rd Regular Sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Council as well as the United Nations High Level Political Forum on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) along with quite a few other United Nations events and meetings.

The Sikh Human Rights Group's side event on Menstrual Health issues was very successful with quite a few countries attending it. The United Nations Population Fund's Assistant Director at Geneva was one of the speakers along with the Joint Secretary from Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall. There was an inventor of biodegradable menstrual products and the key speaker was a Senator from Kenya who has managed to push her country to provide free menstrual hygiene products. Her success could be a turning point for women all over the world who are not only charged to manage an aspect of their health that is not in their gift to avoid but also taxed by Governments. On the other hand hair growth products that are used by men and are not really a necessity in nature, but are exempt from tax. It is clearly an issue of gender discrimination.

Many NGOs have expressed interest in joining the campaign to get rid of the tax on menstrual products - a report will be published in our next newsletter.

The SHRG held meetings with a number of Ambassadors and State officials to discuss our proposed Declaration on Diversity. More countries are interested in the proposal. Once we get a reasonable number of States on board, we hope it will be taken up as a serious proposal to compliment the Durban Declaration of 2001.

The Sikh Neurodiversity Networks support events have become regular features in four Gurdwaras. The SHRG has been very pleased by the satisfaction and hope seen in families with children on the Autism spectrum and who felt a lack of support by the community before the project started in 2020.

Currently the Sikh Human Rights Group is preparing for the COP 28 that will be held in Dubai in December 2023. It is hoped that the SHRG will get an opportunity to hold a side event and an exhibition space to show case the work of Nishan-e- Sikhi, Khadur Sahib, who are affiliated with the SHRG for international forums.

We are greatly enthusiastic about our internship and volunteer programme that gives young people an immense amount of experience and knowledge about the United Nations and how international affairs really work, within a short space of time. Over twenty young people have benefitted from this. In this newsletter, we have the testimony of one volunteer from the United States who felt very pleased with the programme. We hope that she and others will find the programme valuable in their careers.

The SHRG will continue to engage with other departments and activities of the United Nations. One of our Human Rights Officers has been engaged with the Sustainable Development Goals. We hope to give you more information about our work in this field in our next newsletter.

Please contact us if you wish to support or participate in any capacity.

Yours sincerely,

*Dr Jasdev Singh Rai*

# WELCOME TO OUR JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER

## EDITORS NOTE

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER & PROJECT COORDINATOR AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

Welcome to the June 2023 edition of the Sikh Human Rights Group's monthly newsletter informing you of our ongoing work. Unfortunately, we are not able to cover everything that we do in this brief newsletter. Nevertheless, and as you will see we are engaged in a wide variety of domestic and international human rights issues to promote our founding doctrine of Pluralism.

We have also taken on a number of interns and volunteers who take up research, take notes during United Nations conferences and events and write reports. Consequently, we always try to encourage them to contribute to our newsletter.

If you would like to get involved in any of our ongoing projects or for anything else then please contact me via: [carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)

I very much hope that you enjoy the contents of this edition.

Yours sincerely,

*Mr Carlos Arbuthnott*



(Mr Carlos Arbuthnott)



GURDWARA SRI GURU  
SINGH SABHA

SOUTHALL

shrg  
SIKH HUMAN  
RIGHTS GROUP

# SEND After School Club

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Every Wednesday from 4:30pm to 5:30pm

At Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Upstairs Hall)

2-8 Park Avenue, Southall, UB1 3AG



LET'S LEARN ABOUT ...

GURDWARA SAHIB

SIKH CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

SENSORY PLAY

KIRTAN

STORIES - SAKHIES

SIKH RHYMES

MUCH MORE



PLAY. LEARN. GROW.

**For more information please contact Mr Carlos Arbuthnott via:**

[carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)



# Art & Craft Workshop

**SEND** FAMILIES ONLY

EVERY **TUESDAY** FROM **4:30 PM** TO **5:30 PM**

GURDWARA SRI GURU SINGH SABHA SOUTHALL,  
PARK AVENUE, GIANI DITT SINGH HALL, UBI 3AG

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT VIA:  
[CARLOS.ARBUTHNOTT@SHRG.NGO](mailto:CARLOS.ARBUTHNOTT@SHRG.NGO)

See you there!



# Don't forget to obtain your child's FREE ticket for our Brand New West London SEND Football Club Training Session

AFTER A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL START, OUR NEXT TRAINING SESSION AT RECTORY PARK FOOTBALL CENTRE (UB5 5FA) WILL BE ON 02 AUGUST 2023 FOR 1 HOUR BETWEEN 16:30 AND 17:30. OPEN TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 5 - 16.

## Upcoming Dates:

02 August 2023

We will then migrate to hosting weekly SEND football training sessions.

## Venue:

Rectory Park Football Centre, Middlesex FA, Ruislip Road, Northolt, UB5 5FA

Cost: Free

To book your place or your child's place or for more information please scan the QR code below or contact Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer & Project Coordinator) via:

[carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)

**"Football gives you the confidence not to hide your disability and shows you can do amazing things..."**

**Liam Irons**

**England Cerebral Palsy Team Star**



SCAN ME





**Do you require support around a recent diagnosis, understanding your child's needs or behaviour or navigating all aspects surrounding Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?**

**Then please join our FREE FULL DAY parent and carer training session on Saturday the 05 August 2023.**

**The session will be led by Dr Pawan Rajpal a consultant from the Priory Hospital and a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.**

**Dr Pawan Rajpal specialises in Autism, ADHD, PTSD, addictions and complex health diagnoses.**

**We will cover the following topics as well as an audience Q&A:**

- **Super parenting skills, for bringing up children in today's fast-paced world.**
- **How to manage challenging behaviours.**
- **What communication techniques work best with those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?**
- **The importance of working together to eradicate the stigma of additional needs in our community.**

**Date: 05 August 2023 (Saturday)**

**Time: 10:00 - 17:00 (2 Short Breaks x 1 Lunch Break)**

**Address: Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Slough, Bhai Mani Singh Learning Centre (New Classroom), Sheehy Way, Berkshire, Slough, SL2 5SS.**

**N.B. Open to all members of the public. The training session will be run in both English and Punjabi.**

**For more information please contact Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer & Project Coordinator at the Sikh Human Rights Group) via:**

**[carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)**



**(Dr Pawan Rajpal)**



**SCAN ME**



# UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 53RD REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



**Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises**

To watch the full video please click [here](#)

On Tuesday the 27th of June 2023 Mr Albert Barseghyan (Human Rights Officer at the SHRG) made the following oral submission at the 53rd Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. Specifically, at the Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises.

## **Full Text:**

'Further to our written statement and consistent with **paragraph 13** of this working groups report **A/HRC/50/40**, requiring States to meet their duty to protect human rights under Pillar I of the UNGPs on Business and Human Rights, the Sikh Human Rights Group would like to suggest that:

- The particulars of this intended smart mix still need to be clarified further; and
- That this working group undertakes consultations with relevant stakeholders including civil society at large on at least the following matters:

(1) Why too few States and businesses have offered their constructive criticisms and/or support for the Binding Legal Instrument when both are needed?

(2) The extent to which all relevant stakeholders understand the forthcoming practical operation of the UNGPs and the Binding Legal Instrument. In other words, do they believe that the Binding Legal Instrument will serve to enhance the current matrix derived from the UNGPs or whether it will operate as an unconnected instrument of international human rights law?

This would not only increase transparency, engagement and accountability between stakeholders, but it would also provide civil society organisations and UN Treaty Bodies with the opportunity to pre-empt the major areas of contention or difference between stakeholders. This in turn would allow all relevant stakeholders to strategize accordingly as we move into the next decade of action...'



# UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

## 53RD REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

On 22 June 2023, Ms Bethan Walters (Human Rights, Communications and Media Officer at the SHRG) made an oral statement at the Interactive Dialogue with the United Nations Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls.

### **Purpose of the mandate:**

Women and girls everywhere are still subject to significant disadvantages as a result of discriminatory laws and practices. Equality has not been achieved in any country in the world, and pledges to eliminate discriminatory laws have not been fulfilled.

The UN Working Group's mandate was created to intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls throughout the world.

### **About the mandate:**

At its 15th Regular Session in 2010, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted [Resolution 15/23](#) to establish a Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

When renewed in June 2019 through [Resolution 41/6](#), the mandate name was changed from the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and Practice to the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls. The mandate was renewed again in June 2022 through [Resolution 50/18](#).

### **Members:**

The Working Group is composed of five independent experts of balanced geographical representation, working collectively as a group and producing work in the name of the mandate.

### **The SHRGs oral statement:**

Last year Ms Bethan Walters submitted an oral statement at the UN's first-ever panel on Menstrual Hygiene Management, Human Rights and Gender Equality, and during this year's meeting, they referenced the panel and accepted its recommendations.

### **Please find the SHRGs most recent oral statement (June 2023) below:**

*'Despite over 50% of the population experiencing menstruation at some stage in their life, we still see much of the world treating it as a luxury or choice rather than an involuntary natural occurrence. For instance, the taxing of menstrual products and, where not taxed, charging beyond the means of many, especially those living in poverty, is an example of gender discrimination.*

*The Sikh Human Rights Group recognises that menstruation has been stigmatised, undereducated, and even used as a tool for discrimination, and we've made suggestions and recommendations in our written statement.*

*We urge governments to follow the examples set by Kenya and Scotland by implementing policies that provide free menstrual products in all public places. Such initiatives eliminate financial barriers, improve school and work attendance rates, and reduce stigma.*

*Menstruation should also be discussed as a vital aspect of health education rather than just a hygiene topic. Broadening our discourse on menstruation, we can challenge gendered-based tax discrimination on menstrual products, delve into the health, ethical, and environmental implications of menstrual products, and address issues around gender equality, child marriage, reproductive health, education, and water and sanitation with the gravitas they deserve.*

*By ensuring access, affordability, education, and safety, menstruators can live with dignity and without discrimination...'*

**To watch the full video please click [here](#)**

**If you like the sound of this project and you would like to become involved then please contact Ms Bethan Walters via: [bethan.walters@shrg.ngo](mailto:bethan.walters@shrg.ngo)**

# SHRG UPDATE RE: UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 2023

BY MR IVAN LORENCI DE FRANCISCO (HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER AT THE SHRG)  
(GENEVA OFFICE)

Committed to the promotion of sustainable development and the promotion of human rights, the SHRG is going one step further and will participate for the first time in the upcoming United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). Our colleague Mr Albert Barseghyan (Human Rights Officer at the SHRG) will participate in this annual forum which will take place between 10 July 2023 and 19 July 2023.

But what is this forum? The HLPF serves as a critical platform for promoting and reviewing progress towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and its significance cannot be overstated.

The HLPF brings together global leaders, diplomats from all countries, members of civil society and stakeholders from around the world. During this forum, participants take stock of progress, identify potential challenges and share best practices with the aim of catalysing action towards achieving the SDGs by 2030. In this way, we will be able to develop innovative approaches that will enable us to address the issues that hinder sustainable development.

The importance of the SDGs lies in their nature. They provide a comprehensive roadmap to address the world's most pressing needs. Whether it is to eradicate poverty or promote gender equality, the SDGs provide a framework that integrates the socio-economic and environmental dimensions needed to achieve them. In this way, thanks to the SDGs, strategies, public policies and actions can be coordinated to achieve a more sustainable and equitable future. The HLPF is one of the best ways to unleash the power of collective action to build resilient communities, empower the marginalised, protect the planet and build a prosperous future together.

For more information on the HLPF 2023 please click [here](#)



# PERSONAL REFLECTIONS RE: VOLUNTEERING WITH THE SHRG

BY MS APRIL HAMILTON (HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (NEW YORK OFFICE)

I began working as an intern for the Sikh Human Rights Group in June 2022, drafting newsletters, attending COP27 sessions virtually, authoring documents, and getting to know my colleagues. During this time, I also had the fantastic opportunity to lead a webinar on Mental Illness in Black and Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC) communities.

While my work was gratifying, I never expected what would come next. In October 2022, my supervisor informed me that I was invited to the 52nd Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland. While at the Human Rights Council, I attended several sessions, notably the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, the Interactive Dialogue on the Report of Human Rights Experts in Nicaragua, and the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Religion. Not only did I learn about the issues themselves, but I also gained a deeper understanding of the way in which the United Nations functions and the various dynamics between the delegates and the countries they represent.

I did have a method when deciding which events to choose. The Sikh Human Rights Group prides itself on its dedication to improving the lives of as many people as possible and bettering the environment. Each session I attended pertained to our interests, especially the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Religion.

Being in a room with so many experts and representatives incredibly well versed in their fields and where discussions of global importance were being undertaken was surreal but also something that I hope to experience again.

Regarding the Sikh Human Rights Group itself, I finally had the opportunity to meet my Geneva colleagues in person. Considering I spent the past nine months connecting with them over Zoom with a 6-hour time difference, this was a welcome change.

I am genuinely thankful to have had this experience and look forward to continuing my work with the organisation.



(Ms April Hamilton)

# United Nations Engagement Opportunities 2023

Want to contribute to a written and oral  
statement at the United Nations  
Human Rights Council?



We are currently searching for secondary school and undergraduate students to help us prepare our written and oral statements on climate change adaptation and mitigation for the United Nations Human Rights Councils 2023 Regular Sessions:

We want to empower you to have your say, at a truly international event, on how every member of our global society can overcome the many challenge and issues of climate change

Through online presentations and simple practical projects you will learn more about the United Nations and how you can become involved

Enhance your CV and UCAS applications whilst simultaneously learning more about climate change and how it can be overcome

To apply please send an expression of interest statement to:

[carlos.arbutnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbutnott@shrg.ngo)