



HOUSE OF LORDS

Report from the Commissioner for Standards

The conduct of Lord Singh of Wimbledon

Code of Conduct for Members, Guide to the Code of Conduct and Code of Conduct for Members' Staff

The present Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords was agreed on 30 November 2009. Amendments to it were agreed by the House on 30 March 2010, 12 June 2014, 25 February 2016, 9 February 2017, 3 April 2017, 30 April 2019, 18 July 2019, 16 March 2020 and 8 July 2020.

The Guide to the Code of Conduct was proposed by the Committee for Privileges (2nd Report, Session 2009–10, HL Paper 81) and agreed by the House on 16 March 2010. The Guide was amended on 9 November 2011, 6 March 2014, 13 May 2014, 24 March 2015, 25 February 2016, 9 February 2017, 3 April 2017, 30 April 2019, 18 July 2019, 16 March 2020 and 8 July 2020.

The Code of Conduct for House of Lords Members' Staff was agreed on 13 May 2014. Amendments to it were agreed on 24 March 2015, 30 April 2019, 18 July 2019, 16 March 2020 and 8 July 2020.

Review

The Codes and Guide are kept under review by the Conduct Committee. Recommended changes are reported to the House and take effect when agreed by the House.

The members of the Conduct Committee are:

Baroness Anelay of St Johns
Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood
Cindy Butts (lay member)
Mark Castle (lay member)
Andrea Coomber (lay member)
Dr Vanessa Davies (lay member)
Baroness Donaghy
Baroness Hussein-Ece
Lord Mance (Chairman)

Advice

The Registrar of Lords' Interests advises members of the House and their staff on their obligations under the Codes of Conduct.

Address: Registrar of Lords' Interests, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

Email: lordsregistrar@parliament.uk

Telephone: 020 7219 3112/3120

Registers of Interests

A list of interests of members and their staff can be found online:

<http://www.parliament.uk/hlregister>

Commissioner for Standards

The independent Commissioner for Standards is responsible for considering any alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct.

Address: The Commissioner for Standards, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

Email: lordsstandards@parliament.uk

Telephone: 020 7219 7152

Website: www.parliament.uk/hl-standards

Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Helpline

0808 168 9281 (freephone) Support@ICGShelpline.org.uk

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Summary	7
Chapter 1: Introduction	9
Chronology and process	9
Relevant aspects of the Code	10
Parliamentary Behaviour Code and definitions of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct	10
Chapter 2: Principles relating to investigations and outcomes	12
Natural justice and fairness	12
Proportionality	13
Remedial action	13
Sanctions imposed by the House	13
Agreed resolution	14
Openness and transparency	14
Chapter 3: Account of the key facts and evidence	16
Timeline of investigation	16
Preet Kaur Gill MP's complaint	16
Lord Singh's response	19
Proposal for mediation	22
APPG for British Sikhs	23
Lord Singh's engagement with the APPG	24
Ms Kaur Gill as chair of the APPG	24
Lord Singh's requests for an opportunity to address the APPG	25
Analysis	27
ONS meeting	28
Analysis	29
Sunny Hundal article	30
Analysis	30
Tweets	31
Analysis	33
Network of Sikh Organisations and the Sikh Federation (UK)	33
The Network of Sikh Organisations and Lord Singh	33
The Sikh Federation (UK) and Ms Kaur Gill	34
Analysis	34
Impact of Lord Singh's conduct on Preet Kaur Gill	35
Chapter 4: Response to draft factual report	38
Lord Singh's response to the draft factual report	38
Chapter 5: Findings and outcome	39
Is the conduct complained of proven?	39
Does Lord Singh's behaviour amount to harassment?	40
Was Lord Singh's conduct unwanted?	40
Was Lord Singh's conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic?	41
Has Lord Singh's conduct created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for Ms Kaur Gill/the perception of Ms Kaur Gill?	41
The other circumstances of the case	41
Is it reasonable for the conduct to have that effect?	42
Finding	42
Does Lord Singh's behaviour amount to bullying?	42

Finding	43
Conclusion	43
Appendix 1: Factual report	44
Appendix 2: Lord Singh's response to the draft factual report	99

The Conduct of Lord Singh of Wimbledon

SUMMARY

In July 2019, Preet Kaur Gill MP made a complaint about the conduct of Lord Singh of Wimbledon.

In brief, her complaint was that Lord Singh's conduct towards her as Chair of the APPG for British Sikhs constituted a breach of the Code of Conduct. She alleged that his behaviour had been rude and bullying. She said that his behaviour towards previous chairs of the APPG, all of whom had been men, had been professional. She therefore considered that his conduct towards her was as a result of her sex, and therefore constituted harassment.

Ms Kaur Gill provided various examples to support her complaint. These included articles published by the Network of Sikh Organisations (of which Lord Singh is the Director), a press article on the website barficulture.tv, and a chain of emails between Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill's office.

Lord Singh rejected Ms Kaur Gill's allegations. He considered that Ms Kaur Gill had misused her position as Chair of the APPG to support the Sikh Federation (UK) (an organisation which provides the secretariat to the APPG but whose work Lord Singh objects to) and to promote a policy view with which he fundamentally disagreed.

The issue at the heart of their disagreement concerned how Sikhs are recorded on the census for England and Wales.

Since 2001, the census has collected data on religious affiliation, for which a specific Sikh "tick box" is included. Ms Kaur Gill, and others, have campaigned that a Sikh "tick box" ought also to be an option available in the section of the census on ethnicity. She considered that the inclusion of a Sikh "tick box" would allow for more accurate data collection about the Sikh community in England and Wales which, in turn, would affect how public funding might be spent to support Sikh-related issues. Lord Singh, and others, object to the inclusion of a Sikh "tick box". He considered that recording "Sikh" as an ethnicity would be wrong and contrary to the tenets of Sikhism.

Following investigation, I concluded that a finding of harassment could not be supported by the evidence. While there was discourteous conduct demonstrated towards Ms Kaur Gill, the evidence did not demonstrate on the balance of probabilities that this could reasonably be ascribed to Ms Kaur Gill's sex. For example, Ms Kaur Gill noted that one reason for Lord Singh's approach might be that since her election he was no longer the leading Sikh voice in Parliament. Lord Singh explained that he had treated previous APPG chairs differently as they had not been Sikhs. Once Ms Kaur Gill had been elected, he considered the APPG and its policy positions a matter worth being involved with.

Similarly, I concluded that a finding of bullying could not be demonstrated on the balance of probabilities. Essential to a finding of bullying is evidence of a misuse or abuse of power, typically arising out of an imbalance of power between the two parties. In this instance, both Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill had a similar level of power: both were parliamentarians (which I consider to be the most important factor

in this parliamentary context) and both were supported by external organisations (Ms Kaur Gill, the Sikh Federation (UK); Lord Singh, the Network of Sikh Organisations).

As a result, I have dismissed Ms Kaur Gill's complaint.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. This report deals with a complaint made about Lord Singh of Wimbledon by Preet Kaur Gill MP under the provisions of the Code dealing with bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct.
2. In considering this complaint I have been supported by Quentin Colborn, Independent Investigator, Andrea Adams Consultancy, and Moriyo Aiyeola and James Whittle, two of the Clerks who assist me in my work. I wish to place on record my thanks to them for all their help, while also acknowledging that I am solely responsible for the conclusions reached and the decisions made in this investigation.
3. By its nature, any report into allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct will include content that some readers may find upsetting or offensive. My aim is to reflect fairly and fully the evidence I gather in the course of an investigation and not to censor or in any way minimise views expressed or material uncovered. I believe this transparency is essential to helping the House of Lords to be a workplace where everyone is valued and respected, and where it is clear that bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated. This means that reports into allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct will often make for difficult reading.
4. **The findings and discussions in this case relate to bullying, and to harassment associated with the protected characteristic of sex.**
5. **The report includes language that some readers may find offensive.**

Chronology and process

6. Following the receipt of Ms Kaur Gill's complaint I carried out a preliminary investigation to establish if the complaint engaged the Code of Conduct, and concluded that it did so.
7. On 13 September 2019, I informed Lord Singh of the complaint, sent him the details Ms Kaur Gill had provided to me, and asked for his written response.
8. Lord Singh replied on 23 September with his written response.
9. Quentin Colborn and I, with Moriyo Aiyeola supporting us, interviewed:
 - Lord Singh on 23 October 2019 and 16 March 2020;
 - Preet Kaur Gill MP on 20 January 2020 and 20 July 2020; and
 - an official with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), VW, on 24 April 2020.¹
10. In accordance with paragraph 155 of the Guide to the Code, I produced a draft report of the facts which I sent to Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill. Lord Singh's response is included at Appendix 2. Ms Kaur Gill did not provide a response.

¹ As noted, VW is an official with the Office for National Statistics. They have asked to remain anonymous for the purposes of this report. The initials used here, VW, bear no relation to their name.

11. This investigation has taken much longer than I would have wished. This is due to a variety of factors: recesses, a General Election, delays in receiving responses and the COVID-19 pandemic. I am grateful to all involved for their patience and engagement.

Relevant aspects of the Code

12. On 30 April 2019, the House agreed a revised Code of Conduct. This included, for the first time, explicit reference to the Parliamentary Behaviour Code. Paragraph 10 of the Code says:

“Members of the House should observe the principles set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code of respect, professionalism, understanding others’ perspectives, courtesy, and acceptance of responsibility. These principles will be taken into consideration when any allegation of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is under investigation.”

13. Paragraph 17 says that “Members are required to treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities with respect and courtesy” and makes clear that “behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of this Code.”
14. The revisions to the Code also expanded its scope where complaints of behaviour amounting to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct are concerned. For other types of conduct the Code’s remit is “the discharge of their parliamentary duties” and it does not extend to “duties unrelated to parliamentary proceedings, or to their private lives.” Paragraph 17 applies more broadly to “the standards of conduct expected of members in performing their parliamentary duties and activities whether on the Parliamentary estate or elsewhere.”

Parliamentary Behaviour Code and definitions of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct

15. The Parliamentary Behaviour Code, included as Appendix A to the Code of Conduct, sets out six principles of conduct:
- Respect and value everyone - bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated;
 - Recognise your power, influence or authority and don’t abuse them;
 - Think about how your behaviour affects others and strive to understand their perspective;
 - Act professionally towards others;
 - Ensure Parliament meets the highest ethical standards of integrity, courtesy and mutual respect;
 - Speak up about any unacceptable behaviour you see.
16. Appendix B of the Code defines bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct at some length, drawing from definitions included in the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report.

17. This report concerns allegations of bullying and harassment related to the protected characteristic of sex. It does not include any allegations of sexual harassment or other forms of sexual misconduct.

External investigator

18. Paragraph 139 of the Guide to the Code says:

“In cases involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, the Commissioner is supported by independent investigators. The Commissioner may delegate to the investigator to the extent she considers appropriate any of her investigatory functions.”
19. As noted above, in this case I was supported by Quentin Colborn, Independent Investigator, Andrea Adams Consultancy.
20. Whenever I work with an external investigator it is on the basis of a close, collaborative relationship in which I value their expertise, challenge and advice but where it is clearly understood that I maintain final responsibility of all investigative decisions, analysis of evidence, findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: PRINCIPLES RELATING TO INVESTIGATIONS AND OUTCOMES

21. I have now investigated a number of complaints under the revised provisions in the Code for dealing with bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. In each case I have applied the principles of natural justice, fairness, proportionality, openness, and transparency in reaching decisions as to the appropriate ways to proceed and sanctions to agree or recommend.

Natural justice and fairness

22. The Guide to the Code of Conduct states that:
- “In investigating and adjudicating allegations of non-compliance with this Code, the Commissioner and the Conduct Committee shall act in accordance with the principles of natural justice and fairness.”
(paragraph 137)
23. How the rules of natural justice apply to the respondent were extensively discussed in a previous investigation and may be consulted in the second report of that investigation.²
24. The requirement of fairness applies to both complainant and respondent, and here I set out how I interpret this principle.
25. I do not give any advantage to one or the other in the investigatory process; for both I offer the same options and conduct interviews in the same way. I seek documentary or third-party corroboration of any disputed evidence and assess the reliability of evidence using the same criteria for both parties, which does not include any assumption that status, power or reputation makes one person’s evidence inherently more reliable than that of someone of lesser status, power or reputation.
26. Where there are points in an investigation where the parties have to agree to a particular proposal, I will take particular care to ensure that agreement is freely given, and for the right reasons.
27. Paragraph 141 of the Guide to the Code says that “Members, and in cases involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct the complainant, are given an opportunity to review and, if they so wish, challenge the factual basis of any evidence supplied.”
28. Paragraph 155 of the Guide to the Code sets out the process for this, requiring me to “share with the member a summary of the evidence she has obtained upon which her findings will be founded, so that the member has an opportunity to comment on it. In cases involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, the Commissioner will provide the complainant with the same opportunities to challenge or comment on the evidence.”
29. Fairness also requires that where mediation is under consideration at an early stage in the investigation, any response to the complaint by the respondent will be made available to the complainant before mediation takes place, even if no report of the facts has been prepared.

2 Committee for Privileges and Conduct, Further report on the conduct of Lord Lester of Herne Hill (3rd Report, Session 2017–19, HL Paper 252)

30. The criteria for bullying and harassment largely overlap, such that a finding of harassment will often automatically provide good evidence of bullying. However, as a matter of fairness, where behaviour meets both definitions, I shall not make two findings on the same facts.

Proportionality

31. The next principle is that of proportionality. This is implicit in the Code and the Guide to the Code, which envisage a range of appropriate outcomes in the event of a breach. Some of these can be recommended by me but must be agreed by the Conduct Committee and imposed by the House. Others can be decided by me with the agreement of the complainant and respondent.

Remedial action

32. A sanction proposed by me and agreed to by the complainant and respondent is referred to as “remedial action”. The Guide to the Code sets out where such an outcome might be proportionate and what it might involve:

“Remedial action may be agreed if the complaint, though justified, is minor and is acknowledged by the member concerned.” (paragraph 146 of the Guide to the Code)

“In cases involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct any remedial action recommended at the end of an investigation will need to be agreed by both the member and the complainant and possibly negotiated through mediation. Remedial action in such cases may include the respondent apologising to the complainant or agreeing to attend appropriate training.” (paragraph 148 of the Guide to the Code)

33. “Minor”, in this context, does not mean trivial, and does not imply that the effect on the complainant has been minor. Rather, it acknowledges that in the full range of behaviours covered by the provisions, the behaviour complained of is at the lower end of the range.
34. In considering whether to agree to deal with a matter by remedial action, the consent of both complainant and respondent is required. Although this is necessary, it is not sufficient; I also have to decide that it is a proportionate response.
35. If the respondent is the subject of complaints relating to conduct similar to that previously dealt with by remedial action, I would take into account this apparent lack of modification in his or her conduct when considering whether further remedial action would be appropriate.

Sanctions imposed by the House

36. Some sanctions can only be imposed by the House: suspension, denial of access to services and expulsion. These are the more severe sanctions available and would be used where the behaviour complained of was at the higher end of the range.
37. It may also be necessary to resort to a sanction imposed by the House for less severe breaches if remedial action, even if considered proportionate by me, cannot be agreed by the parties or is not proportionate as it has proven to be ineffective in the past.

Agreed resolution

38. The Guide to the Code of Conduct also provides for an outcome prior to any finding by “agreed resolution”:

“At any time during an investigation involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct the Commissioner may reach an agreed resolution with both the complainant and the member under investigation. At the Commissioner’s discretion, such an agreed resolution can bring the investigation to an end. In this case, it is at the discretion of the Commissioner, having consulted the complainant and the member, whether a report is published on her webpages on the parliamentary website.” (paragraph 151)

39. This outcome differs from remedial action in that:
- No finding is reached;
 - No sanction is imposed (though the parties may agree to some action as part of the agreement); and
 - A report is not necessarily published. If no report is published, the existence of the complaint and investigation will remain confidential indefinitely.
40. The Guide to the Code does not stipulate when this course of action might be suitable but I would expect it to be the exception rather than the norm, and would expect it only to apply as a result of the particular circumstances of the case.
41. Two factors to which I would anticipate paying particular attention when considering a request for an agreed resolution would be the motivation behind any such request and the need for the enforcement of the Code of Conduct to be as open and transparent as possible.
42. In particular, I would want to be sure that a complainant was choosing an agreed resolution in his or her own interests, rather than those of the respondent, and that a respondent who disputed the accuracy of the complainant’s account was not agreeing to this outcome simply to avoid publicity.

Openness and transparency

43. The principle of openness and transparency may be relevant when considering proportionality.
44. If I, or the Conduct Committee, uphold a complaint, the Code requires that a report is published, naming the respondent.
45. Publication is not a sanction, but the effect of publication is, in my view, a matter that I can take into account when considering the proportionality of any sanction I may impose, as publicity may itself be a very effective catalyst for change in the respondent’s behaviour.
46. The educative benefits of openness and transparency require me in most, if not all, cases to publish in my report significant details of the respondent’s agreed and alleged behaviour, and its effects on the complainant. This is the case even though the respondent may be deeply embarrassed at the descriptions

of the behaviour, and the effects of the behaviour on the complainant, being made public. Publishing the details allows readers to assess whether their own behaviour requires modification to avoid the possibility of a complaint being made and upheld, and allows readers who may have been affected by similar or equivalent behaviour to recognise that they have a remedy. Both these effects, over time, should improve the working environment of the House of Lords.

CHAPTER 3: ACCOUNT OF THE KEY FACTS AND EVIDENCE

Timeline of investigation

47. The broad timeline of the investigation, and significant parliamentary occasions,³ was as follows:

24 July 2019	Complaint made via the Helpline
12 August 2019	Further details supplied by Ms Kaur Gill
28 August 2019	<i>Prorogation of Parliament</i>
13 September 2019	Investigation launched
23 September 2019	Lord Singh's written response received
8 October 2019	<i>Prorogation of Parliament</i>
24 October 2019	Interview with Lord Singh
6 November 2019	<i>Dissolution of Parliament</i>
19 December 2019	<i>State Opening of Parliament after 2019 General Election</i>
20 January 2020	Interview with Ms Kaur Gill
16 March 2020	Second interview with Lord Singh
March 2020	Correspondence with VW
March and April 2020	Correspondence with Ms Kaur Gill
24 April 2020	Interview with VW
June 2020	Further correspondence with VW
20 July 2020	Second interview with Ms Kaur Gill
July to September 2020	Further correspondence with Ms Kaur Gill
October and November 2020	Correspondence with Ms Kaur Gill and Lord Singh completing evidence gathering

Preet Kaur Gill MP's complaint

48. In July 2019, Preet Kaur Gill submitted a complaint concerning the conduct of Lord Singh of Wimbledon via the Houses of Parliament bullying and harassment helpline.⁴ As well as receiving a copy of her complaint via the Helpline, Ms Kaur Gill sent me a copy of her email to the Helpline which set out her complaint in almost identical terms:

“I am writing with a complaint about the bullying, sexism and harassment I have received from Lord Indarjit Singh.

3 As both parties in this investigation are parliamentarians the parliamentary occasions of late 2019 affected their availability. This particularly true for Ms Kaur Gill who stood for re-election in the December 2019 General Election.

4 Complaints of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct concerning members of the parliamentary community may be made via a dedicated helpline. At time of writing, this helpline can be contacted on 0808 168 9281 or support@ICGShelpline.org.uk

Since becoming an MP in 2017, I have been victim of a targeted, personal campaign of harassment, especially with regards to my role as Chair of the APPG for British Sikhs and our campaign to see a Sikh ethnic tick box included in the 2021 census. I have been repeatedly and unfairly criticised with public statements which consist of misinformation and smears, and Lord Singh has clearly sought to leverage his position to sow discord in the Sikh community, as well as bully and patronise me and my staff. This poor conduct has gone past a lack of professionalism to verge on a vendetta, and is, needless to say, completely disproportionate to my conduct as Chair of the APPG, our political disagreements notwithstanding. It has come to a point where I believe his behaviour towards me and my staff warrants disciplinary action and an investigation.

For background, I became the Chair of the APPG for British Sikhs in 2017, but the APPG was formed in 2005 and as has had Sikh Federation UK act as secretariat in all that time. According to the previous white, male, non-Sikh chairs, since Lord Singh assumed office in 2011 until 2017 when I became involved, he took next to no interest in the APPG for British Sikhs. Indeed, only when I became Chair of the APPG, did Lord Singh see fit to complain to the Labour Party about the Sikh Federation's position as secretariat. Due to this and the patronising manner of some of his comments, I suspect my being a woman is partly what has caused Lord Singh such consternation, and his abuse is meant to intimidate me from occupying a position of influence within the Sikh community.

Some examples:

In January 2018, I had a meeting with [VW] re. the tick box issue, with Lord Singh present. To reiterate, this campaign has been run by the APPG since its formation in 2005, long before my tenure, yet in this meeting Lord Singh sought to undermine my knowledge and experience. In the presence of [VW], with reference to some of the public health implications of data collection, he stated: "You know nothing about Sikhism, you are making lies that Sikhs drink alcohol." [VW] was quite shocked but did not challenge it, and tried to move the conversation on.

Following this meeting Lord Singh approached media outlets and pushed a story out via Sunny Hundal, who is a controversial figure in the Sikh community but also opposed to a tick box. He ran an article stating that 'a bitter row has broken' on 4th February 2018, in which Lord Singh says "I have ... contacted Preet Gill on several occasions to be allowed an opportunity to discuss my concerns on ethnic monitoring but she continues to evade my request". However, as the same article shows, I offered to meet him twice in September and December 2017. To this, his condescending response is recorded: "The offer of meeting up for a cup of tea seemed pointless and I ignored it. If she gives a convenient date for Lord Suri and me to discuss ethnic monitoring and other questionable policies of the Sikh Federation with the APPG. I will happily buy her a cup of tea." With this article, I provided comment about the sexism and misogyny at the root of his issue with me, and called out the undertones of his tea comment.

On the Network of Sikh Organisations website, in a post entitled “Response to misleading ‘APPG British Sikhs update’”, re. another matter, he incorrectly asserts that Sikhs from the Lords were “being excluded from the APPG”. Whilst there has occasionally been miscommunication in arranging meetings due to human error, this obviously a wild exaggeration. The article concludes: “Lord Singh, Lord Suri and Baroness Verma have subsequently made their position clear. They strongly object to the extremist SFUK running an APPG which should be for ALL Sikhs in Parliament and are unwilling to be part of the APPG while Preet Gill and SFUK are in charge.” Again, this is a distortion. Having subsequently spoken to Lord Suri and Baroness Verma, they have said they have no problem with me or the APPG and that this statement was put out without their consent. Lord Singh’s officer [...] had been instructed to post the article to exaggerate divisions in the Sikh community, which I would argue is an instance of Lord Singh inappropriately leveraging the privilege and influence of his position. This is not the first time, as he recently failed to disclose his directorship of the Network of Sikh Organisations when speaking in a recent Lords debate about the Offensive Weapons Bill, in another political dispute with me and the APPG.

On 10th March 2019, Lord Singh writes that I am a ‘supporter’ of the Sikh Federation in a critical article, when they are merely the APPG’s secretariat.

In ‘Common sense prevails: ONS say no to SFUK’s call for Sikh ‘ethnic’ tick box’ he writes that “it’s clear that the SFUK and Preet Gill MP are upset and angry”, citing no evidence, collapsing our roles into one and making an unnecessary personal comment that is designed to portray me as petulant. As an elected public servant, it is my duty to see that Sikhs are protected from discrimination. I wonder if Lord Singh would speculate about a male MP being ‘upset’ about a campaign issue?

In “Is APPG for British Sikhs truly representative?”—again, inaccurate account of the event. Attacks another well respected organisation Nishkam; “Preet Gill MP seemed irritated by both my presence at the meeting, and because I had raised an issue about which she had clearly not been briefed by the Sikh Federation UK, the official secretariat of the APPG.” Also: “Lord Suri and I, were perhaps, even more disappointed by the mute subservience of the 5 MPs.” This is again an instance of Lord Singh putting out inaccurate information in the public domain to undermine me. This is not Lord Suri’s view, so this is again an instance of Lord Singh abusing his position and authority to push his agenda.

Finally, I have a long chain of emails which exhibit Lord Singh’s bullying tendencies towards my researcher [...], who has been trying to organise a meeting for Lord Singh to deliver his case to the APPG on the tick box issue. These speak for themselves, and are included below.

These examples will I hope detail the nature of Lord Singh’s bullying, and I welcome the opportunity to talk in detail about his conduct. There are many more examples I could draw from his social media accounts as well, and other instances I am undoubtedly forgetting. Some supplementary email evidence is attached.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope we can arrange a meeting soon.”

49. In her complaint, Ms Kaur Gill also provided copies of email exchanges between Lord Singh and her office (see paragraph 5 of Appendix 1). The tweets and press releases by the Network of Sikh Organisations referred to by Ms Kaur Gill are also included in Appendix 1.

Box 1: Summary of ethnicity tick box disagreement

Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint referred to “the campaign to see a Sikh ethnic tick box included in the 2021 census”.

This issue was raised repeatedly by both Ms Kaur Gill and Lord Singh during this investigation. The purpose of this report is to consider whether Lord Singh breached the House of Lords Conduct, not to explore the details of the question of whether the Office for National Statistics (ONS) should include a “Sikh” ethnic tick box in the 2021 census. Both Ms Kaur Gill and Lord Singh explain their views on the question in their evidence, much of which is included in Appendix 1. However, it may be useful briefly to set out the issue.

The census for England and Wales collects data on both ethnicity and religion. Ethnicity data have been collected since 1991. Religious affiliation data have been collected since 2001. Currently the census includes a specific “Sikh” tick box under the religion section. Since 2011 there has been an “other, specify” free-text option in the ethnicity section. This allows Sikhs who wish to identify themselves as ethnically Sikh to do so.

In December 2018, the ONS published a review of data to be collected by the census. This review considered the options for ethnicity and did not recommend the inclusion of an ethnic tick box for “Sikh”. The review concluded that the data collected on religion provided sufficiently accurate information and the free-text option in the ethnicity section of the census allowed those who wished to identify themselves as ethnically Sikh the option to do so.

Broadly speaking, the APPG for British Sikhs, Ms Kaur Gill and the Sikh Federation (UK) favour the inclusion of a specific “Sikh” tick box in the ethnicity section. They argue that the benefit of having such a box would be that more complete data would be collected as the ethnicity section of the census is compulsory, whereas the religion section is not. Also, public bodies use the ethnicity data collected to plan and monitor the delivery of public services.

Lord Singh and the Network of Sikh Organisations oppose the inclusion of an ethnicity tick box as they argue that Sikhism is a world religion, unconnected with questions of ethnicity. For the census to present Sikhism as an ethnicity would therefore be inaccurate and reductive and, furthermore, would be contrary to the inclusive tenets of Sikhism.

Lord Singh’s response

50. When I wrote to Lord Singh to inform him that I had accepted Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint for investigation, I asked him for a written response to it. On 23 September 2019, Lord Singh emailed his written response:

“I was surprised to read Ms Gill’s complaint about me and hurt and appalled about her wholly unfounded smear of sexual harassment⁵ about which I am seeking legal advice. She has consistently misused her position as Chair of the APPG for Sikhs to further the agenda of the Sikh Federation, an extremist political party, and prevent me from raising genuine concerns of the wider Sikh community, but I never thought she would stoop to malicious smears in a formal complaint.

Ms Gill’s complaint is clearly simply an attempt to smear my reputation. She has consistently misused her position to prevent an alternative view to that of the extremist Sikh Federation being put to Members of Parliament. She misused her position to get more than 100 MPs to sign their support for the Federation policy of reducing a respected world religion practiced by people of different ethnicities, to a single ethnic group in furthering the Federation’s claim for a separated Sikh state in India. Most Sikhs oppose this attempt to downgrade our religion for supposed political gain. They rightly expect me to oppose this affront to Sikh religious teachings in Parliament.

The problem is that that Ms Gill has misused her position as Chair of the APPG to tell MPs, understandably not au fait with Sikh teachings, that the Federation’s political agenda is widely supported by the Sikh community. Ms Gill has also misused her position as Chair to freeze me out of APPG discussions. Most of the emails accompanying her complaint refer to my 2 years attempt to request Ms Gill to simply allow me an opportunity to provide those who signed support for Sikhs being called an ethnic group, with an alternative view held by many Sikhs. My requests have always been polite requests for a meeting with MPs who signed their support for the Federation position, to brief them on the actual pros and cons of calling Sikhs an ethnic group. The emails provided by Ms Gill show deliberate stalling by both her and her secretary. I even offered to help by sending out invitations if given the list of MPs. The offer was ignored. Instead, Ms Gill tried to patronise me with the offer of a chat. As the summer recess was drawing near, I reluctantly agreed to present my concerns to a smaller group at which only two non-Sikh MPs were present. My note of the meeting is attached.

Ms Gill feels that as a woman she has a right to use words like white, male, bullying, misogyny and patronising, as weapons to smear those who disagree with her. She absurdly contradicts herself in her appeal for special consideration. For example, in her complaint (page 5), she quotes me saying ‘it is clear that SFUK and Preet Gill MP are upset and angry’, she then uses this to suggest my comment was made to suggest she was ‘petulant’. How? The same comment also referred to the SFUK., mostly males!

Bullying .

This is a misuse of physical strength or authority. Correspondence shows that Ms Gill, as Chair of the APPG has misused her position to try to deprive me of a voice in APPG discussions. I would like to make a formal

⁵ For clarity, it should be noted that though Lord Singh’s response refers to sexual harassment, which is a form of sexual misconduct. This is not what Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint relates. Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint of harassment related to her sex.

complaint that Ms Gill has used her authority to bully me into accepting the Federation's political and anti-Sikh stance on ethnic monitoring.

Misogyny

The very suggestion to someone with a consistent record in speaking and writing on sex equality is deeply insulting. I see nothing in the email correspondence to corroborate the accusation.

In other correspondence, Ms Gill presents a total false and potentially liable accusation of a supposed comment I made in a meeting with [VW] (page 4). I would never speak to anyone in that way. 'You are making lies' is not even English! I do not speak broken English. Ms Gill should be asked to provide evidence or retract this statement and apologise. In the meeting,

I actually congratulated Ms Gill on her appointment as Shadow Overseas Aid Secretary and repeated my congratulations in a letter after the meeting suggesting it would be useful to meet and see if we could develop a common approach. In her reply she made no mention of her new allegation.

Ms Gill has also made other potentially libellous statements about me, and others who disagree with her on social media, some of which are attached. I would like to make a formal complaint against her about her use of language in a way that contravenes the parliamentary code.

Ageism

What is the relevance of writing 'the 86-year-old Peer' on page 23?

Is it acceptable language to get your colleagues to refer to someone respected by the Sikh and wider community as dinosaur? Why didn't she complain about their use of language? I would like to make a formal complaint about this misuse of language by Ms Gill and her Federation colleagues.

Patronising and condescending

She writes: 'I have not pursued the matter further legally given his age. Page 20. What is the relevance of her reference to age? I am reluctantly considering making a make a formal complaint about this.

I would very much like to meet you as soon as possible to explain the absurdity of Ms Gill's allegations and seek your advice on pursuing my fact backed complaints outlined above, and what can be done to prevent the Sikh APPG being used by a former proscribed political party in a way that affronts many Sikhs.

By way of background, I have made just two requests to the APPG on behalf of the wider Sikh community. The first, to be allowed to discuss the pros and cons of reducing Sikhism to ethnicity has been discussed above. The second was asking the APPG for support for Seva school, a Sikh school in Coventry to prevent the DfE merging it with a Sikh cult school. Ms Gill, after rudely asking who I was to be asking this, sided with the cult against parents and governors of the school. She was well-aware that I represent the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) which

is responsible for Sikh schools. In the event, the court decided in favour of Seva School and stopped the attempted merger.

It is easy to smear someone but far harder to remove all the mud thrown. My problem is time. This is the 350th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, and as one who represents Sikhs on national occasions like the Remembrance Service at the Cenotaph and the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey, I am having to travel the length and breadth of the country from Southampton to Peterborough, to Bradford and Edinburgh and other places to give talks on different aspects of Guru Nanak's teachings, while at the same time addressing important concerns in the Prisons chaplaincy and other urgent work.

Ms Gill's complaint is vexatious and to answer it in detail would mean going through hundreds of emails and social media posts. Unlike Ms Gill, I have neither staff nor time to help me further before the completion of my 350th-anniversary engagements in November. Yesterday I had to spend a full day speaking to four gurdwaras in Southampton.

I have provided a brief summary response to Ms Gill's smears which I believe make all too clear her disturbing readiness to use accusations of gender discrimination to prevent discussion of importance to the Sikh community. I believe the information provided more than refutes Ms Gill's complaint. It shows it to be malicious and deliberately hurtful.

I can give oral rebuttals of any point not covered in my reply and would be happy to meet at a time convenient to you. I will also be seeking your advice on pursuing my own complaints against behaviour mentioned above, not out of vindictiveness, but to curb Ms Gill's policy of preventing legitimate discussion on Sikh issues while turning the APPG for Sikhs into a mouthpiece for the extremist policies of the Sikh Federation.

I look forward to hearing from you. I am attaching a number of attachments showing the extent of Ms Gill's use of innuendo and unacceptable behaviour."

Proposal for mediation

51. Paragraph 151 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct provides for a case to end prior to a finding under an agreed resolution:

"At any time during an investigation involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct the Commissioner may reach an agreed resolution with both the complainant and the member under investigation. At the Commissioner's discretion, such an agreed resolution can bring the investigation to an end."⁶

52. Because of the clear policy disagreement informing the exchanges between Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill, and the possibility of a process of complaint and counter-complaint arising, I suggested to both parties that matters might be addressed through an agreed resolution of mediation.

⁶ This investigation was launched under the seventh edition of the Code of Conduct. References to the Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Code in this report are to the current, tenth Code available online at www.parliament.uk/hl-code. None of the changes made to the Code between the seventh and tenth editions are relevant to this case.

53. Both parties considered the opportunity for mediation, however as there was no unanimity to proceed, this option was not pursued.

APPG for British Sikhs

54. According to the Register of APPGs, the purpose of the APPG for British Sikhs is:

“To support and promote the interests of Sikhs in the UK, work with British Sikhs to celebrate Sikh culture in the UK, and ensure full equality for all British Sikhs.”⁷

Box 2: All-Party Parliamentary Groups

An All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) consists of Members of both Houses who join together to pursue a particular topic or interest. APPGs cover a diverse range of subjects and are established for a rich variety of purposes. However, they are not official parliamentary bodies (such as select committees).

According to the Guide to the Rules on All-Party Parliamentary Groups⁸, an APPG must meet at least twice during its reporting year, with one meeting being its Annual General Meeting (AGM) or a meeting which involves an inaugural election of officers. Formal meetings of the group must be advertised (normally at least one week in advance) in the All-Party Notices (an internally circulated list of the forthcoming meetings of all APPGs), together with details of a parliamentary contact for the group and a list of any external speakers.

The quorum for a formal meeting of the group is five Members of either House.

Beyond these formal requirements, APPGs are free to organise themselves as they wish. *How Parliament Works* describes this flexibility and variation:

*“APPGs meet as often as enthusiasm sustains them ... Some have formal secretaries and planned programmes; others may simply have a social event from time to time, perhaps with a guest speaker.”*⁹

55. In correspondence after our first interview, Ms Kaur Gill explained that the APPG had had two previous chairs (one acting as chair twice):

- Rob Marris MP (2005–2010);
- Fabian Hamilton (2010–2015); and
- Rob Marris (2015–2017).

56. She explained how members of the APPG were notified of meetings:

“A note is put on the all-party notice to ensure Peers and MPs can have advance sight and notice and an email to all MPs is sent round. An additional reminder to the vice-chairs is sent round if there is a need for the meeting to be quorate- for example an AGM.”

57. She also explained that the APPG only produced minutes for AGMs, rather than for all meetings.

7 Register Of All-Party Parliamentary Groups [as at 24 September 2020]: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/200924/british-sikhs.htm>

8 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/rules/guide.html#_idTextAnchor002

9 *How Parliament Works*, 7th edition, Robert Rogers and Rhodri Walters

58. She said that the Sikh Federation (UK) had provided the secretariat to the APPG since it was established in 2005.

Lord Singh's engagement with the APPG

59. Ms Kaur Gill said that her understanding was that “from the time that Lord Singh became a Peer in 2011, he was not a member of the APPG nor did he attend any APPG meetings or events until I became chair in 2017. Even following that he did not attend any meetings or events hosted by the [APPG] apart from the AGMs and the meeting set up for him to brief MPs on the census campaign.”
60. Lord Singh explained that although he had been involved with the APPG in its early years—saying that the current APPG had evolved out of an APPG for Punjabis—he had then not engaged once the Sikh Federation (UK) had become involved.
61. However, once Ms Kaur Gill and Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi¹⁰ had been elected, he decided to engage again:

“I thought, “Here are two Sikhs”, and the ethnicity or anything wasn’t pushed initially. And I hoped we could actually discuss Sikh issues and promote a wider understanding of Sikh teachings.”

62. In her interview on 20 July 2020, Ms Kaur Gill countered Lord Singh’s reasons for re-engaging with the APPG:

“it shouldn’t really matter whether I’m a Sikh or not because the APPG for British Sikhs is set up by cross-party MPs and Peers for them to campaign on the issues that are important for the Sikh community. These are not issues that I or my colleagues or we just drum up. These are because the community have been campaigning for them, writing to MPs on all sides of the House. So it’s very much about issues and not the personalities.”

Ms Kaur Gill as chair of the APPG

63. Lord Singh said that Ms Kaur Gill had used “her position as chair [of the APPG] to prevent me expressing the view of the majority of Sikhs in the UK.”
64. Ms Kaur Gill rejected Lord Singh’s claim that she had used her position as APPG chair to prevent him presenting his views. She described Lord Singh’s conduct at the APPG meetings from her point of view:

“He’s come to the APPG. He seems to be directing these kinds of comments towards me and he thinks he’s able to. [...] I’ve seen his behaviour in APPGs. You can ask a number of people that have attended the APPG, in terms of how it is very much directed at me. And that has been observed by others, it’s been picked up by others and it’s quite obvious is what I would say. He doesn’t hide the fact that he is so openly objectionable towards me.”

10 Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP, MP for Slough

65. Ms Kaur Gill believed that Lord Singh’s criticisms of her as chair of the APPG were because of her gender:

“And I have to say it is then, it is linked to my gender. Because, as I said before, the APPG was set up in 2005. This is a campaign it campaigned on in 2005 and has done subsequently since then. I only became an MP in 2017. All the previous chairs of the APPG have been white males.

I have spoken to both of them and they have said that they have never had any conversation with Lord Singh about the fact that they were leading on the Sikh ethnic tick box campaign on behalf of the Sikh community; he never engaged; he never attended the APPG meetings, he wasn’t writing articles against them. His voice was actually quite silent, if I’m really honest.

[...]

when he says “there is no question of gender”, of course there is a “question of gender” because suddenly you’ve had the first Sikh female MP in 2017 elected and all she’s doing is continuing the campaign that has gone on before her. And all of a sudden there are articles in the paper about her, about her views, maligning me, incorrect information, you know, challenging me, telling other Members of Parliament that the information I’m giving is incorrect; a whole heap of, actions that he has taken to date that absolutely suggest that this is only because I’m a woman and it is because I’m a Sikh woman”.

Lord Singh’s requests for an opportunity to address the APPG

66. Lord Singh told us that he had “tried for two years to get a proper discussion including briefing the MPs so they can make up their minds from information rather than have it made up for them.” One reason he said he wished to speak to the APPG was to address the over 100 MPs who had reportedly signed a letter in favour of the ethnicity tick box at the instigation of the APPG, supported by the Sikh Federation (UK).
67. Ms Kaur Gill provided copies of an email chain between Lord Singh and her office dating from 7 June to 21 June 2019 in which Lord Singh asked for a meeting with the APPG. Ms Kaur Gill’s office offered to arrange one (see Appendix 1). The emails then went into details about times, dates and room bookings. As the exchange progressed, Lord Singh took issue with the arrangements saying:
- “Your suggestion that this should take place next Tuesday 18th June, when today 13 June, we have neither a meeting time nor location is completely impractical.
- You need to give at least one week’s (preferably two weeks) notice to give time for interested parties to put it in their diaries. I also suggest that you invite a representative of the ONS to this important meeting.”
68. In response, Ms Kaur Gill’s office said that the purpose of the meeting was for Lord Singh to meet Ms Kaur Gill and the officers of the APPG. Lord Singh objected to this:

“I find your latest response to my request completely unsatisfactory. I have repeatedly asked for an opportunity to give members of the APPG

an opportunity to hear a non-Federation view on its suggestion that members of a world religion, born in different countries, constitute a single ethnicity.

Why are Preet Gill and her supporters in the Sikh Federation so afraid of open discussion on what she and the Federation say is an important issue for Sikhs!

It is unsatisfactory, having initially agreed to my consistent request seen in the email trail below, for open discussion on this issue to now completely ignore it. I am (on Friday 14th June), being asked to meet with Preet Gill and one or two of her supporters next Tuesday morning for a private chat to persuade me to drop my request. I am not prepared to do this.”

69. Ms Kaur Gill’s office responded to say that “Tomorrow’s meeting has been arranged with an open agenda and I have invited the Members of the All Party Group.”

70. Lord Singh objected and replied:

“I have consistently asked to give a proper briefing to APPG members to present an alternative view to that of the Federation on Ethnic Monitoring. Members of the APPG, and other MPs who were led to believe that the Federation were representing a Sikh view must be given proper notice to enable them to attend and ask questions.

I will attend an open meeting if I have a clear assurance before 5 pm today, that this will be used to plan a meeting and invitation list and date for all who were erroneously persuaded to support the Federation to hear and question an alternative Sikh view.”

71. Ms Kaur Gill’s office responded:

“The meeting tomorrow is an opportunity for you to brief the APPG. I am more than happy to send the minutes out to all members following the meeting (including those who are unable to attend).”

72. The email exchange continued with Lord Singh insisting that the meeting arranged was insufficient and did not meet his request.

73. In our interview with Lord Singh we discussed this exchange. He said:

“First of all, there was a blanket opposition to me addressing them at all. Then they said various things. “You can come. There’s two or three of us. We’ll chat or something”. That’s not what I wanted. I wanted the supposedly 100 plus MPs who had supposedly supported the Federation position to reconsider their position on the basis of fact and open discussion.

[...]

However, MPs are busy people and they could fill their time going to meetings. In reality, they only go to meetings if they receive an agenda and if it is of interest. I offered to send out details of the meeting if they gave me the list of the 100+ MPs that were said to support the Federation

position. Unfortunately, they never sent invitations or allowed me to do so. They did not want proper briefing and discussion.”

74. He said he had attended a meeting in July 2019 but said that it had not been what he had asked for:

“The correspondence clearly shows that for two years I had been trying to get a full debate with those who had supposedly signed support for the Federation position on ethnic monitoring. I did not want to chat to 2-3 people. I was trying for a meeting with a longer notice allowing greater attendance. Preet Gill successfully stalled to prevent this. [...] It was not the fuller briefing meeting I wanted, but because the summer recess was coming up, I said, “All right, I’ll go with whatever it is”. It wasn’t satisfactory or the way I wanted it. It wasn’t an opportunity to inform MPs who were signing one thing and then there was another viewpoint.”

75. We were also provided with an email exchange between Lord Singh and Pat McFadden MP (see Appendix 1). Lord Singh wrote to Mr McFadden saying:

“I am writing to you as Vice Chair of the APPG and someone who has close links with Sikhs, to seek your help in persuading you Chair Preet Gill to stop prevaricating in calling a long-requested meeting of the APPG to allow me to give a short presentation, and invite open discussion on the merits or otherwise of Federation policy of wanting Sikhs throughout the world to be labelled as having a single unique ethnicity.”

76. Mr McFadden replied:

“Thank you for your email. A meeting was arranged a couple of weeks ago to discuss these matters. I attended along with Lord Suri, Dominic Grieve, Preet Gill and Afzal Khan. We waited for you but you did not arrive.

Nevertheless, I believe Preet’s office has now arranged a second meeting. I hope you will be able to attend this time. I haven’t seen any evidence of prevarication and I am happy for Preet’s office to arrange the meeting.

In terms of numbers who attend, none of us has the power of summons and MPs tend to have busy diaries. No one can guarantee how many people will attend.”

77. Ms Kaur Gill provided us with the minutes of the APPG’s AGM on 9 October 2018. These listed ten members as being present.

Analysis

78. Ms Kaur Gill suggests that Lord Singh’s re-engagement with the APPG following her election as chair and his criticism of her and her views on the issue of the census demonstrate that his conduct is personal and bullying. Lord Singh, however, says that he considered the APPG worth re-engaging with once it had a Sikh chair and other Sikh officers. Though Ms Kaur Gill may disagree with his reasoning, that does not mean Lord Singh’s reason for re-engaging was not genuine.

79. Lord Singh has certainly made repeated requests for a large scale meeting of the APPG to enable him to set out his position on the issue of an ethnicity tick box and, in particular, to discuss the issue with the reported over 100 MPs who had signed a letter supporting the tick box proposal. It does not appear that such a meeting has happened. Lord Singh attributes this to Ms Kaur Gill actively frustrating him from presenting a view which opposes her position and that of the Sikh Federation (UK).
80. There is no evidence that Ms Kaur Gill has acted in this way. Although his motivation of wishing to speak to the more than 100 MPs reported to be in favour of a Sikh tick box is understandable, the generally flexible nature of APPGs, the small number of attendees at the 2018 AGM and the email from Mr McFadden suggest that Lord Singh's request was not a realistic one and that it is the nature of APPG meetings to be organised with variable degrees of notice and for the attendance at meetings also to be unpredictable.

ONS meeting

81. On 17 January 2018, Ms Kaur Gill and Lord Singh met with VW. VW was leading the ONS's work on the review of the census.
82. Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill arrived early for the meeting held in Parliament.
83. Ms Kaur Gill highlighted two aspects of the discussion during that meeting that she considered demonstrated Lord Singh's conduct.
84. At one point in the conversation, Ms Kaur Gill referred to an issue relating to alcohol use and the Sikh community. According to her account, Lord Singh replied, "You know nothing about Sikhism, you are making lies that Sikhs drink alcohol".
85. Lord Singh denied this allegation. In his written response he said:
- "I would never speak to anyone in that way. 'You are making lies' is not even English! I do not speak broken English."
86. In interview on 16 March 2019, he repeated his denial:

"The suggestion that I said that Sikhs do not drink alcohol, is manifestly absurd, because I have organised meetings [with an expert], and the NSO, to combat alcohol abuse in the Southall Sikh community. It is a problem particularly in those who came from the more rural areas of Punjab

[...]

I would never say that to anyone. It's an absurd and untrue accusation. I wrote to her immediately after the meeting a letter: "Dear Preet, It was a pleasure to meet you last Wednesday and discuss Sikh issues". I gave a detailed view of what had interested me in the meeting and invited comments in that letter so that we could try and explore the finding of common ground. I congratulated her both in the pre meeting discussion and in the letter because she'd been made a—some position in the shadow International Development.

[...]

I would not speak to anyone like that. I am aware that she belongs, and is very close, to a sect in Smethwick that do not practise the mainstream Sikhism but I would not hold this against her. I wouldn't say to anyone, "You know nothing". I could not speak like that to anyone. I mentioned it in the letter, that in Sikhism, because of various challenges to the ten Gurus, the tenth Guru said, "No more gurus. Just simply follow the Sikh teachings in the holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib". Now, in Smethwick they have another guru and they have another text as well, so it is not mainstream."¹¹

87. In interview, Ms Kaur Gill described the exchange from her point of view in more detail:

"I said to Lord Singh, "Of course there's an issue of alcohol in the Sikh community", because, you know, it's shared at the weddings, for example, at all Sikh weddings, and he said, I don't know, he said, "No, you are misleading in saying that. No, Sikhism doesn't believe in drinking alcohol and I don't know what weddings you go to, but certainly there's no, you know, we don't drink in the Sikh community. We're not supposed to drink", something like, you know, that.

[...]

I mean, it's a fact, if you ask any Sikh, moderate or non-moderate, "Tell me about Sikh weddings", everybody knows there's alcohol at Sikh weddings, end of. Of course the community has an alcohol-related issue. I mean, yes, the faith says we shouldn't drink alcohol, but that doesn't mean to say people are religious and follow the religion."

88. VW also recalled a conversation about alcohol within the Sikh community, with Ms Kaur Gill saying "come on Lord Singh, we all know there is a problem with alcohol in the Sikh community, think of what happens at weddings", to which Lord Singh replied "maybe there's alcohol at the types of weddings you go to."
89. VW considered that the tone of the meeting was generally reasonably polite and neutral. Ms Kaur Gill was surprised that VW had said they didn't think the exchanges were personal as she believed they had been uncomfortable during the meeting at how personal matters got.

Analysis

90. All parties agreed that the issue of alcohol came up during the meeting. The accounts of both Ms Kaur Gill and VW included Lord Singh making a reference about "the types of wedding you go to". However, Lord Singh consistently said that he did not say what Ms Kaur Gill attributed to him, nor did he deny that there were alcohol-related issues within the Sikh community.
91. It is notable that VW described the meeting as reasonably polite and neutral. I recognise that Ms Kaur Gill expressed surprise at this description as she had felt matters became personal during the meeting. However, I also give weight to VW being a witness who is independent of either party in this investigation.

11 The letter Lord Singh referred to is reproduced at paragraph 92 of Appendix 1.

92. It is also notable that Lord Singh has consistently denied having said “you are making lies that Sikhs drink alcohol”. He argues that he does not speak “broken English” like that. A review of Lord Singh’s written and oral evidence for this investigation corroborates his position that this form of words was untypical of his idiomatic use of English.

Sunny Hundal article

93. Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint said that after the ONS meeting “Lord Singh approached media outlets and pushed a story out via Sunny Hundal [...] He ran an article stating that ‘a bitter row has broken’ on 4th February 2018, in which Lord Singh says “I have ... contacted Preet Gill on several occasions to be allowed an opportunity to discuss my concerns on ethnic monitoring but she continues to evade my request”.¹²
94. We discussed the article by Sunny Hundal with Lord Singh in interview. He said he did not recall any contact with Mr Hundal around the time of the article and did not recall the article. He suggested that the quote attributed to him in Mr Hundal’s article may have been provided by a member of his staff or taken from a “a debate in Sikh media”. He said that if the quote had come from a member of staff, this may have happened without his knowledge as they “would not need my authority to relay fact”.
95. We also discussed the article during our interview with Ms Kaur Gill. She said that she considered it implausible that the quote could be given to a journalist without Lord Singh’s knowledge and approval. She argued that was not a coincidence that Mr Hundal’s article took the same line as Lord Singh:

“I find it quite interesting that all of a sudden Sunny Hundal has never, you know, commented on anything of this and then, because of Lord Singh, he’s using the very same arguments as Lord Singh. He’s not coming from it from a different angle; he’s just talking about the two things that Lord Singh always says, “We are a religion; we are not an ethnic group”. He will say the same thing.”

Analysis

96. The article quotes both parties at length, saying “These responses were sent to Barfi Culture by email. They have been edited for brevity.”
97. The quotes attributed to Lord Singh are long and framed in the first person. There is no suggestion in the article that they were provided by a member of staff or spokesperson. Lord Singh suggested that they could have been taken from “a debate in Sikh media”. However, my office has not been able to find any evidence of these quotes appearing in any other media outlet.
98. Ms Kaur Gill is also quoted extensively in the article, saying:

“I have had to write to Lord Singh due to bullying and mysogistic [*sic*] behaviour towards me. I am extremely concerned despite my raising of concerns with him he has made this statement to you.

12 The article, published on barficulture.tv on 4 February 2018, is reproduced in Appendix 1.

My predecessor Rob Marris never endured anything like what I have been subjected to and stated that since the APPG inception in 2005 Lord Singh has taken no interest.”

We asked for evidence for Lord Singh’s alleged behaviour but Ms Gill declined to offer it so. However she did forward two emails, dated Sept. and Dec. 2017, in which she offered to meet Lord Indarjit Singh.

[...]

He could have attended the Appg the Lords confirmed the notices go out to them. I checked the procedure. He never attended a single meeting since 2005 and never responded saying he wanted a meeting with the Appg.”

99. While Ms Kaur Gill suggests that the article uses “the very same arguments as Lord Singh”, it also includes quotes from a letter by Ms Kaur Gill to the Guardian explaining her position.¹³

Tweets

100. A number of tweets from the Network of Sikh Organisations, Ms Kaur Gill and others were included as evidence to support Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint. A list of the tweets is shown in Appendix 1.
101. They included the following exchange between Ms Kaur Gill (@PreetKGillMP), the Sikh Federation (UK) (@SikhFedUK) and the Network of Sikh Organisations (@SikhMessenger) on 20 December 2017:

@SikhMessenger: The thorny question of Sikhs and ethnicity: Meeting with member of @ONS leadership team at Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Hounslow <http://ow.ly/S1SI30hlsEd> #Census #Religion #Sikhs

@PreetKGillMP: This is an inaccurate account and it concerns me that you are misrepresenting the legal position due to your failure of understanding the question at hand. I have offered to meet with Lord Singh and await a date. The committee have asked to speak with me so I will follow this up.

@SikhFedUK: Indarjit Singh, an unelected peer, can mirepresent the situation as much as he likes, but it does not change the Mandla v Lee judgement or the fact that all Sikh organisations and individuals responding to the official @ONS consultation are in favour of a Sikh ethnic tick box.

@SikhMessenger: Can you respond to the points raised. First and foremost were you invited to the Hounslow meeting by the committee? Did you clear your attendance with the @ONS beforehand?

@SikhFedUK: Suggest you speak to the Vice President who said Sikhs were welcome from surrounding areas. President also said meeting could not be private.

¹³ The full text of Ms Kaur Gill’s letter, published in the Guardian on 23 October 2017, can be found here: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/23/a-sikh-ethnic-tick-box-is-needed-in-the-uks-2021-census>

@SikhMessenger: If you paid any attention to our statement it includes a quote from a Hounslow gurdwara committee member. We were invited to attend, were you? Answer YES or NO. Did you get express approval from the @ONS before turning up in numbers uninvited?”

102. They also included this exchange between the Network of Sikh Organisations and Ms Kaur Gill on 24–30 January 2018:

“@SikhMessenger: Our Director is willing to publicly debate both Dabinderjit of the @SikhFedUK and @PreetKGillMP on their @ONS ‘ethnicity’ campaign, let’s organise / British Sikhs deserve an open and transparent debate on this issue

@PreetKGillMP: Your director is in breach of Equalities Act as on the record he referred to Sikhs in the West Midlands and all Gurdwara’s to not observe the Sikh faith in accordance with his views. I wonder what their response would be? He had no evidence to support his views.

@SikhMessenger: Do you agree to a televised public debate, yes or no? Of course this will also provide an opportunity to address smears against our Director

@SikhMessenger: This will now be our third request for a public debate (preferably televised) on the Sikh ‘ethnic’ tick box with both

@SikhMessenger: Dear @PreetKGillMP Please provide the ‘on the record’ evidence for the allegation leveled against our Director or apologise. We await your response to requests for a debate made on 01/01/18, 24/01/18 & 28/01/18. Thanks”

103. On 21 and 22 December 2018, there was the following exchange between Ms Kaur Gill and the Network of Sikh Organisations:

@PreetKGillMP: This is not true I have the minutes of the January meeting where [VW] had proposed this as a way of addressing Public acceptability criteria. In that meeting [VW] was shocked at the statements made by Lord Singh which evidenced lack of knowledge by him in this area.

@SikhMessenger: No official minutes were kept. Another smear. Please address the issues at hand. We request you focus on the subject matter, rather than individuals who disagree with your position. That said, we appreciate your efforts in other areas & hope to work together in the future.

@PreetKGillMP: Your wrong [VW] had a minute taker and I took my own minutes!! [VW] even prepared a short draft which I responded to as it omitted all the inappropriate discriminatory comments made by Lord Singh! I reminded [VW] of that.

@SikhMessenger: It’s [correcting the spelling of VW’s name]. We have no further comment to make, but strenuously refute the allegations levelled against our Director in your tweet. Shame, our previous tweet was a genuine offer to work together on other areas where we share common ground & still stands.

@PreetKGillMP: I will focus on the truth! The fact remains your Director has been a bully and mysognist as have you! Glad you have confirmed that you are tweeting using your director handle I wonder why? Why don't you use your personal one [staff member of Network of Sikh Organisations]

@SikhMessenger: Please retract these serious allegations. Disagreeing on an issue does NOT equate to 'bullying' or 'mysogyny'."

104. As a result of this exchange another user tweeted Ms Kaur Gill to say " That is extremely harsh. [The staff member of Network of Sikh Organisations] is niether [sic] of those things. Not a nice thing to tweet!" Ms Kaur Gill replied "I am not sure who you are, but standing up for a bully? Really? Then again twitter has many people who hide behind fake accounts."

Analysis

105. These exchanges are ill-tempered on all sides. While Twitter is not necessarily a medium that encourages carefully measured discussion, the pattern of accusation and counter-accusation is clear.
106. It should be noted no messages were included from a personal account for Lord Singh. He does not appear to have a personal Twitter account.

Network of Sikh Organisations and the Sikh Federation (UK)

The Network of Sikh Organisations and Lord Singh

107. The Network of Sikh Organisations describes itself as a charity "that links more than 130 UK gurdwaras and other UK Sikh organisations in active cooperation to enhance the image and understanding of Sikhism in the UK ... a loose linking of gurdwaras and other Sikh bodies to facilitate the development of common approaches to spiritual and secular life."¹⁴
108. Lord Singh is the Network's founding and current Director.
109. In a press release by the Network of Sikh Organisations headed "*Lord Singh's response to the Sikh Federation UK's statement of 6 February 2019*", Lord Singh described his position:
- "I am not a lifetime director. All power lies with the elected Executive. They can sack me any time. It is an honorary post for which I do not receive a penny. In last month's AGM, I specifically requested a diminution in my responsibilities."
110. In her interview with us on 20 July 2020, Ms Kaur Gill described her understanding of Lord Singh's role with the Network:

"He's never been seen to be a collaborator in the community. He's pretty much seen to be a one-man-band. If you ask him for the names of the 130 organisations he allegedly is head of, he never provides them to you because they don't exist. And this is something that all the community knows. We know, I've known for years and years that the Network of Sikh Organisations does not exist. It's pretty much Lord Singh, and one or two others."

14 <http://nsouk.co.uk/>

The Sikh Federation (UK) and Ms Kaur Gill

111. On its website, the Sikh Federation (UK) describes itself as:

“a non-governmental organisation, and the first ever Sikh political party in the United Kingdom. SFUK is based on the “miri-piri” principle the Sikh principle that temporal and spiritual goals are indivisible.

The organisation was established in September 2003 with the aim of giving Sikhs a stronger political voice by taking an increasing interest in mainstream politics in the UK.”¹⁵

112. Throughout his evidence, Lord Singh inferred a close connection and coordination between Ms Kaur Gill and the Sikh Federation (UK). For example, in his letter to VW on 5 August 2018, he wrote:

“Preet Gill is one of their supporters, and following her election as MP in the last election, the Sikh Federation got her to call a meeting of the APPG (from which three of the five Sikhs in Parliament including myself were excluded). She elected herself Chair, and promptly got the Federation to act as secretariat.”

113. In his written response of 23 September 2020, Lord Singh alleged that Ms Kaur Gill was clearly acting on the Federation’s behalf:

“Ms Gill’s policy of preventing legitimate discussion on Sikh issues while turning the APPG for Sikhs into a mouthpiece for the extremist policies of the Sikh Federation.”

114. In her email to the reporting helpline of 3 July 2019, Ms Kaur Gill described her view of Lord Singh’s opposition to the Sikh Federation (UK) being involved in the APPG:

“For background, I became the Chair of the APPG for British Sikhs in 2017, but the APPG was formed in 2005 and as has had Sikh Federation UK act as secretariat in all that time. According to the previous white, male, non-Sikh chairs, since Lord Singh assumed office in 2011 until 2017 when I became involved, he took next to no interest in the APPG for British Sikhs. Indeed, only when I became Chair of the APPG, did Lord Singh see fit to complain to the Labour Party about the Sikh Federation’s position as secretariat.”

115. Also in that email, Ms Kaur Gill noted that Lord Singh had described her as a “supporter” of the Sikh Federation (UK) “when they are merely the APPG’s secretariat.”

Analysis

116. It is beyond the scope of a report into an alleged breach of the House of Lords Code of Conduct to draw firm conclusions about the exact roles of either member in the two organisations.
117. However, it is clear that Lord Singh has a senior and formal role within the Network of Sikh Organisations. Some of the press releases from the Network referred to in Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint (and included in Appendix 1) are

15 <http://www.sikhfeduk.com/>

posted in his name and phrased in the first person. It is fair to assume that those press releases, at least, are either written or approved by him.

118. Furthermore, the tweets sent by the Network are often about him personally rather than the positions of the Network generally.
119. Ms Kaur Gill's connection with the Sikh Federation (UK) is less clear. It is certainly the case that the Sikh Federation (UK) provided the secretariat to the APPG before she became Chair and, indeed, before she was elected to the House of Commons.
120. However, it is also clear that on the issue of the census, she and the Federation are in agreement. The tweets provided as evidence also appear to indicate that Ms Kaur Gill and the Federation work together to counter criticism of one another.

Impact of Lord Singh's conduct on Preet Kaur Gill

121. In the course of her evidence, Ms Kaur Gill explained that she considered she had been bullied by Lord Singh in part due to her gender.
122. In our interview of 20 July 2020, she said that the campaign for an ethnicity tick box in the census had predated her involvement with the APPG but none of its previous chairs had been treated by Lord Singh as he had treated her:

“And I have to say it is then, it is linked to my gender. Because, as I said before, the APPG was set up in 2005. This is a campaign it campaigned on in 2005 and has done subsequently since then. I only became an MP in 2017. All the previous chairs of the APPG have been white males.

I have spoken to both of them and they have said that they have never had any conversation with Lord Singh about the fact that they were leading on the Sikh ethnic tick box campaign on behalf of the Sikh community; he never engaged; he never attended the APPG meetings, he wasn't writing articles against them. His voice was actually quite silent, if I'm really honest.

[...]

when he says “there is no question of gender”, of course there is a “question of gender” because suddenly you've had the first Sikh female MP in 2017 elected and all she's doing is continuing the campaign that has gone on before her. And all of a sudden there are articles in the paper about her, about her views, maligning me, incorrect information, you know, challenging me, telling other Members of Parliament that the information I'm giving is incorrect; a whole heap of, actions that he has taken to date that absolutely suggest that this is only because I'm a woman and it is because I'm a Sikh woman”.

123. However, in that interview she also proposed an alternative explanation for Lord Singh's conduct:

“I feel that this is all about Lord Singh feeling very threatened. He has been the lone voice in Parliament as the only Sikh voice. He's been able to say anything he wants on behalf of the community without any challenge. A lot of people have a view of him—it's not for me to say—in my community. They don't have the regard for him that he has for himself.

They don't have the kind of respect that he has placed himself. They don't see him in the elevated position. They think what he has achieved is great. They think, you know, they agree with him sometimes; they don't agree with on other issues.

[...]

So, yes, I do. I feel that this is about him not now being the "go to" voice in the House because now you have Tanmanjeet;¹⁶ you have myself. And this has been a bit of a change. I think this has been difficult for him to deal with, because suddenly you've got other people that people go to and not him, you know. But he does regard himself, he does say, he does regard himself and he comes across as, you know, it's like he has this very seniority and he's in a position that he can talk about these issues that none of us can."

124. She also explained why she felt bullied by Lord Singh and the impact it had had on her:

"The reason I feel bullied by him is because of the whole harassment around the fact that he doesn't agree with the community view on the campaign. He has his own view. He thinks he is right, and he's now going to go and malign me at any cost. He's going to go and make sure that there are articles about me; information is incorrect about me. He's trying to make me, you know, out to be this -- Well, he's labelled the Sikh Federation and calls them "extremists". He's used all this kind of language and, by very virtue of saying that I'm with them, he's trying to, sort of, put me into that category. That is bullying. That is trying to bully me to silence me, to get me to move away from the campaign and not be a vocal support.

[...]

it's been upsetting me. It's really been emotionally difficult. It's made me question myself at times. It's made me want to think you know. At times it was, it was very difficult. I just felt like I was constantly being attacked, especially on social media. [...] You're trying to do something good and then you've got all this, kind of, hate almost around you and people attacking you when they don't even understand the argument half the time [...] So it is-- I think it knocked my confidence a little bit, if I'm honest [...] it's just been very difficult. It's been very upsetting. It's upsetting now when I think about it because it's been three years nearly of having to keep putting up with it".

125. We explained that although she saw Lord Singh's conduct as being related to her gender, there would need to be evidence in order to make a finding of harassment based on sex. Ms Kaur Gill noted, "You never do though when it is sexism, do you? Nobody says, "Oh, it's because she's a woman"."
126. Lord Singh has denied bullying in any form and considered the allegations to be "malicious smears" against him:

"So she has robustly pushed her line and I have opposed it in, I think, a gentlemanly and fair manner. I have certainly never demeaned her or

anything like that at all, and nor could I because that's not my makeup. I've never done it to anyone.

But there is this basic difference and she has—it's being recorded but I'll still say it—she is behaving like (I don't know if you've read the "Just William" books) Violet Elizabeth Bott, "I'll scream and I'll scream". And here it is, "I'll scream misogyny unless you agree with me."

[...]

This is a, sort of, wild, smearing campaign that is behind it and there is nothing there in any email. [...] I've got no personal agenda with her at all or with the Federation, but I will stick to the Sikh line."

127. He insisted that with regard to Ms Kaur Gill he had "no personal enmity, no personal friendship, no personal enmity; it is only on issues".

CHAPTER 4: RESPONSE TO DRAFT FACTUAL REPORT

128. Paragraph 155 of the Guide to the Code provides:

“If the Commissioner’s investigation has uncovered material evidence that is at variance with the member’s version of events, she will put this to the member, who will have a chance to challenge it. Before finalising her report, the Commissioner will also share with the member a summary of the evidence she has obtained upon which her findings will be founded, so that the member has an opportunity to comment on it. In cases involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, the Commissioner will provide the complainant with the same opportunities to challenge or comment on the evidence.”

129. I therefore shared a draft of the factual report (the final version of which is at Appendix 1).

130. Lord Singh provided a response to the draft factual report. Ms Kaur Gill did not provide any comments.

Lord Singh’s response to the draft factual report

131. In response to the draft factual report, Lord Singh provided a version with tracked changes and a covering note. The covering note is included at Appendix 2.

132. In his comments on the draft factual report, Lord Singh drew our attention to various aspects including:

- Ms Kaur Gill’s allegation that after the meeting with the ONS, Lord Singh approached media outlets and “pushed a story out via Sunny Hundal”. Lord Singh commented that this was untrue;
- That Ms Kaur Gill’s account that the reference in the press release by the Network of Sikh Organisations on the work of the APPG on UK Sikhs, dated 31 March 2019, to Lord Suri and Baroness Verma was included without their permission was correct;
- That Ms Kaur Gill’s reference to the Sikh Federation (UK) being “merely the APPG’s secretariat” does not recognise that she is “is a member of the ‘Sikh Network’ a small group affiliated to the Sikh Federation”;
- Ms Kaur Gill’s description of reminders to APPG vice-chairs being sent round before meetings: Lord Singh comments that this is not true.
- Lord Singh particularly highlighted the various points at which Ms Kaur Gill referred to herself as being the first female chair of the APPG and the times when either she or the Sikh Federation (UK) referred to his age.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND OUTCOME

133. Paragraph 10 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords provides that:

“Members of the House should observe the principles set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code of respect, professionalism, understanding others’ perspectives, courtesy, and acceptance of responsibility. These principles will be taken into consideration when any allegation of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is under investigation.”

134. Paragraph 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords provides that:

“Members are required to treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities (including parliamentary proceedings) with respect and courtesy. Behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of this Code.”

135. Therefore, while all Members ought to adhere to the principles and standards of behaviour set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code, it is only behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct that constitutes a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords.
136. There are no allegations of sexual misconduct in this investigation. The following paragraphs assess the evidence gathered against the definitions of bullying and harassment set out in Appendix B to the Code of Conduct.

Is the conduct complained of proven?

137. While Lord Singh denies certain aspects of Ms Kaur Gill’s account, his approach to her complaints has been to present counter allegations and to be critical of Ms Kaur Gill, her chairing of the APPG and the role of the Sikh Federation (UK) in much the way described in Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint.
138. Some elements of Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint are supported by either documentary evidence—the press release by the Network of Sikh Organisations published in Lord Singh’s name and drafted in the first person is disparaging of Ms Kaur Gill in a way that is consistent with the behaviour she describes—or by corroborative accounts—some elements of the ONS meeting are corroborated by VW.
139. The Code of Conduct requires me to make findings on the balance of probabilities. I find the consistency between the conduct described by Ms Kaur Gill, Lord Singh’s characterisation of Ms Kaur Gill in his evidence to this investigation and other evidence persuasive. **On the balance of probabilities, I find it more likely than not that Lord Singh has treated Ms Kaur Gill in a manner which has been disrespectful and discourteous.**
140. Whether this conduct amounts to harassment or bullying, and therefore whether it constitutes a breach of the Code of Conduct is explored in the next sections.

141. As noted above, the criteria for bullying and harassment largely overlap, such that a finding of harassment will often automatically provide good evidence of bullying. As a matter of fairness, where behaviour meets both definitions, I shall not make two findings on the same facts.

Does Lord Singh’s behaviour amount to harassment?

142. The Behaviour Code, incorporated into the House of Lords Code of Conduct, describes harassment as:

“any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of either violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is related to one or more of the relevant ‘protected characteristics’ which include age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.”

143. Sections 26(1) and 26(4) of the Equality Act 2010 set out the tests to be taken into account when considering an allegation of harassment:¹⁷

“(1) A person (A) harasses another (B) if—

- (a) A engages in unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, and
- (b) the conduct has the purpose or effect of—
 - (i) violating B’s dignity, or
 - (ii) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for B.”

“(4) In deciding whether conduct has the effect referred to in subsection (1)(b), each of the following must be taken into account—

- (a) the perception of B;
- (b) the other circumstances of the case;
- (c) whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.”

144. As a general principle, it is useful to take each aspect of subsections (1) and (4) in turn in order to consider whether Lord Singh’s behaviour amounted to harassment.

Was Lord Singh’s conduct unwanted?

145. Lord Singh’s conduct was unwanted. Ms Kaur Gill is clear that she would rather Lord Singh behaved differently towards her. **That Lord Singh’s conduct was unwanted is demonstrated beyond the balance of probabilities.**

¹⁷ Subsections (2) and (3) refer to harassment of a sexual nature and are therefore not relevant to this case.

Was Lord Singh's conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic?

146. Ms Kaur Gill believes that the fact that Lord Singh did not treat her male predecessors as chair of the APPG in the same way is evidence that Lord Singh's conduct is related to her gender. She agreed that there was no explicit evidence that Lord Singh's behaviour was influenced by her sex but noted "You never do though when it is sexism, do you? Nobody says, "Oh, it's because she's a woman"." During our interview on 20 July 2020, Ms Kaur Gill said that she would provide details of further witnesses to provide evidence of Lord Singh's treatment of her based on her gender. However, despite various emails from me and my office, no further evidence was provided (see paragraphs 66-74 of Appendix 1).
147. Lord Singh denies this and argues that he did not engage with the APPG before her election as chair because the previous chairs were not Sikh and therefore the APPG did not carry much weight for him. The only evidence of gendered language gathered in this investigation was Lord Singh's disparaging remark comparing Ms Kaur Gill to the character Violet Elizabeth Bott in the Just William stories, which he made in relation to her complaints of misogyny.
148. Ms Kaur Gill also provided another explanation for Lord Singh's conduct towards her: that her election to Parliament, along with that of Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP, has injured Lord Singh's pride and stopped him being the "go-to" voice in Parliament on Sikh issues.
149. **The lack of evidence to demonstrate that Ms Kaur Gill's sex was the reason for Lord Singh's conduct, along with the alternative explanations for the difference in his approach to Ms Kaur Gill compared to previous APPG chairs means that it is not shown on the balance of probabilities that Lord Singh's conduct was related to a protected characteristic.**

Has Lord Singh's conduct created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for Ms Kaur Gill/ the perception of Ms Kaur Gill?

150. **Ms Kaur Gill's description of how upsetting she has found Lord Singh's conduct suggests that this criterion has been met.**

The other circumstances of the case

151. That there is a fundamental policy disagreement between Ms Kaur Gill and Lord Singh, and that they are each supported by organisations in that dispute are relevant factors in this case. It suggests that Lord Singh's behaviour is not solely personal—his disagreement is with Ms Kaur Gill and with the Sikh Federation (UK).
152. Ms Kaur Gill has also publicly made damaging allegations about Lord Singh and, although I do not have any evidence that she has any directive influence over the Sikh Federation (UK), she does not appear to have sought to criticise or distance herself from the personally insulting remarks of the Federation. Because of these factors, Ms Kaur Gill must bear some of the responsibility for the tenor of the exchanges between herself, Lord Singh, the Network of Sikh Organisations and the Sikh Federation (UK).

153. That Lord Singh has found Ms Kaur Gill’s and the Sikh Federation (UK)’s remarks about him to be insulting is also a relevant circumstance, though this report is not into Ms Kaur Gill’s conduct.

Is it reasonable for the conduct to have that effect?

154. While I consider Ms Kaur Gill’s upset at Lord Singh’s conduct to be genuine, the relevant circumstances set out above demonstrate that there has been fault on both sides. I therefore do not consider that it is reasonable for Ms Kaur Gill to consider that Lord Singh is solely responsible for the unpleasant environment arising from their interactions.

Finding

155. The Code of Conduct requires members of the House of Lords to “treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities (including parliamentary proceedings) with respect and courtesy”. However, only “[b]ehaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of this Code.”
156. **As I have not found that Lord Singh’s conduct was more likely than not to be related to Ms Kaur Gill’s sex, and as there is no suggestion that it related to any other protected characteristic, it does not meet the criteria necessary for it to amount to harassment. It does not, therefore, constitute a breach of the Code.**
157. **In reaching this finding, I do so on the balance of probabilities and based on the evidence gathered. My finding, therefore, in no way casts doubt on the genuineness of Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint.**

Does Lord Singh’s behaviour amount to bullying?

158. I have found that Lord Singh’s conduct did not constitute harassment. However, for the reason explained above, I now look at the same conduct against the criteria for bullying.
159. The Behaviour Code, incorporated into the House of Lords Code of Conduct, describes bullying as:
- “offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving an abuse or misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority and can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.”
160. Ms Kaur Gill’s description of the impact of Lord Singh’s conduct on her makes it clear that she finds his conduct offensive, malicious and insulting. It is equally clear that Lord Singh has found comments made by Ms Kaur Gill and by the Sikh Federation (UK) (on her behalf, he presumes) to be offensive, malicious and insulting. That is not a matter on which I can comment, as I am not investigating a complaint against Ms Kaur Gill.
161. However, for behaviour to amount to bullying it must also involve an abuse or misuse of power. In both of their cases, Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill have similar sources of power. In the context of Parliament, their primary sources of power are that each is a member of Parliament (Ms Kaur Gill, elected; Lord Singh, appointed). In addition, each has the support of a vocal

organisation (Ms Kaur Gill, the Sikh Federation (UK); Lord Singh, the Network of Sikh Organisations).¹⁸ Viewed this way, there does not appear to be the power imbalance allowing for an abuse of power that typically characterises bullying.

162. There is clearly a policy disagreement between Ms Kaur Gill and Lord Singh that has escalated into an argument in which both sides have chosen to behave in a way that the other finds insulting.

Finding

163. Although the Code of Conduct sets out various principles of behaviour towards others to which all members of the House of Lords should adhere, only “[b]ehaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of this Code.”
164. Abuse or misuse of power is an essential criterion in the Code’s definition of bullying.
165. **Given that both parties have similar levels of power and influence, I do not consider that Lord Singh’s conduct towards Ms Kaur Gill meets the criteria for it to amount to bullying. It does not, therefore, constitute a breach of the Code.**

Conclusion

166. The Parliamentary Behaviour Code requires all members of the parliamentary community, among other things, to:
- think about how their behaviour affects others and strive to understand their perspective;
 - act professionally towards others; and
 - ensure Parliament meets the highest ethical standards of integrity, courtesy and mutual respect.
167. It is not my role to pass judgment on members of the House of Commons so my comments here are necessarily limited to Lord Singh.
168. Although I have found that his behaviour towards Ms Kaur Gill did not meet the criteria necessary to constitute bullying or harassment—and therefore did not constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords—I would urge Lord Singh, and all members of the House, to ensure that policy disagreements are pursued in a way that meets the expectations set out in the Behaviour Code.

¹⁸ Though Ms Kaur Gill implied that the Network of Sikh Organisations was not an influential body, describing it as a “one-man band”, it is beyond the scope of this report to seek to analyse the relative influences of the two organisations.

APPENDIX 1: FACTUAL REPORT

Preet Kaur Gill MP's complaint

1. In July 2019, Preet Kaur Gill submitted a complaint concerning the conduct of Lord Singh of Wimbledon via the House of Parliament bullying and harassment helpline.¹⁹ Her complaint, disclosed by the helpline to my office, read:

“Complainant (C) wishes to raise a formal complaint of bullying, sexism and harassment against Lord Indarjit Singh.

Since becoming a MP in 2017, C feels she has been a victim of a targeted, personal campaign of harassment, especially with regards to her role as Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs and the campaign to see a Sikh ethnic tick box included in the 2021 census.

C feels she has been repeatedly and unfairly criticised by Lord Singh, with public statements which consist of misinformation and smears, and feels Lord Singh has clearly sought to leverage his position to sow discord in the Sikh community.

In 2017, C became the Chair of the APPG which was formed in 2005. C advised that Lord Singh had not taken any interest in the APPG for British Sikhs when the previous Chairs were white, male, non-Sikh chairs. Only when C became Chair in 2017 did Lord Singh take interest. Lord Singh complained to the Labour Party about the Sikh Federation's position as secretariat and abused C in her role, which C feels was to intimidate her from occupying a position of influence within the Sikh community.

In January 2018, C attended a meeting with [VW], where Lord Singh was present. C advised that Lord Singh sought to undermine her knowledge and experience. In the presence of [VW], with reference to some of the public health implications of data collection, he stated: “You know nothing about Sikhism, you are making lies that Sikhs drink alcohol”.

Following this meeting, Lord Singh approached media outlets and pushed a story out via Sunny Hundal, who C advised is a controversial figure in the Sikh community. He ran an article stating that ‘a bitter row has broken’ on 4th February 2018, in which Lord Singh says “I have ... contacted Preet Gill on several occasions to be allowed an opportunity to discuss my concerns on ethnic monitoring but she continues to evade my request”.

However, C advised the same article shows that she offered to meet him twice in September and December 2017. To this, his response is recorded: “The offer of meeting up for a cup of tea seemed pointless and I ignored it. If she gives a convenient date for Lord Suri and me to discuss ethnic monitoring and other questionable policies of the Sikh Federation with the APPG. I will happily buy her a cup of tea.”

¹⁹ Complaints of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct concerning members of the parliamentary community may be made via a dedicated helpline. At time of writing, this helpline can be contacted on 0808 168 9281 or support@ICGShelpline.org.uk

On the Network of Sikh Organisations website, in a post entitled “Response to misleading ‘APPG British Sikhs update’”, re. another matter, Lord Singh asserts that Sikhs from the Lords were “being excluded from the APPG”. C explained there has occasionally been miscommunication in arranging meetings due to human error, however claims the above is an exaggeration. The article concludes: “Lord Singh, Lord Suri and Baroness Verma have subsequently made their position clear. They strongly object to the extremist SFUK running an APPG which should be for ALL Sikhs in Parliament and are unwilling to be part of the APPG while Preet Gill and SFUK are in charge.”

C explained she subsequently spoke to Lord Suri and Baroness Verma, they have said they have no problem with her or the APPG and that this statement was put out without their consent (C has a supporting email to confirm).

In another article, Lord Singh comments that “it’s clear that the SFUK and Preet Gill MP are upset and angry”. C felt this was an unnecessary personal comment that is designed to portray her as petulant. C questioned whether Lord Singh would speculate about a male MP being ‘upset’ about a campaign issue?

Another example is “Lord Suri and I, were perhaps, even more disappointed by the mute subservience of the 5 MPs.” C again feels this is an instance of Lord Singh putting out inaccurate information in the public domain to undermine her. C advised that she is aware this is not Lord Suri’s view, so this is again an instance of Lord Singh abusing his position and authority to push his agenda.

C also has a number of emails which exhibit Lord Singh’s bullying tendencies towards her researcher [...], who has been trying to organise a meeting with Lord Singh. C explained there are many more examples she could draw from Lord Singh’s social media accounts as well to detail the nature of Lord Singh’s bullying.

As the first female chair of the APPG Sikhs, C feels Lord Singh has found an issue with her involvement and has attacked her and made derogatory remarks about her, something which C claims her predecessor never had to endure. C suspects that being a female is partly what has caused Lord Singh to act in such a patronising manner.

Informal and formal resolution options have been discussed with C. C wishes for the matter to be formally investigated and has provided her consent to do so.”

2. On 12 August 2019, Ms Gill also sent my office an email with her original email to the helpline and an email exchange between Lord Singh and a member of her office attached.
3. The email to the helpline, dated 3 July 2019, read:

“I am writing with a complaint about the bullying, sexism and harassment I have received from Lord Indarjit Singh.

Since becoming an MP in 2017, I have been victim of a targeted, personal campaign of harassment, especially with regards to my

role as Chair of the APPG for British Sikhs and our campaign to see a Sikh ethnic tick box included in the 2021 census. I have been repeatedly and unfairly criticised with public statements which consist of misinformation and smears, and Lord Singh has clearly sought to leverage his position to sow discord in the Sikh community, as well as bully and patronise me and my staff. This poor conduct has gone past a lack of professionalism to verge on a vendetta, and is, needless to say, completely disproportionate to my conduct as Chair of the APPG, our political disagreements notwithstanding. It has come to a point where I believe his behaviour towards me and my staff warrants disciplinary action and an investigation.

For background, I became the Chair of the APPG for British Sikhs in 2017, but the APPG was formed in 2005 and as has had Sikh Federation UK act as secretariat in all that time. According to the previous white, male, non-Sikh chairs, since Lord Singh assumed office in 2011 until 2017 when I became involved, he took next to no interest in the APPG for British Sikhs. Indeed, only when I became Chair of the APPG, did Lord Singh see fit to complain to the Labour Party about the Sikh Federation's position as secretariat. Due to this and the patronising manner of some of his comments, I suspect my being a woman is partly what has caused Lord Singh such consternation, and his abuse is meant to intimidate me from occupying a position of influence within the Sikh community.

Some examples:

In January 2018, I had a meeting with [VW] re. the tick box issue, with Lord Singh present. To reiterate, this campaign has been run by the APPG since its formation in 2005, long before my tenure, yet in this meeting Lord Singh sought to undermine my knowledge and experience. In the presence of [VW], with reference to some of the public health implications of data collection, he stated: "You know nothing about Sikhism, you are making lies that Sikhs drink alcohol." [VW] was quite shocked but did not challenge it, and tried to move the conversation on.

Following this meeting Lord Singh approached media outlets and pushed a story out via Sunny Hundal, who is a controversial figure in the Sikh community but also opposed to a tick box. He ran an article stating that 'a bitter row has broken' on 4th February 2018, in which Lord Singh says "I have ... contacted Preet Gill on several occasions to be allowed an opportunity to discuss my concerns on ethnic monitoring but she continues to evade my request". However, as the same article shows, I offered to meet him twice in September and December 2017. To this, his condescending response is recorded: "The offer of meeting up for a cup of tea seemed pointless and I ignored it. If she gives a convenient date for Lord Suri and me to discuss ethnic monitoring and other questionable policies of the Sikh Federation with the APPG. I will happily buy her a cup of tea." With this article, I provided comment about the sexism and misogyny at the root of his issue with me, and called out the undertones of his tea comment.

On the Network of Sikh Organisations website, in a post entitled "Response to misleading 'APPG British Sikhs update'", re. another matter, he incorrectly asserts that Sikhs from the Lords were "being

excluded from the APPG”. Whilst there has occasionally been miscommunication in arranging meetings due to human error, this obviously a wild exaggeration. The article concludes: “Lord Singh, Lord Suri and Baroness Verma have subsequently made their position clear. They strongly object to the extremist SFUK running an APPG which should be for ALL Sikhs in Parliament and are unwilling to be part of the APPG while Preet Gill and SFUK are in charge.” Again, this is a distortion. Having subsequently spoken to Lord Suri and Baroness Verma, they have said they have no problem with me or the APPG and that this statement was put out without their consent. Lord Singh’s officer [...] had been instructed to post the article to exaggerate divisions in the Sikh community, which I would argue is an instance of Lord Singh inappropriately leveraging the privilege and influence of his position. This is not the first time, as he recently failed to disclose his directorship of the Network of Sikh Organisations when speaking in a recent Lords debate about the Offensive Weapons Bill, in another political dispute with me and the APPG.

On 10th March 2019, Lord Singh writes that I am a ‘supporter’ of the Sikh Federation in a critical article, when they are merely the APPG’s secretariat.

In ‘Common sense prevails: ONS say no to SFUK’s call for Sikh ‘ethnic’ tick box’ he writes that “it’s clear that the SFUK and Preet Gill MP are upset and angry”, citing no evidence, collapsing our roles into one and making an unnecessary personal comment that is designed to portray me as petulant. As an elected public servant, it is my duty to see that Sikhs are protected from discrimination. I wonder if Lord Singh would speculate about a male MP being ‘upset’ about a campaign issue?

In “Is APPG for British Sikhs truly representative?”—again, inaccurate account of the event. Attacks another well respected organisation Nishkam; “Preet Gill MP seemed irritated by both my presence at the meeting, and because I had raised an issue about which she had clearly not been briefed by the Sikh Federation UK, the official secretariat of the APPG.” Also: “Lord Suri and I, were perhaps, even more disappointed by the mute subservience of the 5 MPs.” This is again an instance of Lord Singh putting out inaccurate information in the public domain to undermine me. This is not Lord Suri’s view, so this is again an instance of Lord Singh abusing his position and authority to push his agenda.

Finally, I have a long chain of emails which exhibit Lord Singh’s bullying tendencies towards my researcher [...], who has been trying to organise a meeting for Lord Singh to deliver his case to the APPG on the tick box issue. These speak for themselves, and are included below.

These examples will I hope detail the nature of Lord Singh’s bullying, and I welcome the opportunity to talk in detail about his conduct. There are many more examples I could draw from his social media accounts as well, and other instances I am undoubtedly forgetting. Some supplementary email evidence is attached.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope we can arrange a meeting soon.”

Supporting material provided by Ms Kaur Gill

4. With her complaint, Ms Kaur Gill included several examples of interactions with Lord Singh to support her complaint.

Email exchange between Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill's office

5. The emails referred to by Ms Kaur Gill from Lord Singh to her office, dated between 7 June and 21 June 2019, read:

7 June 2019: Ms Gill's office to Lord Singh

“Are you available on the 18th of June between 10:30 and 12:30? If not I will find some other potential dates.”

7 June: Lord Singh to Ms Gill's office

“Yes, I will be happy to make time if it is with members of the APPG to discuss an alternative Sikh view to that of the Federation on ethnic monitoring as previously requested by me.”

11 June 2019: Ms Gill's office to Lord Singh

“Great. I will invite the vice-chairs.

Are you able to book one of the rooms in the Lords at that time? We don't have any availability in the commons and the committee rooms will need me to call up on Monday and hope there are some available.”

12 June: Lord Singh to Ms Gill's office

“In view of the difficulty of booking a room, the importance of the topic, and the need for all members of the APPG to be invited, can I suggest that we should try to book a room for the same time on Tuesday 25 June?”

12 June 2019: Ms Gill's office to Lord Singh

“As next week works for both diaries I think best to go ahead with it. I will call the room booking office on Monday morning when the rooms become available and have not had problems in the past obtaining a room.

If that doesn't work then we can look to the 25th.

Will send invites out now.”

13 June 2019: Lord Singh to Ms Gill's office (with a number of other MPs copied in)

“The APPG for Sikhs should have had a briefing on the pros and cons of labelling Sikhs as an ethnic group long ago. All Sikhs agree it is important. The Federation view has been presented to MPs as a ‘Sikh community view’. I and many other Sikhs totally disagree and I would like to present what I feel is the majority view, invite questions and discussion with APPG members, and other MPs. They should be given sufficient time and notice to attend.

Your suggestion that this should take place next Tuesday 18th June, when today 13 June, we have neither a meeting time nor location is completely impractical.

You need to give at least one week's (preferably two weeks) notice to give time for interested parties to put it in their diaries. I also suggest that you invite a representative of the ONS to this important meeting.

[...]

PS Could you please send me the minutes of the meeting of last October promised me by the Chair."

13 June 2019: Ms Gill's office to Lord Singh (with a number of other MPs copied in)

"The purpose of the meeting is for you to meet with the officers of the All Party Group.

I have sent invites for a start time of 10:30 and will book a room for an hour on Tuesday the 18th. Will confirm the room on Monday.

Will also bring along the minutes/actions of the AGM for you.

Thanks and look forward to seeing you on Tuesday."

14 June 2019: Lord Singh to Ms Gill's office (with a number of other MPs copied in)

"Repeated Request for an Open Discussion on Ethnic Monitoring

I find your latest response to my request completely unsatisfactory. I have repeatedly asked for an opportunity to give members of the APPG an opportunity to hear a non-Federation view on its suggestion that members of a world religion, born in different countries, constitute a single ethnicity. ,

Why are Preet Gill and her supporters in the Sikh Federation so afraid of open discussion on what she and the Federation say is an important issue for Sikhs!

It is unsatisfactory, having initially agreed to my consistent request seen in the email trail below, for open discussion on this issue to now completely ignore it. I am (on Friday 14th June), being asked to meet with Preet Gill and one or two of her supporters next Tuesday morning for a private chat to persuade me to drop my request. I am not prepared to do this.

Preet Gill is being wrongly advised by the Sikh Federation to prevent an open discussion on a key issue facing Sikhs."

17 June 2019: Ms Gill's office to Lord Singh (with a number of other MPs copied in)

"Tomorrow's meeting has been arranged with an open agenda and I have invited the Members of the All Party Group.

I have booked Committee Room 21 for 10.30 and will send a reminder email to the group. I have already had provisional confirmation from 3 of the officers in addition to Preet.

As requested I have the minutes of the 2018 AGM which I will bring with me to give to you.”

17 June 2019: Lord Singh to Ms Gill’s office (with a number of other MPs copied in)

“No. You are again missing the point. I have never asked for an open meeting.

I have consistently asked to give a proper briefing to APPG members to present an alternative view to that of the Federation on Ethnic Monitoring. Members of the APPG, and other MPs who were led to believe that the Federation were representing a Sikh view must be given proper notice to enable them to attend and ask questions.

I will attend an open meeting if I have a clear assurance before 5 pm today, that this will be used to plan a meeting and invitation list and date for all who were erroneously persuaded to support the Federation to hear and question an alternative Sikh view.”

17 June 2019: Ms Gill’s office to Lord Singh (with a number of other MPs copied in)

“The meeting tomorrow is an opportunity for you to brief the APPG. I am more than happy to send the minutes out to all members following the meeting (including those who are unable to attend).

The All Party Group is a group of MPs from different political parties who raise the concerns & aspirations of British Sikhs in Parliament. They receive a wide range of evidence and support from many different organisations on a number of issues related to the British Sikh community.

If you would rather discuss this on the phone I can call you if you give me a suitable number.”

17 June: Lord Singh to Ms Gill’s office (with a number of other MPs copied in)

“My emails have been consistently clear. I have repeatedly requested an opportunity to brief MPs to show that the Federation view on ethnic monitoring does not stand up to scrutiny. The only reason for your Chair not wanting a proper meeting with opportunities for Members to ask questions is that she is afraid that the truth will come out.

The APPG should be for all Sikhs, not just for Federation supporters. I again request an opportunity to discuss ethnic monitoring with all those who have unthinkingly given their support to the Federation’s anti-Sikh stance to hear another view and then make up their own minds. Members should be given sufficient notice. I am happy to send out a briefing paper when I have the names of those attending.

Your suggested ‘chat’ tomorrow with 2-3 people is no substitute for a properly called meeting on the lines suggested. It is simply designed as a clear attempt to brush the issue under the carpet.”

18 June 2019: Ms Gill’s office to Lord Singh (with a number of other MPs copied in)

“At your request, the meeting today has been organised as an opportunity for you to brief MPs. There will of course be opportunities for Members to ask you questions and for you to respond.

Looking forward to seeing you later.”

21 June: Lord Singh to Ms Gill’s office (with a number of other MPs copied in)

“Need for a Properly Structured Meeting of the APPG

to inform Members of Parliament of the pros and cons of monitoring Sikhs as an ethnic group

At first, I thought that your hurriedly called meeting at a day’s notice of time and place was simply an attempt to sweep an important issue under the carpet, in case a properly called meeting, with adequate notice, exposed the absurdity of the Federation’s briefing on this issue. However, It could well be due to ignorance of the way to call APPG meetings with adequate notice for people to attend, an agenda, invited contributors and start and finish times. I am a member of several APPGs and they all give sufficient notice to ensure maximum attendance. I am attaching an invitation from one APPG as an example of how meetings should be called.

Issues that are important to the Sikh community should be properly discussed, Members of the APPG must be allowed to hear views that may challenge the briefing given by the Sikh Federation. It is now more than a month since my original request. My request is that you arrange a meeting with adequate notice, as shown in the attachment. I will be happy to help with the Agenda and can provide a Briefing Note. I suggest that all MPs who were lobbied for their support by the Federation are invited to attend. It may also be an idea to invite a representative of the ONS to answer any technical queries.”

Email exchange between Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill

6. On 30 January 2018, Lord Singh wrote to Ms Kaur Gill:

“I shall be grateful for an early response to the attached.”²⁰

7. On 31 January, Ms Kaur Gill replied:

“I shall not be responding to your email as you and your staff member [...] have resorted to bullying me on social media and in person. The mysogny I have had to deal with has been most concerning and has been very distressing for me.

As the first female chair of the Appg Sikhs you have resorted to attacking me and making derogatory remarks something which my predecessor Rob Marris never had to endure.

I ask that you refrain from this bullying manner.”

8. Later that day, Lord Singh replied:

“It is sad that you feel free to make a clearly defamatory statement about me and then complain of bullying when asked for evidence!

In your tweet to [my office], you stated ‘it is on record that you Director is in breach of the Equalities Act ... ‘ It is not bullying to ask you where

²⁰ The attachment has not been provided.

it is ‘on record’, and for some evidence of how I supposedly ‘breached’ the Equalities Act.

I have generously given you an opportunity to explain or retract your statement before I consider further action. I await your considered response.”

Email exchange between Lord Singh and Pat McFadden MP

9. On 28 June 2019, Lord Singh emailed Pat McFadden MP:

“Prevarication in calling a Meeting of the APPG to discuss Sikh Federation stance on Ethnic Monitoring.

I am writing to you as Vice Chair of the APPG and someone who has close links with Sikhs, to seek your help in persuading you Chair Preet Gill to stop prevaricating in calling a long-requested meeting of the APPG to allow me to give a short presentation, and invite open discussion on the merits or otherwise of Federation policy of wanting Sikhs throughout the world to be labelled as having a single unique ethnicity.

I initially asked for a meeting on 19 May 2019. We are now nearing the end of June. As you know, I have repeated my request several times in the succeeding weeks. I was eventually asked to give dates. A week has elapsed since I suggested 8 or 9 July. and still no response.

To ensure all who may have inadvertently supported the Federation’s, clearly political views, are given time to sufficient notice to attend, I now suggest the meeting is now re-scheduled for either 15th or 16 July, at the times previously given.

I am asking for your help, as my experience of the recent past is that I fear your Chair Preet Gill, an open supporter of the Federation Secretariat, will either postpone the meeting indefinitely or call one at short notice to ensure minimum attendance. The Federation Secretariat clearly has a biased position on this issue and do not want open discussion. Because of this, I believe that it would be helpful if invitations were sent out from your office. I will be happy to prepare a suitable briefing paper to send out in advance.”

10. Mr McFadden replied on 1 July 2019:

“Thank you for your email. A meeting was arranged a couple of weeks ago to discuss these matters. I attended along with Lord Suri, Dominic Grieve, Preet Gill and Afzal Khan. We waited for you but you did not arrive.

Nevertheless, I believe Preet’s office has now arranged a second meeting. I hope you will be able to attend this time. I haven’t seen any evidence of prevarication and I am happy for Preet’s office to arrange the meeting.

In terms of numbers who attend, none of us has the power of summons and MPs tend to have busy diaries. No one can guarantee how many people will attend.

On the substance, as I have said before, I understand that opinions on the census issue may vary within the Sikh community. The APPG

supported a separate tick box before the last census when Rob Marris was chair, and in the run up to this one. I believe the ONS have refused the request in any case.”

Press release by the Network of Sikh Organisations: “Lord Singh’s response to the Sikh Federation UK’s statement of 6 February 2019”, dated 6 February 2019

11. On 6 February 2019, the Network of Sikh Organisations published a press release in response to a release by the Sikh Federation UK:

“Sikh Federation UK (SFUK) write:

Last week Lord Singh the 86-year old peer who has positioned himself successfully in the wider public and the government as the only voice of the Sikh community for almost the last 40 years..

Comment:

Why the ageist reference? According to Sikh teachings, it is not age, but ability and commitment that count.

Referring to ‘the 86-year-old peer’ is better than a previous SFUK description ‘a dinosaur’. What is it about the SFUK and references to age?

The SFUK in its different forms has been around for nearly 40 years. Why is it that this one individual has done more to promote an understanding of Sikh teachings in the government and wider public than the whole of SFUK put together?

SFUK write:

Lord Singh has also been overshadowed in Parliament for the last 18 months by the energetic Preet Kaur Gill, the first Sikh woman MP who became a shadow Minister within months of being elected and Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, the first turban wearing Sikh MP. Lord Singh is no longer the only Sikh politician that government, fellow Parliamentarians and the media turn to.

Comment:

This childish ‘you’re not the only one,’ is simply school playground jealousy. The more Sikh MPs, the better.

SFUK write:

However, what Lord Singh failed to disclose in the debate is he is the one and only life-time Director of the NSO. It now emerges he may not have declared this for the last seven years in the Register of Lords’ Interests, since he became a Lord in October 2011.

Comment:

I am not a lifetime director. All power lies with the elected Executive. They can sack me any time. It is an honorary post for which I do not receive a penny. In last month’s AGM, I specifically requested a diminution in my responsibilities.

Our website will confirm that membership of the NSO requires a commitment to live and propagate Sikh teachings. I believe, that as the first turban wearing Sikh in Parliament, this commitment is seen whenever I stand up to speak. It is appreciation of this commitment to uplifting Sikh teachings that enabled me to get cross-part support for the Amendment.

Why I stated in the debate that the government should consult with myself and the NSO in discussing any reservations about the amendment.

It was I who raised the issue at Second Reading. It was I who subsequently requested a meeting with the Minister, Baroness Williams and her advisers. It was I who had discussions with Lord Kennedy and Lord Paddick.

At the conclusion of my meeting with Baroness Williams it was agreed that they would come back to me. Instead of doing this as courtesy requires, they, ‘in the innocent belief that they are all the same’, then spoke to the SFUK who were naturally unable to respond to the points raised. But for them speaking to the wrong people, the Amendment would have received unanimous approval at Grand Committee. The Government have already apologised for this.

My comment that SFUK does not speak for all Sikhs

I mentioned this because it is true. If it were not true, SFUK would not have lost power in gurdwaras in Leicester, Southampton and their former stronghold in Wolverhampton.

The APPG for British Sikhs

I said the APPG for Sikhs and SFUK were one and the same, because this is true. The Chair is a SFUK sympathiser who appointed them to be its secretariat. There is only one other Sikh member. Four Sikhs in the House of Lords were excluded from its inaugural meeting.”

Press release by the Network of Sikh Organisations on the work of the Sikh Federation in relation to the Offensive Weapons Bill, dated 10 March 2019

12. On 10 March 2019, the Network of Sikh Organisation published a press released headed “*Sikh Federation UK’s incompetence over the Offensive Weapons Bill*”:

“THE FACTS

The Sikh Federation UK (SFUK) failed to brief their supporter Preet Gill MP, of the need to ensure protection for the kirpan in the early stages of the Offensive Weapons Bill (OWB).

When this was pointed out to them, they met Ministers to introduce protection for ‘religious use’ (which was already protected by the law). They then rushed to self-congratulate with photos with ministers, completely failing to understand that the Bill would prohibit the cultural and ceremonial use of the kirpan.

The SFUK should then have approached a Sikh member in the Lords to try to introduce an amendment to protect the cultural and ceremonial use of the kirpan.

When their colleagues in the Sikh Council suggested this, they argued strongly against Sikhs in the Lords being involved even if the opportunity for protection was lost. They felt that this would draw attention to their incompetence in briefing Preet Gill MP. True Sikhs would have put the needs of the community before their own egos.

Lord Singh, aware of the omission, contacted the relevant Minister before the Bill came to the Lords and, following discussion, raised the issue at the second reading. Because of his standing in the Lords, he received promises of support from all sides of the House.

The Bill then moved to Grand Committee and Lord Singh spoke in detail about the religious significance of the kirpan emphasising that it **literally meant ‘protector’ of the weak and vulnerable**. Lord Singh briefed Labour, Liberal and others from all sides of the House to say the same. Winding up for Labour, Lord Tunncliffe remarked that in all his years in parliament, he could never remember such unanimity

What SFUK are now saying in their jealous tweets, about Lord Singh omitting the religious significance of the kirpan, had already been said by Lord Singh and others at Grand Committee.

It is much harder to get an amendment to a Bill in the Lords than in the Commons, and the Home Office (advised by an anti-Sikh group) said that it was difficult to protect a larger kirpan unless there was a clear and easily recognisable description of its **physical appearance**. Sikhs in the Lords and their supporters saw this as a red herring to create doubt in the minds of the government. A kirpan, whatever its physical appearance, should be protected by legislation for religious and cultural use. There is nothing wrong in saying that in physical appearance a kirpan is a sword to ensure its protection in law.

Following the discussions at Report Stage, government officials have had a further meeting with Lord Singh in working towards a suitable amendment to cover Sikh concerns.

The SFUK in their continuing efforts to smear those that are trying to protect Sikh symbols and identity, while speaking and writing about the uplifting teachings of our Gurus, are again underlining their anti-Sikh agenda.”

Press release by the Network of Sikh Organisations on the work of the APPG on UK Sikhs, dated 31 March 2019

13. Ms Kaur Gill sent us a copy of an email exchange with Baroness Verma. The exchange related to the following press release by the Network of Sikh Organisations published on 31 March 2019 with the title “*Response to misleading ‘APPG British Sikhs Update’*”:

“Preet Gill’s statement dated 25th March 2019 on the work of the APPG contains numerous inaccuracies and distortions. A few examples:

On Seva School Coventry she writes:

‘Lord Singh raised the issue of Seva School. As agreed, I wrote to the DfE and received a full and helpful response from Damian Hinds assuring us that the school would not be closed, and they had asked an outstanding Sikh academy trust to take over. I have been in contact with the regional school’s commissioner.’

The reality:

Correspondence is on record to show that she and the Sikh Federation UK (SFUK)—the APPG’s secretariat, have systematically tried to keep Sikhs in the Lords out of the APPG. Despite this, Lord Singh persuaded Lord Suri, to accompany him to a meeting of the APPG on 9th October 2018, at the request of Seva School to help them in fighting a DfE attempt to force the school to join the non-mainstream Nishkam multi-academy trust, rather than a mainstream Sikh Trust. The parent’s concerns were covered in Schools Week. The DfE were not being helpful as Preet Gill writes; they merely repeated their threat that unless Seva School joined Nishkam, considered a New Religious Movement by many Sikhs, they would close the school down. Preet Gill completely ignored the concerns of the Sikh community detailed by Lord Singh and Lord Suri.

Lord Singh and Lord Suri were made less than welcome at the meeting. In response to a query from Lord Singh as to why Sikhs from the Lords were being excluded from the APPG, Preet Gill said that a letter of invitation had been sent by Pat McFadden. Pat McFadden to his credit, openly disagreed, saying that no invitation had been sent to the Lords. Lord Singh said that the APPG office holders should include someone from the Lords. Preet Gill ignored his suggestion. In the meeting and subsequently, Lord Singh asked for minutes of the meeting be sent to him. Despite several requests, the SFUK which acts as secretariat to the APPG has not done this.

Lord Singh, Lord Suri and Baroness Verma have subsequently made their position clear. They strongly object to the extremist SFUK running an APPG which should be for ALL Sikhs in Parliament and are unwilling to be a part of the APPG while Preet Gill and SFUK are in charge.”

14. In her email to Baroness Verma, Ms Kaur Gill asked Lady Verma to confirm if the reference to her was correct and said:

“I am concerned by the ongoing inaccurate information that Lord Singh and his staff have shared with regards to me. I should further add I have been on the receiving end of bullying by him and [his office].

I have not pursued the matter further legally given his age. However, I have raised informally with others. I will now be taking this matter up further. It would be great to catch up with you and discuss.”

15. Baroness Verma replied:

“I will be very happy to catch up and have a chat. I also just want to say that I am not a member of the APPG and have made no comment either way on the membership of the APPG, however given my name is in the link you kindly sent me, lets meet up as there are many pressing issues

that we could work together on especially against the backdrop of what may or may not happen with Brexit.”

Press release by the Network of Sikh Organisations: “Is the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs truly representative”, dated 12 October 2018

16. On 12 October 2018, the Network of Sikh Organisations published a press release signed off by Lord Singh on its website:

“The APPG for British Sikhs has over the Past 12 months made successful efforts to keep Sikhs in the Lords excluded from its deliberations. By chance I learnt of Tuesday’s AGM and accompanied by Lord Suri, attended the AGM to try to get the Group to issue a statement of concern over the bullying attitude of the Department for Education (DfE) in giving of a 2-week ultimatum to withdraw funding and move to a closure of a Sikh school, Seva School in Coventry unless it agreed to be run by Nishkam. Nishkam is a group regarded by many Sikhs as outside mainstream Sikhism, with a spiritual Head to whom some followers owe total allegiance.

Lord Suri and I were surprised at the poor attendance at the AGM, with one MP brought in for a while to make a quorum. After Preet Gill MP asked the 5 MPs present to confirm her as Chair, I spoke about the widespread concerns of parents, governors, staff, the Council of Gurdwaras in Coventry, the Sikh Council and the Network of Sikh Organisations and others. I also mentioned that an earlier complaint made by me of racist behaviour towards the school (in which Sikh teachings were labelled extremist and negative) had been upheld in an investigation by Sir David Carter a top civil servant with the DfE, with a promise of more supportive behaviour by the minister Lord Nash.

Unfortunately, the harassment has continued culminating in a 2-week ultimatum of a cessation of funding unless the school agreed to be run by Nishkam.

Preet Gill MP seemed irritated by both my presence at the meeting, and because I had raised an issue about which she had clearly not been briefed by the Sikh Federation UK, the official secretariat of the APPG. She expressed her admiration of Nishkam. However asking a mainstream Sikh school to join Nishkam with its different ethos, is like asking a Church of England school to join a group led by Jehovah’s Witnesses. She then queried my credentials in raising the widespread concerns of the Sikh community. Ignoring the need for urgent action, she said that she would have to carry out her own investigation and consult local MPs, as if their views counted for more than those of the Coventry Sikh community and two national Sikh bodies.

Lord Suri and I, were perhaps, even more disappointed by the mute subservience of the 5 MPs. There was no discussion about the DfE’s bullying and racist behaviour, or the need for government to understand a little about Sikhism and the Sikh community. The MPs expressed no sympathy or concern over an issue affecting Sikhs and the education of our children.

Lord Suri and I left the meeting with the knowledge that the APPG exists only to further the interests of the Sikh Federation UK, and not those of the wider Sikh community.”

Lord Singh’s written response

17. I wrote to Ms Kaur Gill and Lord Singh on 13 September 2019 to inform that that, having carried out a preliminary assessment, I had begun an investigation into the complaint. I asked Lord Singh to provide a written response to the matters raised.
18. On 23 September 2019, Lord Singh emailed his response:

“I was surprised to read Ms Gill’s complaint about me and hurt and appalled about her wholly unfounded smear of sexual harassment about which I am seeking legal advice. She has consistently misused her position as Chair of the APPG for Sikhs to further the agenda of the Sikh Federation, an extremist political party, and prevent me from raising genuine concerns of the wider Sikh community, but I never thought she would stoop to malicious smears in a formal complaint.

Ms Gill’s complaint is clearly simply an attempt to smear my reputation. She has consistently misused her position to prevent an alternative view to that of the extremist Sikh Federation being put to Members of Parliament. She misused her position to get more than 100 MPs to sign their support for the Federation policy of reducing a respected world religion practiced by people of different ethnicities, to a single ethnic group in furthering the Federation’s claim for a separated Sikh state in India. Most Sikhs oppose this attempt to downgrade our religion for supposed political gain. They rightly expect me to oppose this affront to Sikh religious teachings in Parliament.

The problem is that that Ms Gill has misused her position as Chair of the APPG to tell MPs, understandably not au fait with Sikh teachings, that the Federation’s political agenda is widely supported by the Sikh community. Ms Gill has also misused her position as Chair to freeze me out of APPG discussions. Most of the emails accompanying her complaint refer to my 2 years attempt to request Ms Gill to simply allow me an opportunity to provide those who signed support for Sikhs being called an ethnic group, with an alternative view held by many Sikhs. My requests have always been polite requests for a meeting with MPs who signed their support for the Federation position, to brief them on the actual pros and cons of calling Sikhs an ethnic group. The emails provided by Ms Gill show deliberate stalling by both her and her secretary. I even offered to help by sending out invitations if given the list of MPs. The offer was ignored. Instead, Ms Gill tried to patronise me with the offer of a chat. As the summer recess was drawing near, I reluctantly agreed to present my concerns to a smaller group at which only two non-Sikh MPs were present. My note of the meeting is attached.

Ms Gill feels that as a woman she has a right to use words like white, male, bullying, misogyny and patronising, as weapons to smear those who disagree with her. She absurdly contradicts herself in her appeal for special consideration. For example, in her complaint (page 5), she quotes me saying ‘it is clear that SFUK and Preet Gill MP are upset and angry’, she then uses this to suggest my comment was made to

suggest she was ‘petulant’. How? The same comment also referred to the SFUK., mostly males!

Bullying .

This is a misuse of physical strength or authority. Correspondence shows that Ms Gill, as Chair of the APPG has misused her position to try to deprive me of a voice in APPG discussions. I would like to make a formal complaint that Ms Gill has used her authority to bully me into accepting the Federation’s political and anti-Sikh stance on ethnic monitoring.

Misogyny

The very suggestion to someone with a consistent record in speaking and writing on sex equality is deeply insulting. I see nothing in the email correspondence to corroborate the accusation.

In other correspondence, Ms Gill presents a total false and potentially liable accusation of a supposed comment I made in a meeting with [VW] (page 4). I would never speak to anyone in that way. ‘You are making lies’ is not even English! I do not speak broken English. Ms Gill should be asked to provide evidence or retract this statement and apologise. In the meeting,

I actually congratulated Ms Gill on her appointment as Shadow Overseas Aid Secretary and repeated my congratulations in a letter after the meeting suggesting it would be useful to meet and see if we could develop a common approach. In her reply she made no mention of her new allegation.

Ms Gill has also made other potentially libellous statements about me, and others who disagree with her on social media, some of which are attached. I would like to make a formal complaint against her about her use of language in a way that contravenes the parliamentary code.

Ageism

What is the relevance of writing ‘the 86-year-old Peer’ on page 23?

Is it acceptable language to get your colleagues to refer to someone respected by the Sikh and wider community as dinosaur? Why didn’t she complain about their use of language? I would like to make a formal complaint about this misuse of language by Ms Gill and her Federation colleagues.

Patronising and condescending

She writes: ‘I have not pursued the matter further legally given his age. Page 20. What is the relevance of her reference to age? I am reluctantly considering making a make a formal complaint about this.

I would very much like to meet you as soon as possible to explain the absurdity of Ms Gill’s allegations and seek your advice on pursuing my fact backed complaints outlined above, and what can be done to prevent the Sikh APPG being used by a former proscribed political party in a way that affronts many Sikhs.

By way of background, I have made just two requests to the APPG on behalf of the wider Sikh community. The first, to be allowed to discuss the pros and cons of reducing Sikhism to ethnicity has been discussed above. The second was asking the APPG for support for Seva school, a Sikh school in Coventry to prevent the DfE merging it with a Sikh cult school. Ms Gill, after rudely asking who I was to be asking this, sided with the cult against parents and governors of the school. She was well-aware that I represent the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) which is responsible for Sikh schools. In the event, the court decided in favour of Seva School and stopped the attempted merger.

It is easy to smear someone but far harder to remove all the mud thrown. My problem is time. This is the 350th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, and as one who represents Sikhs on national occasions like the Remembrance Service at the Cenotaph and the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey, I am having to travel the length and breadth of the country from Southampton to Peterborough, to Bradford and Edinburgh and other places to give talks on different aspects of Guru Nanak's teachings, while at the same time addressing important concerns in the Prisons chaplaincy and other urgent work.

Ms Gill's complaint is vexatious and to answer it in detail would mean going through hundreds of emails and social media posts. Unlike Ms Gill, I have neither staff nor time to help me further before the completion of my 350th-anniversary engagements in November. Yesterday I had to spend a full day speaking to four gurdwaras in Southampton.

I have provided a brief summary response to Ms Gill's smears which I believe make all too clear her disturbing readiness to use accusations of gender discrimination to prevent discussion of importance to the Sikh community. I believe the information provided more than refutes Ms Gill's complaint. It shows it to be malicious and deliberately hurtful.

I can give oral rebuttals of any point not covered in my reply and would be happy to meet at a time convenient to you. I will also be seeking your advice on pursuing my own complaints against behaviour mentioned above, not out of vindictiveness, but to curb Ms Gill's policy of preventing legitimate discussion on Sikh issues while turning the APPG for Sikhs into a mouthpiece for the extremist policies of the Sikh Federation.

I look forward to hearing from you. I am attaching a number of attachments showing the extent of Ms Gill's use of innuendo and unacceptable behaviour."

Interview with Lord Singh on 24 October 2019

19. Quentin Colborn and I, with Moriyio Aiyeola attending, interviewed Lord Singh on 24 October 2019. Having read the various documentary evidence supplied by both parties, I began by suggesting that mediation might be a better way to deal with the allegations each was making about the other's behaviour, which is permissible under the Code, and would, if successful, bring the investigation to an end.
20. Lord Singh responded suggesting he was amenable to seeking a mediated outcome because to continue with the investigation would be time consuming:

“I’ve got so many commitments that although I feel there’s a very strong case that she is abusing the process to smear me and I think that can be proved, but it takes work and I don’t have the time and there is also in it libel. And I don’t want it to be unpleasant. It’s something—I’ve got better things to do.”

21. Lord Singh was adamant that the allegations were false.
22. Lord Singh then set out the points of disagreement that he considered to be the cause of Ms Kaur Gill’s complaint:

“[Preet Kaur Gill] represents an extremist fringe of the Sikh community, the Sikh Federation, which is trying to suggest that Sikhs are an ethnic group rather than—Sorry, I’ll bore you for a couple of minutes about this—rather than a world religion. Now, I do know something about this because under the 1976 Race Relations Act religion was not covered against discrimination. I worked with Bindman & Partners and the CRA to look for ways in which religion could be covered and we found that—First of all, I was asked to try and prove that Sikhs were a racial group and I flatly refused to do that because a prime emphasis in Sikhism is that we’re all of one common race, one humanity.

And then looking at ethnicity, which was also covered, it refers to people from one part of the world with common ethnic and genetic type characteristics. Most Sikhs at that time, in the early 80s, had come from the Sub-Continent and were—could be described, just about, as an ethnic group. There were other Sikhs in other parts of them but we thought we’d try it and we got away with it. It went to the House of Lords and it was said that, yes, Sikhs could be covered as an ethnic group.

Things have changed totally since then. There are Sikhs from East Africa, from Europe and from other places and the 1976 Race Relations Act has been repealed. That cover no longer exists nor is it necessary because the 2010 Act covered religion. So the ethnicity is not relevant except in a very tortuous argument: if we call ourselves an “ethnic group” we can call ourselves a distinct community and demand a homeland in India, Khalistan.

Now, that is the agenda and I am totally opposed to it. And being a representative of the Sikh Community in Parliament, I am bound to oppose the degrading, downgrading of a world religion to a little group, suggesting that it is a sort of endangered species that needs a home and protection. The religion totally argues against religious States. It would not be in conformity with religion. That is my argument.

Now, the complainant has, right from the beginning, as soon as she was elected, tried to push this agenda. She has got people to sign that, “Yes, we want Sikhs to be called—” MPs to sign that we should call Sikhs an ethnic group against the will of the Sikh Community, the wider Sikh Community. It’s something I’m bound to oppose.

Now, we could have a discussion about that, the complainant and myself. I’ve tried for two years to get a proper discussion including briefing the MPs so they can make up their minds from information rather than have it made up for them.

[...]

So she has robustly pushed her line and I have opposed it in, I think, a gentlemanly and fair manner. I have certainly never demeaned her or anything like that at all, and nor could I because that's not my makeup. I've never done it to anyone.

But there is this basic difference and she has—it's being recorded but I'll still say it—she is behaving like (I don't know if you've read the "Just William" books) Violet Elizabeth Bott, "I'll scream and I'll scream". And here it is, "I'll scream misogyny unless you agree with me." It's not myself that's had that thrown at me, it is anyone who is opposed. I particularly feel for an academic who was not only screamed at but also reported to her university that "this person is behaving badly."

This is a, sort of, wild, smearing campaign that is behind it and there is nothing there in any email. The only thing is that there is the one from the ONS where she—which is totally made up and the evidence I've given shows that there was no thought of it in her mind at the time. After meeting I wrote to her. First of all, in the meeting, I congratulated her on her appointment as Shadow-Overseas Aid Secretary. I did the same in the letter. I raised a number of points—we had about 20 minutes before the ONS people came—that concerned me, so that we could get our facts clear and try and find some common ground. And I referred to that in the letter and that is all.

At that time there was no hint of anything having been said. She never said it. It's years later, and this is a manufactured and libellous smear which can be proved in front of the ONS. And I am not the only one who feels that Sikhs are not an ethnic group, it's a world religion. The ONS also say so. That is a fundamental difference and there's nothing more. I've got no personal agenda with her at all or with the Federation, but I will stick to the Sikh line."

23. Throughout our interview, Lord Singh reiterated that with regard to Ms Kaur Gill he had "no personal enmity, no personal friendship, no personal enmity; it is only on issues".

Interview with Preet Kaur Gill on 20 January 2020

24. Quentin Colborn and I, with Moriyo Aiyoola in attendance, interviewed Ms Kaur Gill on 20 January 2020. Ms Kaur Gill was accompanied to the meeting.
25. I began by explaining that Lord Singh's written response to her complaint had suggested he might make a counter-complaint against her (which would be dealt with by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards who is responsible for enforcing the House of Commons Code of Conduct). I suggested that mediation might be a better way to deal with the allegations each was making about the other's behaviour, which is permissible under the Code, and would, if successful, bring the investigation to an end.
26. Ms Kaur Gill was concerned that a process of complaint and counter-complaint made to two different Commissioners—myself and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards in the House of Commons—would disadvantage her in the process she had begun by complaining to me.

However, she also said that she considered the most important outcome was for Lord Singh “to stop the behaviour”:

“I mean, there is one thing saying things in meetings in front of other professionals and that’s not challenged, and then there’s another thing to put out an article for everyone to see, which is inaccurate, not been checked in terms of information, but it’s all about maligning and trying to, you know, bring my [...] undermine me, bring my reputation into disrepute.”

27. She noted that she was the first Chair of the APPG not to be white and male. She considered that this was a factor that had contributed to Lord Singh’s conduct:

“The thing for me that is very stark is that every chair to myself has been white and male and he has never engaged to date; there is no evidence. I have spoken to the chairs and he has never attended a meeting, this you know, whether it is a campaign, whether he agrees or not, that is not the issue here, because, you know, there will be lots of things we don’t agree on, but actually he has never, ever, ever made a public comment about it even previously, but he chooses to do it when I and the thing is these attacks have started pretty much as I have entered Parliament. It is now two and a half years. I have thought about his age, the fact that I have respect, you know, and regard, given his age really, that I didn’t want to push things in the first year. But actually he just does not stop, even though I feel like even if I try and engage with him and talk to him, he is just not interested. He says something to your face and he will go back and do something else. That is the thing.”

Correspondence with Ms Kaur Gill following interview on 20 January 2020

28. During the interview Ms Kaur Gill said she would consider the suggestion of mediation and write to me. On 29 January 2020, Ms Kaur Gill’s office emailed my office:

“Having considered everything, Preet has decided to decline mediation for a number of different reasons which I am sure she can expand on face-to-face and she would like to continue with the investigation. Please do let me know the next steps.”

29. I wrote to Ms Kaur Gill on 23 March 2020 seeking some further information. She replied on 21 April with responses (my questions and requests for information in **bold**):

“In answer to your other questions, I have tried to answer them as fully as possible although obviously much of the information is from before I was an MP:

- **when was the APPG set up; I understand that it may have had a different title in the early years, so any information on how it has developed would be appreciated;**

As far as I understand The APPG was set up in 2005, this seems to correspond with this article http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4675079.stm and an extract from Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a community: Gurharpal Singh & Darshan Singh Tatla (2006) -

P120 reads: “a new Sikh All-Party Parliamentary Group was officially launched on 12 July 2005 with five vice-chairs from the Labour Party, Conservative Party, Liberal Democrats [sic], Scottish Nationalists and plaid Cymru.”

It has always been with the secretariat of the Sikh Federation with different volunteers supporting

- **when a meeting is organised, how are potential attendants notified and/or how is the meeting publicised? Are individuals invited and/or is there a membership list? If there is a membership list, how are such members invited to be a part of the group and/or selected?**

A note is put on the all-party notice to ensure Peers and MPs can have advance sight and notice and an email to all MPs is sent round. An additional reminder to the vice-chairs is sent round if there is a need for the meeting to be quorate- for example an AGM.

- **a list of previous chairs of the APPG and its officers going back to its origin;**

The chairs were: Rob Marris MP (2005–2010), Fabian Hamilton (2010–2015), Rob Marris (2015–2017), Preet Kaur Gill 2017-

Officers I will find harder to access prior to my time. If helpful I can send you those since I was elected?

My understanding is that from the time that Lord Singh became a Peer in 2011, he was not a member of the APPG nor did he attend any APPG meetings or events until I became chair in 2017. Even following that he did not attend any meetings or events hosted by the apart from the AGMs and the meeting set up for him to brief MPs on the census campaign. You have the record of the organisation of that meeting and a record of his manner and behaviour towards [...], my researcher.

I do not believe that he has ever, even prior to my election attended any of the celebrations of Vaisakhi organised by the APPG and British Sikh Consultative Forum (BSCF) or the Gurburb (Birth) of Guru Nanak Dev Ji organised by the APPG, The Sikh Network and Sikh Federation (UK).

- **the minutes of the last few meetings of the APPG going back to the beginning of your chairmanship**

For official APPG meetings, we only take minutes for the AGM’s rather than all events. I have attached the minutes for the 2018 AGM. We didn’t have an AGM in 2019 due to the General Election but did in early 2020. Unfortunately the most recent minutes of that AGM are saved on a computer in my parliamentary office and the paper notes are also in my office. As soon as I am able to safely do so I will send this over.”

Interview with Lord Singh on 16 March 2020

30. Quentin Colborn and I, with Ms Aiyeola in attendance, interviewed Lord Singh again on 16 March 2020.

31. We began by asking Lord Singh to comment on Ms Kaur Gill's allegation that Lord Singh's conduct towards her was based on her gender and that it amounted to bullying and harassment. Lord Singh denied this:

"There is no substance to it at all, but it is very much the other way around! She has used her position as chair to prevent me expressing the view of the majority of Sikhs in the UK. [...] there is no question of gender coming into it at all."

32. We also discussed Ms Kaur Gill's impression that Lord Singh had only become active on the issue of a Sikh ethnicity tick box since she became chair of the APPG:

"Ms Gill flatters herself in suggesting that only I opposed the Federation position on ethnic monitoring after she became first non-white female, in the chair. The ONS have a record of meetings with me before the 2011 census. There was no Sikh representation on the APPG in 2011 but I successfully opposed the Federation's ethnic tick box suggestion in the period leading up to the 2011. I helped start the APPG for Sikhs (in the early years I gave 2-3 keynote talks on Sikhism and concerns of Sikhs in the UK. I also enlisted the support of the APPG on some Sikh issues.) After the election of Ms Gill and Mr Dhesi, who became the first Sikhs on the APPG, I thought it might become more active and tried to get involved, I was not welcome to an APPG interested only in furthering the ethnic tick box agenda. Every effort was made to prevent me from questioning Federation policies or raising other Sikh concerns—even to the extent of Ms Gill abusing and bringing disgrace on the Parliamentary Complaints procedure by suggesting any disagreement with her was misogyny. Despite disagreement on issues mentioned, I have always treated her with politeness and courtesy."

33. Lord Singh said the APPG had initially been an APPG for Punjabis but had developed into the APPG on British Sikhs. He had been active with the APPG when it was for Punjabis but largely stopped taking part once the Sikh Federation UK became involved. He had objected to the Sikh Federation UK being involved and had spoken to John McDonnell MP:

"I had known John for years and he helped set up the APPG. I was concerned that it should be an APPG for Sikhs, not an APPG for the Sikh Federation with a very slanted political view that is not the majority view of Sikhs."

34. However, he said he had sought to become involved again once Ms Kaur Gill was elected chair:

"I thought, "Here are two Sikhs", and the ethnicity or anything wasn't pushed initially. And I hoped we could actually discuss Sikh issues and promote a wider understanding of Sikh teachings."

35. We then discussed the meeting between Lord Singh, Ms Kaur Gill and VW (see below). We asked about the discussion about Sikhs and alcohol and Lord Singh's alleged remark to Ms Kaur Gill, "You know nothing about Sikhism. You're making lies that Sikhs can drink alcohol":

"The accusation is completely and made to smear my reputation in the House, the Sikh community and wider society. I would never use the

words “you are making lies”, which she gives as a direct quote without any backing evidence. It’s not even English.

It is absurd. We did talk about Sikh issues before [VW] arrived. She mentioned something about “We’ve got to tackle alcohol abuse”, I agreed but said that it wouldn’t be helped by calling Sikhs an ethnic group. The suggestion that I said that Sikhs do not drink alcohol, is manifestly absurd, because I have organised meetings with Dr Pannu (an expert), and the NSO, to combat alcohol abuse in the Southall Sikh community [...] if alcoholism was mentioned in the meeting, the only reference would be from Preet Gill to say it’s a problem and I might have responded that it’s a problem that’s got nothing to do with tick boxes.”

36. We also asked about Ms Kaur Gill’s allegation that during that meeting Lord Sign had said to her “You know nothing about Sikhism”:

“The suggestion that I said that Sikhs do not drink alcohol, is manifestly absurd, because I have organised meetings [an expert], and the NSO, to combat alcohol abuse in the Southall Sikh community It is a problem particularly in those who came from the more rural areas of Punjab

[...]

I would never say that to anyone. It’s an absurd and untrue accusation. I wrote to her immediately after the meeting a letter: “Dear Preet, It was a pleasure to meet you last Wednesday and discuss Sikh issues” I gave a detailed view of what had interested me in the meeting and invited comments in that letter so that we could try and explore the finding of common ground. I congratulated her both in the pre meeting discussion and in the letter because she’d been made a–some position in the shadow International Development.

[...]

I would not speak to anyone like that. I am aware that she belongs, and is very close, to a sect in Smethwick that do not practise the mainstream Sikhism but I would not hold this against her.t I wouldn’t say to anyone, “You know nothing”. I could not speak like that to anyone. I mentioned it in the letter, that in Sikhism, because of various challenges to the ten Gurus, the tenth Guru said, “No more gurus. Just simply follow the Sikh teachings in the holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib”. Now, in Smethwick they have another guru and they have another text as well, so it is not mainstream.”

37. We discussed the article by the journalist, Sunny Hundal. Lord Singh said he did not recall any contact with Mr Hundal around the time of the article and did not recall the article. He suggested that the quote attributed to him in Mr Hundal’s article may have been provided by a member of his staff or taken from a “a debate in Sikh media”. He said that if the quote had come from a member of staff, this may have happened without his knowledge as they “would not need my authority to relay fact”.
38. We discussed Lord Singh’s exchanges with Preet Kaur Gill’s office attempting to arrange a meeting of the APPG at which he could speak. We noted that he

had been invited in those emails to attend on more than one occasion. Lord Singh explained that what was offered was not what he had been asking for:

“First of all, there was a blanket opposition to me addressing them at all. Then they said various things. “You can come. There’s two or three of us. We’ll chat or something”. That’s not what I wanted. I wanted the supposedly 100 plus MPs who had supposedly supported the Federation position to reconsider their position on the basis of fact and open discussion.

[...]

However, MPs are busy people and they could fill their time going to meetings. In reality, they only go to meetings if they receive an agenda and if it is of interest. I offered to send out details of the meeting if they gave me the list of the 100+ MPs that were said to support the Federation position. Unfortunately, they never sent invitations or allowed me to do so. They did not want proper briefing and discussion.”

39. In July 2019, Lord Singh had attended an APPG meeting to discuss the census. However, he said that meeting was not “what I had been asking for”:

“The correspondence clearly shows that for two years I had been trying to get a full debate with those who had supposedly signed support for the Federation position on ethnic monitoring. I did not want to chat to 2-3 people. I was trying for a meeting with a longer notice allowing greater attendance. Preet Gill successfully stalled to prevent this. [...] It was not the fuller briefing meeting I wanted , but because the summer recess was coming up. I said, “All right, I’ll go with whatever it is”. It wasn’t satisfactory or the way I wanted it. It wasn’t an opportunity to inform MPs who were signing one thing and then there was another viewpoint.”

40. Lord Singh then spoke about comments the Sikh Federation UK (SFUK) and Preet Kaur Gill had made about him. He referred to an SFUK description of him as a “76-year-old dinosaur”. He also queried why Ms Kaur Gill had mentioned his age:

“There is a reference, Preet Gill saying at one time, “I was going to complain but, given his age, I didn’t”. Why the ageist references? Either I am capable of conducting myself or I’m not, and this is smear. It’s an ageist smear, whereas in all this she has been talking about misogyny and smearing me with the outrageous suggestion that I treated her as a lesser individual because she’s female, This is simply playground behaviour in response to my request for adult discussion.”

41. We discussed why Lord Singh had attended an APPG meeting in January 2020 given that, for the duration of the investigation, we had asked Lord Singh to have no contact Ms Kaur Gill. He said that he went with Lord Ranger as he felt he should try again to engage with the group. He said he had not seen our instruction not to contact Ms Kaur Gill as preventing him from attending the APPG:

“I interpreted it as not contacting Preet Gill and talking to Preet Gill or writing to her. I didn’t interpret it as saying that I could not attend a

meeting of the APPG. I think I had as much right to attend it as Preet Gill.”

42. He agreed that during that meeting he had spoken to Ms Kaur Gill, but only in her capacity as the Chair of the APPG. We asked whether he had considered how she might react to this interaction during the investigation:

“I don’t think that excludes me from being a member of the APPG [...] I have no idea how she feels. She apparently feels upset at the sight of me, but I can’t do anything about that. But this should not preclude me going about my parliamentary business or being true to the Sikh community. I don’t think the Commissioner wanted me bullied out of the APPG. [...] I took that as meaning that I should not enter into no separate dialogue with her or meet with her. I never took that to exclude me attending a meeting of the APPG.

[...]

I thought the guidance and the request was that I shouldn’t contact her or in that sort of way as an individual, not to stop me doing my parliamentary work as a Sikh.

QUENTIN COLBORN: Can you see that, in retrospect, perhaps there was another interpretation of that?

LORD SINGH: It’s an interpretation that would never occur to me, and I feel that, if I attend any meeting and she happens to be there, that doesn’t make me culpable in going against the Commissioner’s request.”

43. Lord Singh reiterated his refutation of the allegations against him:

“There have been serious allegations of misogyny and treating—acting in a way I wouldn’t with white males. I totally refute that and invite you to give me evidence of that. Smears are one thing, but a deliberate sustained attempt to destroy the reputation of one of the most respected Sikhs in UK for daring to disagree with Federation policy, brings the whole Complaints Procedure and Parliament into disrepute.”

Correspondence with Lord Singh following interview on 16 March 2020

44. Following my interview with Lord Singh on 16 March 2020, he replied on 21 April with corrections to the transcript. His letter also included:

“Having gone through points in detail, I feel bad that Ms Gill has wasted hours of your time to smear and denigrate someone who most people in the Sikh and wider community regard as an internationally recognized Sikh who has devoted his life to serving the Sikh community and furthering interfaith understanding,

As I said before it is far easier to smear someone with mud than for the victim to completely remove it. Other than than the manufactured accusation that I was rude to her in a meeting with the ONS, there is nothing other than my daring to oppose Federation policies on religion and ethnicity, with her screaming misogyny at me and others who have a different view to hers.

On reflection, I feel my involvement with the APPG since 2017, to try to get an open discussion on ethnic monitoring, has been a complete waste of time. Although this is what Ms Gill has always wanted, I am seriously considering leaving the APPG.. The extent of the pettiness of Ms Gill and the Federation Secretariat is seen in their Press Release following the January 2020 meeting. There is no mention of my name in the list of officers although, at the suggestion of Lord Ranger, I was eventually given the post of Treasurer.

Sikh Federation UK Just a small example of how the bully boys of the Federation operate.

Sikh Federation Hacked insertion into my Wikipedia Entry

Referring to my inadvertent omission to mention that I was the honorary Director Network of Sikh Organisations while speaking on the Offensive weapons Bill, the Sikh Federation hacked my Wikipedia entry to write : *‘Not sure how far the Commissioner will go, but since he became a Lord in 2011 he has almost certainly used his position as the Director of the NSO (and as a Lord) to continue to be the sole representative of the Sikh community at events such as the Genotaph Remembrance Service, Westminster Abbey Commonwealth Day Service and receive invites to events like the royal wedding’*

The envy and attempt to smear my reputation by the Federation colleagues of Ms Gill is all too evident.

There was much more but I don't want to waste your time.

In Summary, MS Gill has used her position as Chair and her female identity to further a Federation agenda with fictitious and hurtful smears.and, in doing so has brought the Complaints Procedure itself into a measure of disrepute.

As mentioned previously, I don' want to waste your time with further information but will be happy to provide further details if needed.”

45. Lord Singh also provided the following statement on 21 April 2020:

“I have read the record of questions and my responses. I had intended to attend the meeting in person after collection documentation from my office in the Lords. The questions and responses sometimes covered the same ground in different ways. I believe my responses from memory were generally accurate if somewhat badly put. In some cases, they were best guesses, and looking at what little documentation I have, on at least one occasion inaccurate. I am therefore summarising both the thrust of questions and my responses corrected for inaccuracies.

1. Ethnic Tick box.

You are right when you quote Preet Gill MP (PG) saying her main difference with me was over the proposed ‘ethnic tick box’. She and the Federation had been suggesting in the media that they have the support of more than a hundred MPs Having originated the argument of ethnicity in the 1983 Mandla case, I knew the concept was difficult to understand even by experts, and for two years tried to get a meeting

in which I could explain the pros and cons. PG could find no reason for opposing my suggestion and made the outrageous suggestion that my reason for repeatedly requesting a proper debate was motivated by misogyny and that I would not have made the request if she was white and male.

2. Questions on alleged bullying Ms Gill in a meeting with [VW].

Sequence of events. [VW] was about 15 minutes late in joining us and we chatted about our background and concerns about Sikhs in the UK. I had hosted an earlier meeting with the ONS and was keen to know PG's position on ethnicity and general Sikh concerns and the possibility of finding common ground on the census.

Discussion in the meeting confirmed our different attitudes to the census, but I still felt that we might find common ground and, after the meeting, wrote to PG to this effect. [attachment 1] At no time did I speak in rude or dismissive words. That is not my way of discussion. I certainly did not use the words or the sentiments detailed in her complaint. She says further that the comment was made in front of [VW]. It is a serious slur to put to the Commissioner for Standards without an iota of evidence and she should apologise to both the Commissioner for Standards and to me for her attempt at character assassination and the wasting many hours of our time. In our telephone meeting I mentioned that [VW] took notes but at that time thought he had not circulated any note of the meeting. I was wrong. He did send a note of the discussion. There was no reference in it to back PG's complaint. On the contrary, he looked forward to further meetings, [Attachment 2]

3. My Involvement with the APPG

This is as shown in the corrected notes of the meeting. The APPG for Sikhs started off as the 'APPG for Punjabis' and was set up by Iqbal Singh, a Researcher with John McDonnell MP, and myself with the help of Jack Weatherill then Speaker of the Commons (later Lord Weatherill). After an early flurry of activity at which I was twice keynote speaker, it became dominated by the ISYF and its successor the Sikh Federation and activities diminished. Non-the-less, its Chair did help on some occasional Sikh issues, [Attachment 3] I hoped it would become an active voice for Parliamentary Sikh with the election of two Sikh MPs in 2017, but soon found that PG was only interested in pursuing the Federation's narrow political agenda. She has since responded to attempted debate on Sikh issues with rudeness and cries of misogyny, smearing all those who disagree with her, including myself, [Attachment 4] contains some twitter exchanges passed on to me.

4. Article written by Sunny Hundal

I know Sunny Hundal and have been interviewed by him on BBC radio on Sikh issues. Unfortunately, my notes on PG's complaint are in my office in the Lords. I am vaguely aware of an article in which PG referred to him, me or both of us as misogynists. If you think it important, I will be grateful if you would send me a copy of Mr Hundal's article to help me respond more fully.

5. Exclusion from the APPG

I feel the record shows that PG has done everything to exclude my participation at APPG meetings. She has said that she had asked Pat Mc Fadden to send me an invitation to the inaugural meeting in 2017. This was denied by both Pat Mc Fadden's secretary and, in the meeting Lord Suri and I attended, by Pat McFadden himself. While other are sent emails and invitation, no invitations were sent to any Sikh in the Lords. After I complained, email invitations were sent to Lord Suri and he was made an officer.

When I raised a concern over the DfE attitude to a Sikh school in Coventry on behalf of the NSO., she rudely asked Who is the NSO? I knew that she was trying to belittle me in front of others, but explained that the NSO is the inspection authority for Sikh schools and runs the Chaplaincy Services for Sikhs in prisons and the Armed Services. She shamelessly uses her position as Chair to promote the Federation stance on calling Sikhs an ethnic group as the most important issue facing the community, while at the same time successfully preventing my attempts at getting a sizeable number of the 100+ MPs, supposedly in favour of the Federation position, to openly debate on the issue. The measure of her success is that only three non-Sikh MPs came to the July 2019 meeting. Perhaps excluding is too strong a word, but, when she appoints officers of her choice to exclude me, even before being elected Chair and then makes a formal complaint that I dared to speak at the recent re-inaugural meeting, it is close to a policy of attempted exclusion.

6. Small Meeting to Discuss Sikhs and Ethnicity July 2019

I made notes of the meeting knowing that PG would not circulate details of the proceedings. These are included as attachment 5.

7. Attendance at Inaugural Meeting of the APPG January 2020

I did not for a moment think that The Standards Commissioner's advice that I should not contact each other pending the conclusion of the enquiry, meant that I should not go to APPG meetings. This would virtually give carte blanche to promote the Federation's political agenda. However, if that is what's wanted, I'll be happy to comply."

46. On 4 May 2020, Lord Singh wrote to me about his membership of the APPG:

"Please see attachment confirming that I was involved with the APPG from the beginning.

It was active initially but inactive as the APPG for Sikhs when I was appointed to the Lords in 2011. It got its first parliamentary Sikh members when Preet Gill and Tan Dhesi got elected about 3 years ago. I then tried to get involved so that we could further respect and understanding for Sikhs but as you have seen got instantly rebuffed."

47. On 8 June 2020, Lord Singh wrote to me:

“I hope you and the family are well in the current Covid19 lockdown. My wife and I have not left the house since our telephone conference discussion on Ms Gill’s complaint.

In my enforced confinement I have had time to reflect on the way Ms Gill has used the fact that she is a female, to accuse someone, who had spent the best part of his life fighting for women’s rights, of misogyny. I find it truly sickening that she tried to smear me because I dared to express, what has now been conceded as a majority view, that Sikhism is a religion rather than an ethnicity. To make her case, she gave an entirely fictitious account of a supposed argument in front of [VW]. I would not speak to anyone, man or woman in the way she suggests: a smear that can easily be refuted by [VW].

Since the passing of the 2021 Census Order dismissing the Federation’s arguments on ethnicity, on-line abuse and ageist references to my senility from her Federation supporters, have become more frequent and nastier.

When we last met before Xmas, I mentioned that I would like to lodge my own complaint. You responded that while I had a right to do this, it would reflect badly on the Sikh community. You suggested mediation might be a better option and I readily agreed. Sadly, she is not interested in mediation but only in trying to damage my standing in the Sikh and wider community.

Despite the provocation, I will probably [*sic*] not make a formal complaint about her behaviour because I believe it might reflect badly on the Sikh community, and because I do not have the time to waste. Nor do I want to any longer be a member of an APPG that behaves in partisan way

I do hope that your findings will reflect not only her malicious behaviour, but perhaps even more importantly, that her behaviour brings an important Complaints Procedure into disrepute.”

Interview with Preet Kaur Gill on 20 July 2020

48. Quentin Colborn and I interviewed Ms Kaur Gill again on 20 July 2020, with Ms Aiyoola in attendance. Ms Kaur Gill had been provided with a summary of Lord Singh’s responses to the complaint and VW’s evidence (see below).
49. Ms Kaur Gill began by commenting on Lord Singh’s response. She questioned Lord Singh’s counter-allegations that she had used her position to prevent him from representing the position of the majority of Sikhs in the UK. She did not think that he could claim to speak for the majority without demonstrating how that majority view had been canvassed and did not believe that she had done anything as chair of the APPG that had prevented him from speaking his mind.
50. Lord Singh had said that he had not previously been engaged with the APPG because it had not been chaired by a Sikh. Once Ms Kaur Gill had taken the Chair he considered the APPG had legitimacy and had therefore he had become involved. Ms Kaur Gill said:

“it shouldn’t really matter whether I’m a Sikh or not because the APPG for British Sikhs is set up by cross-party MPs and Peers for them to campaign on the issues that are important for the Sikh community. These are not issues that I or my colleagues or we just drum up. These are because the community have been campaigning for them, writing to MPs on all sides of the House. So it’s very much about issues and not the personalities.”

51. Ms Kaur Gill also noted that the Sikh Federation (UK) had provided the secretariat to the APPG for British Sikhs since the APPG was formed.

52. Ms Kaur Gill described Lord Singh’s conduct at APPG meetings:

“He’s come to the APPG. He seems to be directing these kinds of comments towards me and he thinks he’s able to. [...] I’ve seen his behaviour in APPGs. You can ask a number of people that have attended the APPG, in terms of how it is very much directed at me. And that has been observed by others, it’s been picked up by others and it’s quite obvious is what I would say. He doesn’t hide the fact that he is so openly objectionable towards me.”

53. Ms Kaur Gill said Lord Singh’s contact with her had pre-dated her election as Chair of the APPG. She said he had messaged her private email. However, she said that he had never sought to engage with her constructively:

“He has never ever shown me that he absolutely wants to engage. He’s never come up to me. He’s passed me in the House a number of times. He has never, you know. We’ve spoken on a number of occasions. He’s never said, “It would be really good to sit down with you and to talk to you now that, you know, you’ve come to the House and I want to engage in these issues”. We’ve never had that conversation. And I’ve seen him in passing on a number of occasions. Not even in his emails has he said that, that I shared with you, em, is he really, sort of, saying, apart from one or two but that’s when the issue became such, you know, it’s become such a big issue.

The thing for me is if you were really intent on building a relationship with me, if you were really intent in terms of working together with me and Tan,²¹ for example, who is the Sikh, you know, two Sikh MPs, then there are other ways of going about to evidence and show that you’re willing to do that. And he has not done that.”

54. She acknowledged that there was a disagreement between them on a point of policy but said that Lord Singh’s approach to the disagreement was linked to her gender:

“And I have to say it is then, it is linked to my gender. Because, as I said before, the APPG was set up in 2005. This is a campaign it campaigned on in 2005 and has done subsequently since then. I only became an MP in 2017. All the previous chairs of the APPG have been white males.

I have spoken to both of them and they have said that they have never had any conversation with Lord Singh about the fact that they were leading on the Sikh ethnic tick box campaign on behalf of the Sikh community; he never engaged; he never attended the APPG meetings,

21 Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, MP for Slough

he wasn't writing articles against them. His voice was actually quite silent, if I'm really honest.

[...]

when he says "there is no question of gender", of course there is a "question of gender" because suddenly you've had the first Sikh female MP in 2017 elected and all she's doing is continuing the campaign that has gone on before her. And all of a sudden there are articles in the paper about her, about her views, maligning me, incorrect information, you know, challenging me, telling other Members of Parliament that the information I'm giving is incorrect; a whole heap of, actions that he has taken to date that absolutely suggest that this is only because I'm a woman and it is because I'm a Sikh woman".

55. We explained that although she saw Lord Singh's conduct as being related to her gender, there would need to be evidence in order to make a finding of harassment based on sex. Ms Kaur Gill noted, "You never do though when it is sexism, do you? Nobody says, "Oh, it's because she's a woman"."

56. She said that Lord Singh had made public comments about her and her adherence to Sikhism without having sought to gain any proper understanding of her views from her:

"most of what he has said is his own assumption and a view. He's never asked me about how I follow Sikhism. All the comments I read are very, you know, things that I find out that he thinks about me. They're not things he's questioned me or asked me or read anywhere else. These are just his own views that he is putting out there, which is misinformation. It's to malign me."

57. She accepted that they had disagreements on policy but argued that such disagreements could be had with each of them respecting one another, but in her view, Lord Singh did not act respectfully:

"The fundamental thing is he doesn't show me the same level of respect. He's always undermining me. He's always trying to malign my character. All the articles he's written about me are very evidential about that."

58. She also said that, though other members of the APPG and other MPs had spoken about the issue of the census and advocated a Sikh ethnicity tick box, Lord Singh's criticism had been focussed on her:

"I'm not doing any different to my white counterparts, my male counterparts. And even now campaigning I'm not doing anything different to the Sikh counterparts and to any of the other females and none of them have had this level of experience from-- and this campaign against me --against the way that Lord Singh is against me."

59. Ms Kaur Gill described the question of the census tick box from her point of view:

"the whole ethnic tick box campaign is about how the United Kingdom delivers its public services but also collects data on ethnic minorities.

Now, the inherent problem we have around discrimination, whether he likes it or not, Sikhs and Jewish people in this country are, by law,

recognised as an ethnic group and they are protected in the 2010 Equality Act. And he struggles with that. Now he was one of the -- So the *Mandla v Dowell-Lee* case, all of the, kind of, protections are still within the Act. He disputes this, that part. It's not for me to dispute the law. I'm not going to argue with the legislation. That is the legislation.

[...]

So the ONS tells every public body in the United Kingdom, of which there are 40,000, that they can only use the ethnic categories and not religious to (a) monitor data and (b) deliver services. The ethnic category is compulsory and the religious category is optional; you do not have to tick it; you do not have to collect data. We know there's a lot of issues around that. I asked the ONS to make the religious category compulsory so we can absolutely extrapolate the data. They said, "No, we won't do that, sorry".

[...]

They [Sikhs] are recognised by law as an ethnic group and religious group, but for purposes of local authorities and public bodies collecting data -- I'll tell you where the evidence base for this is. The race disparity already looked at 176 datasets across government and found no data on Sikhs. There's the inherent problem. It's a community that's invisible to law makers."

60. Ms Kaur Gill discussed an article by the journalist Sunny Hundal which had included quote from Lord Singh. She said that it was implausible that the quote could be given to a journalist without Lord Singh's knowledge and approval. She argued that was not a coincidence that Mr Hundal's article took the same line as Lord Singh:

"I find it quite interesting that all of a sudden Sunny Hundal has never, you know, commented on anything of this and then, because of Lord Singh, he's using the very same arguments as Lord Singh. He's not coming from it from a different angle; he's just talking about the two things that Lord Singh always says, "We are a religion; we are not an ethnic group". He will say the same thing."

61. Ms Kaur Gill disagreed with some of the recollection of VW of a meeting they had hosted with her and Lord Singh (see below). She said that in an exchange about Sikh weddings and drinking alcohol Lord Singh had said more than VW recalled:

"I said to Lord Singh, "Of course there's an issue of alcohol in the Sikh community", because, you know, it's shared at the weddings, for example, at all Sikh weddings, and he said, I don't know, he said, "No, you are misleading in saying that. No, Sikhism doesn't believe in drinking alcohol and I don't know what weddings you go to, but certainly there's no, you know, we don't drink in the Sikh community. We're not supposed to drink", something like, you know, that.

[...]

I mean, it's a fact, if you ask any Sikh, moderate or non-moderate, "Tell me about Sikh weddings", everybody knows there's alcohol at Sikh

weddings, end of. Of course the community has an alcohol-related issue. I mean, yes, the faith says we shouldn't drink alcohol, but that doesn't mean to say people are religious and follow the religion."

62. She was also surprised that VW had said they didn't think the exchanges were personal as she believed they had been uncomfortable during the meeting at how personal matters got.
63. Ms Kaur Gill said that one of the reasons she felt Lord Singh was so critical of her and the APPG was that he had previously been the only influential Sikh voice in Parliament:

"I feel that this is all about Lord Singh feeling very threatened. He has been the lone voice in Parliament as the only Sikh voice. He's been able to say anything he wants on behalf of the community without any challenge. A lot of people have a view of him—it's not for me to say—in my community. They don't have the regard for him that he has for himself. They don't have the kind of respect that he has placed himself. They don't see him in the elevated position. They think what he has achieved is great. They think, you know, they agree with him sometimes; they don't agree with on other issues.

He's never been seen to be a collaborator in the community. He's pretty much seen to be a one-man-band. If you ask him for the names of the 130 organisations he allegedly is head of, he never provides them to you because they don't exist. And this is something that all the community knows. We know, I've known for years and years that the Network of Sikh Organisations does not exist. It's pretty much Lord Singh, and one or two others.

So, yes, I do. I feel that this is about him not now being the "go to" voice in the House because now you have Tanmanjeet; you have myself. And this has been a bit of a change. I think this has been difficult for him to deal with, because suddenly you've got other people that people go to and not him, you know. But he does regard himself, he does say, he does regard himself and he comes across as, you know, it's like he has this very seniority and he's in a position that he can talk about these issues that none of us can."

64. She also explained why she felt bullied by Lord Singh:

"The reason I feel bullied by him is because of the whole harassment around the fact that he doesn't agree with the community view on the campaign. He has his own view. He thinks he is right, and he's now going to go and malign me at any cost. He's going to go and make sure that there are articles about me; information is incorrect about me. He's trying to make me, you know, out to be this -- Well, he's labelled the Sikh Federation and calls them "extremists". He's used all this kind of language and, by very virtue of saying that I'm with them, he's trying to, sort of, put me into that category. That is bullying. That is trying to bully me to silence me, to get me to move away from the campaign and not be a vocal support."

65. Ms Kaur Gill explained the impact Lord Singh’s conduct had had on her:

“it’s been upsetting me. It’s really been emotionally difficult. It’s made me question myself at times. It’s made me want to think you know. At times it was, it was very difficult. I just felt like I was constantly being attacked, especially on social media. [...] You’re trying to do something good and then you’ve got all this, kind of, hate almost around you and people attacking you when they don’t even understand the argument half the time [...] So it is-- I think it knocked my confidence a little bit, if I’m honest [...] it’s just been very difficult. It’s been very upsetting. It’s upsetting now when I think about it because it’s been three years nearly of having to keep putting up with it”.

Correspondence with Ms Kaur Gill following interview on 20 July 2020

66. Following my interview on 20 July 2020, my office wrote to Ms Kaur Gill on 27 July with a copy of the transcript for her to review. In that email, Ms Kaur Gill was asked to provide further details about points that had arisen in the interview:

“During the meeting, the Commissioner requested you provide further information and evidence. This included:

- (1) Mentioning on page 8–9 of the transcript that Lord Singh had been privately messaging you even before you became chair of the APPG. Do you have access to that correspondence and could you provide it to us?
- (2) Speaking to other members of the APPG, and offering names and contact details of willing witnesses who will be able to provide comments about Lord Singh’s particular treatment of you at APPG meetings, that would relate to harassment on the grounds of sex. Again, we must emphasise that their knowledge of your complaint needs to remain confidential.
- (3) Following up on Lord Singh’s complaint about you to the Labour Party. For the sake of this investigation, we are mainly concerned with how the complaint was made to the party, and not necessarily how the complaint was handled.

If you are able to provide us with the above, that would be very helpful with progressing this investigation.”

67. Further emails and letters were sent requesting this information on 17 August, 10 September and 28 September. On 30 September, Ms Kaur Gill replied:

“I have not been able to access all the information required. It’s been difficult to do this during lockdown restrictions. Is the commissioner able to write to John McDonnell to request the nature of complaint submitted against me by Lord Singh? What was said and how this was dealt with?”

68. I replied on 5 October:

“I have made the decision to complete gathering evidence in relation to your complaint against Lord Singh to ensure progress with this case.

In accordance with the Guide to the Code of Conduct, I will now produce a factual report which is a summary of the evidence I have obtained on which my findings will be founded, so that you and Lord Singh have an opportunity to review and comment on it and, if you wish, challenge the factual basis of any evidence supplied.

Regarding your last email to me of 30 September, you will therefore have a chance to provide any further evidence once I invite you to comment on the factual report.”

69. On 16 October, Ms Kaur Gill wrote to bring to our attention emails from the Network of Sikh Organisations and another member of the House of Lords complaining about the actions of the APPG. She wrote:

“Please can you include both these emails as part of my complaint. You were clear that lord Singh was not to have contact with me during this complaint you will see the below email from him as director of NSO to bully, intimidate and send across false information about me. Am I allowed to inform the Appg members of what is happening or do I put up with being maligned because as a woman and a Sikh one I am an easy target for these two Asian men?”

70. I replied on 21 October:

“I am content to add these emails to my overall evidence bundle but I should be clear that this does not mean that I will necessarily choose to use them in my report. I note that the email from Lord Ranger provides no obvious link to demonstrating that Lord Singh’s behaviour towards you has been against the Code. Similarly, as the email from the Network of Sikh Organisations is not signed off by Lord Singh himself, it does not appear to provide evidence of his conduct.

I therefore do not consider that these emails demonstrate that Lord Singh has breached the requirement for him to have no contact with you during the investigation.

In terms of what you can say to your colleagues on the APPG, I see no reason why these emails cannot be shared with them. However, that you have made a complaint against Lord Singh and that it is under investigation must remain confidential.”

71. Ms Kaur Gill responded on 26 October:

“Many thanks - it is also on that basis that I have not been able to approach them to come forward to provide evidence of his conduct.”

72. I replied on 27 October:

“Further to your email of 26 October, I wanted to clarify what the position was during the evidence-gathering stage of my investigation about whether you could approach people for the purposes of having them give evidence to me.

We discussed this in our interview on 20 July. I explained that if you had colleagues on the APPG you thought would have valuable evidence, you could approach them and tell them that you’d made a complaint, but that you could not say anything else to them apart from the fact that you

had made a complaint against Lord Singh and that they might be able to provide evidence. If, on the basis of a conversation on those lines, they were content to give evidence you could pass their names and contact details to my office to make contact.

We followed this discussion up by email on 27 July and 17 August, and by letter on 10 September and 28 September.

Of course, you were under no obligation to provide me with contacts for others on the APPG to speak to, but I wanted to ensure that there was no misunderstanding that this had been a possibility.”

73. Ms Kaur Gill replied on 27 October:

“Many thanks the issue is that when I have said I made a complaint they asked what the nature was? Clearly I said I could not say more.”

74. I replied on 28 October:

“Further to your email of 27 October, I realise the requirements of confidentiality can make such conversations difficult.

As you know, I had considered the evidence-gathering stage of the investigation closed. However, to ensure you have not been denied the opportunity to present relevant evidence, could you let me have a list of who you would want me to speak to and their contact details?

I would ask that you include in that list an indication of what evidence you believe each person could provide. I already have a substantial amount of information about Lord Singh’s conduct and would only consider gathering more evidence where it appears it might fill a gap in the existing evidence base.

Please let me have this information by 4pm on Friday, 30 October. My office will then make any necessary contacts.”

75. I received no further correspondence from Ms Kaur Gill on this matter.

Other evidence

VW, Office of National Statistics

76. I wrote to VW, on 20 March 2020:

“I am writing to you as the House of Lords Commissioner for Standards. It is my job to conduct investigations into potential breaches of the Lords Code of Conduct for members. I am currently conducting such an investigation into the conduct of Lord Singh and hope you can assist.

From my current understanding, Preet Gill MP mentioned she had attended a meeting with you in January 2018 where Lord Singh was also present, concerning the APPG for British Sikh’s campaign to see a Sikh ethnic tick box included in the 2021 census. If you can recall, can I request confirmation from you that you were in fact at this meeting and if you remember taking any notes?

Finally, I would draw your attention to paragraph 136 of The Guide to the Code of Conduct:

“From the point that the Commissioner decides to undertake an investigation all evidence and correspondence relating directly to the inquiry is covered by parliamentary privilege. It must remain confidential unless and until it is published. If such evidence or correspondence were to be published or disclosed to anyone else without the agreement of the Conduct Committee or the Commissioner, this would be a contempt of the House. An attempt to obstruct an investigation is a contempt of the House.”

I would therefore be grateful if you kept this correspondence confidential between my office and yourself.”

77. VW replied on 26 March 2020:

“Thank you for your letter dated 20 March 2020.

I can confirm that that I was in attendance of the meeting January 2018.

I was accompanied by [another official] who took note of the proceedings. I am more than happy to share with you the record of the meeting and also to offer my assistance in any way possible.”

78. [VW] provided a copy of the notes of the meeting held in January 2018:

“[VW] thanked both Preet Gill and Lord Singh for making the time to meet. He said that the meeting in Hounslow had confirmed that recording Indian as ethnicity didn’t work for the Sikh community. [VW] felt there were 2 questions: 1) Can this meeting lead to an agreed way forward; 2) Should we survey Gurdwaras to take a more measured view of the issues?

Lord Singh asked if Punjabi would work as a tick box? While this was appealing, [VW] noted that this would bring up other related challenges but that we would look at Punjabi as an option in more detail.

Lord Singh asked why we asked about ethnicity on the Census at all? [VW] explained that the judgement for all questions was based on user need and public acceptability.

Preet Gill was sure that there would be a way forward without the need for running a survey of Gurdwaras, but felt that Punjabi may be problematic given the region of Punjab spans India and Pakistan.

All at the meeting agreed that they would meet again in a months’ time. In the intervening period, ONS would look at Punjabi, and seek legal advice from the equalities perspective. If, at the meeting in a month, there is still no obvious way forward, a survey of Gurdwaras would be a helpful gauge of public acceptability.”

Interview with VW on 24 April 2020

79. Quentin Colborn and I, with Moriyo Aiyoola in attendance, interviewed VW on 24 April 2020.

80. VW gave us some background to the issue of how Sikhism was represented on the census. The census had first included a religion tick box in 2001. This included “Sikh” as an option.

81. Ethnicity data had been collected through the census since 1991; “Sikh” had not been an option on any census. The tick boxes had been reviewed, with “Roma” being added in 2011 along with a free text option for those who considered none of the tick boxes applied to them.
82. In December 2018, the ONS had published a review of data to be collected by the census.²² This review had considered the options for ethnicity and had not recommended including a tick box for “Sikh”. The review concluded that the data collected on religion provided sufficiently accurate information and the free text option in the ethnicity section of the census allowed those who wished to identify themselves as ethnically Sikh the option to do so.
83. The review reached this conclusion because of evidence that including a “Sikh” tick box under ethnicity “would not be acceptable to a proportion of the Sikh population” and noted that “[t]here are differing views within the Sikh population as to whether a specific response option should be added to the 2021 Census, and views on each side are passionately held.”
84. VW noted that Ms Kaur Gill was very much in favour of the ethnic Sikh tick box, as was the Sikh Federation (UK) (SFUK) with which she worked closely; and that Lord Singh was against an ethnic Sikh tick box, and has his own strong affiliations, notably the Network of Sikh Organisations. He believed that both individuals and groups considered the other not to fairly represent the Sikh community.
85. VW discussed the interactions they had had with both Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill.
86. They had met and spoken to Lord Singh on a number of occasions in later 2017, including attending an event in a Gurdwara in Hounslow in December 2017 where VW was invited to hear invitees’ viewpoints on the tick box issue. This was one of several meetings they had had at Gurdwaras and with community groups to discuss the issue.
87. VW had met with Preet Gill MP in September 2017 and had further meetings and correspondence with her to hear her and the SFUK’s viewpoints. They had also had separate meetings and correspondence with the SFUK.
88. VW had arranged a meeting in January 2018 with Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill in order to discuss their different positions. They said they had a clear memory of the meeting as the issue had later been the subject of a judicial review. They said that the tone of the meeting had been reasonably polite and neutral but the division between them was clear, in both the content of the meeting and their choice of seating (sitting apart from each other in a large meeting room).
89. VW had no recollection of Lord Singh accusing Ms Kaur Gill of not understanding Sikhism, but they recalled the discussion included disagreements about the tenets of the religion and discussion about which sects of Sikhism each belonged to and whether each was a true Sikh. They recalled a conversation about alcohol within the Sikh community, with Ms

22 HM Government, *Help Shape Our Future: The 2021 Census of Population and Housing in England and Wales*, Cm 9745, (December 2018): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765089/Census2021WhitePaper.pdf [accessed 16 December 2020]

Kaur Gill saying “come on Lord Singh, we all know there is a problem with alcohol in the Sikh community, think of what happens at weddings”, to which Lord Singh replied “maybe there’s alcohol at the types of weddings you go to.”

90. VW’s impression was that the exchanges weren’t personal so much as based on a fundamental disagreement over the issues. They had thought it was a shame that they appeared so unwilling to look for compromises across the two viewpoints.

Letter from Lord Singh to Preet Kaur Gill, dated 22 January 2018

91. In his interview with us on 16 March 2020, Lord Singh referred to a letter he had sent Ms Kaur Gill after the meeting arranged by the ONS. He later sent us a copy of the letter:

“It was a pleasure to meet up with you last Wednesday and discuss Sikh issues prior to our meeting with the ONS.

In discussion on the APPG for Sikhs, I raised my concern that Sikhs in the Lords had been excluded from the election of officers and the important discussion on Sikhs and ethnicity. You kindly agreed to my suggestion that Lord Suri, Lord Rana and I should be given a chance to state our views on ethnicity and other Sikh issues at an early meeting of the APPG. Please let me have some possible dates, which I will also convey to Lord Suri and Lord Rana.

In our pre-discussion on ethnicity, you explained that you considered ethnic monitoring of Sikhs to be important because most Sikhs in your view, were now non-practicing and would prefer to describe themselves by ethnicity rather than by religion. While I found this surprising, I conceded that I might be a little out of touch. It would help if you could provide some statistics of the decline in Sikh religious practice.

I explained that my difficulty in accepting the ethnic tick box was linked to my involvement in the Mandla Case. This, as we discussed, was fought to protect the right of a Sikh schoolboy to wear a turban at school at a time when there was no law to prevent discrimination on grounds of religion. Most Sikhs at the time were born in Punjab and shared Punjabi customs, and consequently the Law Lords agreed we could use a common ethnicity for protection under the 1976 Act. I explained my view that assigning permanent ethnicity to Sikhs is both contrary to Sikh teachings and to common sense. Worse, ethnic monitoring erodes the distinction between practicing and non-practicing Sikhs, leaving practicing Sikhs at a disadvantage.

In recent twitter exchanges, I believe you stated that anyone familiar with the Sikh religion would know that Sikhism is not just a religion. I shall be grateful if you would give me any quotation from the Guru Granth Sahib in support of your statement as it would help others understand the Sikh Network’s perspective.

The delay in ONS officials joining us for our meeting, gave me an opportunity to seek your advice on press coverage of the UK visit of the leader of the Nirmal Kutia sect (or ‘Nirmal Sikh Faith’) to the gurdwara in Oldbury, a gurdwara close to you and your family. Treating his photo

as object of veneration, sect followers carried it in procession in the way the Guru Granth sahib is carried. The sect followers then prostrated themselves before the image and were heard shouting jakaras. Some ladies were seen drinking water touched by the feet of the sect leader. You suggested that this was OK so long as the gurdwara had a Guru Granth Sahib on the premises.

Please correct me if I got this wrong. It was not discussed, but it would also help if you could give me the Sikh Network's take on the practice of placing the Dasam Granth alongside the Guru Granth Sahib in the gurdwara in Smethwick long associated with your family.

I will shortly be arranging a meeting with the Network of Sikh Organisations and other groups to discuss your views on ethnicity, to see if we can find a measure of agreement with the Sikh Network to enable us to present a common view on an ethnic tick box to the ONS follow-up meeting to be held in a month's time.

It would help if you could correct any inaccuracies in the above summary on the pros and cons of ethnic monitoring by the end of the month as we will need to take your views into account in trying to find common ground prior to our next meeting with the ONS. In the same spirit, I shall be grateful if you would acquaint the Sikh Network and the Sikh Federation on my views as the Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations UK.

As you know, some members of the community have called for more public discussion on the monitoring of Sikhs as an ethnic group. To this end, I would be happy, as previously offered, to meet with you, and/or Dabinderjit in the London studio of any Sikh TV Channel to take part in discussion and respond to questions.

Thanks again for your time, and once again, my congratulations on your new appointment."

Correspondence between Lord Singh and the Office of National Statistics, dated 5 August 2018

92. Ms Kaur Gill's office provided us with a redacted copy of a letter they understood had been sent by Lord Singh to the Office of National Statistics. The letter was dated 5 August 2018:

"Thank you for your time last Wednesday. It was a pleasure to meet you.

I am conscious that I tried to cover several areas of concern in a short time.

I am therefore summarising and detailing the main points below under the following headings.

Concern over present ethnic options.

Most Sikhs in the UK are still incensed over the near genocide perpetrated against Sikhs by the Indian government in 1984. Successive Indian governments have refused an open inquiry into the killings. In 2011 this led to an understandable reluctance of many Sikhs to identify themselves as Indian in the ethnic category.

Suggestion: India is a subcontinent with many different ethnicities. We already have smaller geographic ethnicities such as Pakistani and Bangladeshi (part of pre-partition India). Punjab is of a similar area and it would help enormously if ONS were to have a ‘Punjabi ethnic option. This was also the view of most of those present at the Hounslow meeting with the ONS. It would meet the approval of most Sikhs and help in addressing the underlying reasons for ethnic monitoring more accurately.

Reasons advanced to justify the recording of Sikhs as an ethnic group.

No cogent reasons have been advanced. All the reasons mentioned are summarised in [redacted]’s article, widely circulated on the internet and discussed below:

Points made [redacted]

Before the British annexed the Sikh Empire in 1849, the Sikh ethnicity was glaringly Punjabi. This included Pakistanis, majority of whom are Punjabis in west Punjab, Pakistan. The international boundaries of states change over a period of time due to wars, annexations or political circumstances. For example, over the past 80 years, the Bangladeshi ethnicity was originally Indian before the Indian independence and after that they became Pakistanis and are now Bangladeshis on the secession of the then East Pakistan.

The Sikh ethnicity must be looked at in that context and there should be no hesitation in affording a separate category for the Sikhs in line with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

Comment

- The inherent ethnicity of people in Pakistan and Bangladesh remains the same despite changes in political boundaries. All that has changed is the defined location
- He is right; the ethnicity of most Sikhs in 1849 was Punjabi. It did not change on the annexation of Punjab.
- The words Pakistan and Bangladesh, define geographic areas. ‘Sikhs’ does not.

2. *The former Race Relations Act 1976 recognised Sikhs as a separate race.*

Comment

- Sikhism teaches ‘there is only one human race’. To argue differently goes against basic Sikh teachings. At a time when there was no protection against religious discrimination, the Law Lords agreed that Sikhs who then had their birthplace in Punjab and spoke English as their first language, could be considered an ethnic group for purposes of protection under the 1976 Race Relations Act. Most UK Sikhs are now born in the UK and speak English as their first language, and these and other associated criteria used do not apply. Nor is this stretched protection necessary because the 1976 Act has been replaced by the Equalities Act 2010 which gives protection to all religions.

3. *With growing number of adherents to the Sikh faith round the world, a separate category for the Sikhs will bring a strong community cohesion between Sikhs and between Sikhs and non-Sikhs.*

Comment

- Calling Sikhs an ethnic group has nothing to do with community cohesion which comes from religious literacy and the respecting of difference.

4. *The census monitors the population as well as their demography. Around 61% of Sikhs in the UK are born in this country and it is vitally important that their growing issues such as hate crimes, iscrimination [sic] and alcohol addiction as recently reported in a documentary by Victoria Derbyshire on the BBC are seriously recognised.*

Comment

- See article on hate crime by [redacted] on work being done to combat hate crime by the better collection of police statistics.

5. *The Sikh women are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence, grooming and inequality in the society.*

Comment

- To suggest Sikh women are particularly recipients of domestic violence is simply insulting. If anything, Sikh teachings on gender equality and respect make this less likely.
- Grooming is predominantly carried out by Pakistani Muslim gangs. Victims are members of other communities.

[Redacted]:The government and the office of national statistics have taken positive steps to understand the concerns affecting this unique minority. (my highlighting)

Comment

Sikh teachings would argue we are no more unique than anyone else.

Hidden Agenda behind the demand for ethnic monitoring.

The Sikh Federation who are pushing this demand for calling Sikhs an ethnic group, are arguing for Khalistan-the creation of a separate state for Sikhs in India. In a heavily stacked meeting with the ONS, they invited Kashmir separatists to come along and support them in the belief that a separate ethnicity will help in claiming separate nationality. This is underlined in repeated internet discussion. Gurmukh Singh, a Federation supporter and columnist for the Punjab Times writing in this weekend's paper, openly talks about how ethnic monitoring will lend support to the campaign for recognition of "Sikh Qaumi" (national). Identity

- The government should not national resources in supporting a thinly veiled demand for Khalistan, a Sikh state like Pakistan in which Sikhs enjoy rights denied others.

- Sikh Gurus gave their lives for the equality of treatment for all faiths.
- Monitoring on the basis of ‘ethnicity’ could mask discrimination against turban wearing Sikhs. The Mandia case was fought to prevent this!

The Sikh Federation and the APPG for Sikhs

Ethnic monitoring of a workforce could d an acceptable quota of

The Sikh Federation has created a number of supposed independent groups such as the International Sikh Youth Federation (their previous name) Sikh Network, and Sikh Agenda to wrongly suggest they have popular support. They have also infiltrated the Sikh Council.

Preet Gill is one of their supporters, and following her election as MP in the last election, the Sikh Federation got her to call a meeting of the APPG (from which three of the five Sikhs in Parliament including myself were excluded). She elected herself Chair, and promptly got the Federation to act as secretariat.

The APPG and the Federation then lobbied some 120 bewildered MPs (anxious to win Sikh support in elections), to give their support to a demand which they were told would protect Sikhs from discrimination.

My request to speak to the APPG about this was arrogantly refused by Preet Gill who called me a misogynist for daring to question her.

There is no substance to their claim that many gurdwaras support them. Many of the gurdwaras they cite are members of the Network of Sikh Organisations UK, of which I am the Director, and say much the opposite,

Sikh Theology

- Ethnicity used in the sense of racial difference is totally against all notions of race. The Sikh Gurus taught. ‘ recognise the oneness of the human race’.
- Stretching the use of ethnicity to protect a turban wearing boy from religious discrimination, when there was no other protection, was my idea and was put forward by the CRE in the early 80s.
- To suggest that this means members of a world religion (in different parts of the world, under different jurisdictions), constitute a distinct ethnic group is contrary to the normal meaning of the word.
- To do so for supposed economic, cultural or political reasons, is an affront to the Gurus’ teachings. (see attachment by [redacted] and Opinion already provided by [redacted], the UK’s leading expert.
- Regarding threats by the Federation that they will resort to legal action if the ONS do not listen to them, the ONS only have to say that British courts have clearly ruled that UK law cannot decide on religious interpretation, and this naturally extends to government and government departments.

The Network of Sikh Organisations UK will rely on this ruling of non-justiciability.”

Article published on barficulture.tv, dated 4 February 2018

93. In her complaint, Ms Kaur Gill referred to an article by the journalist Sunny Hundal. The article was published on 4 February 2018 on the website barficulture.tv under the headline “ A bitter row has broken out between UK’s two most senior Sikh politicians”:

“An extraordinary and bitter row has broken out between two of Britain’s most senior Sikh politicians: Lord Indarjit Singh of Wimbledon and the first woman MP, Preet Gill.

The reasons are slightly complicated, but important for British Sikhs. Barfi Culture reached out to both repeatedly last week to get their responses to each other.

The row is over a campaign led by Preet Gill MP and the campaigning group Sikh Federation UK to have British Sikhs designated as an ethnic minority in the next UK Census. Lord Indarjit Singh opposes this move, for reasons we explain below. He also accuses Preet Gill MP of rebuffing his calls for a proper debate on the issue with MPS so he can explain his concerns.

Moreover, both say they are considering further action against each other.

Barfi Culture is reporting on heated row because it’s newsworthy that two of Britain’s most senior Sikh politicians are publicly opposed on an issue that may have big repercussions. Secondly, we hope this report sheds more light on an issue that has barely had much discussion amongst British Sikhs.

Lord Indarjit Singh is a broadcaster, writer and director of the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO). He has been a prominent Sikh voices for decades, advising governments on issues around race and religious equality. In 2011 he became the first turban-wearing member of the House of Lords.

Preet Gill has represented Birmingham Edgbaston since 2017 and was the first Sikh woman MP. She had been a local councillor in Birmingham since 2012. She is also chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Sikhs.

These responses were sent to Barfi Culture by email. They have been edited for brevity.

Lord Singh

“I had contacted both Preet Gill and Tanmanjit Singh welcoming their election and hoping we could work together on Sikh issues. I then heard that Preet had pushed the Sikh Federation demand for Sikhs to be considered an ethnic group in the meeting and had subsequently secured some 120 MP signatures.

I then wrote to Preet and Tanmanjit asking why Lord Suri and I had not been invited to discuss this important issue and received a categorical response that an invitation to both of us had been sent to both of us by Pat McFadden MP's secretary. When contacted, his secretary confirmed no invitation had been sent to any Sikh in the Lords. The election and policy had been effectively rigged to suit the Federation Agenda.

I have subsequently contacted Preet Gill on several occasions to be allowed an opportunity to discuss my concerns on ethnic monitoring but she continues to evade my request. I have incidentally, also offered on several occasions to debate the issue of ethnic monitoring with her and or Dabinderjit Singh [chair of Sikh Federation] on Sikh TV but they are clearly unwilling."

Preet Gill MP

"Unfortunately you have been given the wrong information as I have offered to meet with Lord Singh on numerous occasions. His comment was 'I will wait to see if I want to meet you depending on your views of census'. [Lord Singh denies making this comment]

I have had to write to Lord Singh due to bullying and misogynistic [sic] behaviour towards me. I am extremely concerned despite my raising of concerns with him he has made this statement to you.

My predecessor Rob Marris never endured anything like what I have been subjected to and stated that since the APPG inception in 2005 Lord Singh has taken no interest."

We asked for evidence for Lord Singh's alleged behaviour but Ms Gill declined to offer it so. However she did forward two emails, dated Sept. and Dec. 2017, in which she offered to meet Lord Indarjit Singh.

Lord Indarjit Singh

We asked Lord Singh about those emails. He said he had always wanted a full meeting with the Sikh APPG, not just Preet Gill.

"The offer of meeting up for a cup of tea seemed pointless and I ignored it. If she gives a convenient date for Lord Suri and me to discuss ethnic monitoring and other questionable policies of the Sikh Federation with the APPG. I will happily buy her a cup of tea."

Preet Gill MP

"He could have attended the Appg the Lords confirmed the notices go out to them. I checked the procedure. He never attended a single meeting since 2005 and never responded saying he wanted a meeting with the Appg."

The row between Lord Indarjit Singh and Preet Gill MP has arisen because the former feels the Sikh APPG is being used as a vehicle by the Sikh Federation and Preet Gill to push their agenda.

In particular he is adamantly against their campaign for the next British Census to classify Sikhs as an ethnic group. Sikhism is already an option in the religion category.

The campaign is being led by the Sikh Federation and supported by the other Sikh MP, Tanmanjeet Dhesi. In addition, over a 100 MPs have signed a petition endorsing the campaign (though that has no legal basis).

Ms Gill wrote a letter to the Guardian last year explaining her reasoning.

“As there is not a separate Sikh ethnic tick box in the census, the majority of schools, hospitals, local authorities and other public bodies ignore Sikhs when considering jobs and service provision. It also explains why earlier this month the PM’s race disparity audit totally ignored Sikhs.”

“The Office for National Statistics (ONS) cannot ignore the 83,362 Sikhs who in the last census rejected the existing ethnic group categories and ticked “other” and wrote Sikh, or the stakeholders working in the education, health, local government and business sectors that recognise the need for information on Sikhs to plan and make decisions on service provision.”

But Lord Indarjit Singh says this is not true. In a letter in September he said the campaign would backfire for Sikhs.

“There is no evidence of ethnic monitoring being used to benefit any distinct community in the UK. Muslims and Jews, on the other hand, do well enough without it. Even if ethnic monitoring of Sikhs were a practical proposition, some Sikhs would probably declare their ethnicity as Indian, resulting in under-counting.”

“More seriously, in employment, ethnic monitoring would worsen the position of practicing Sikhs. Much of existing discrimination against Sikhs is on the basis of visible appearance. Monitoring of ‘ethnic Sikhs’ could mask [confuse] and give legitimacy to discrimination towards turban wearing Sikhs. For example, a large organisation like the BBC might pass the ethnic quota test with few, if any practising Sikhs.”

Moreover, he says, the Sikh religion was never intended to be specific to just one ethnic group.”

Tweets provided in evidence

From	To	Date	Content
@SikhMessenger		20 December 2017	The thorny question of Sikhs and ethnicity: Meeting with member of @ONS leadership team at Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Hounslow http://w.ly/S1S130hlsEd #Census #Religion #Sikhs
@PreetKGillMP		20 December 2017	This is an inaccurate account and it concerns me that you are misrepresenting the legal position due to your failure of understanding the question at hand. I have offered to meet with Lord Singh and await a date. The committee have asked to speak with me so I will follow this up.
@SikhFedUK		20 December 2017	Indarjit Singh, an unelected peer, can mirepresent the situation as much as he likes, but it does not change the Mandla v Lee judgement or the fact that all Sikh organisations and individuals responding to the official @ONS consultation are in favour of a Sikh ethnic tick box.
@SikhMessenger	@SikhFedUK @PreetKGillMP and others	20 December 2017	Can you respond to the points raised. First and foremost were you invited to the Hounslow meeting by the committee? Did you clear your attendance with the @ONS beforehand?

From	To	Date	Content
@SikhFedUK	@SikhMessenger, @PreetKGillMP and others	20 December 2017	Suggest you speak to the Vice President who said Sikhs were welcome from surrounding areas. President also said meeting could not be private.
@SikhMessenger		20 December 2017	If you paid any attention to our statement it includes a quote from a Hounslow gurdwara committee member. We were invited to attend, were you? Answer YES or NO. Did you get express approval from the @ONS before turning up in numbers uninvited?
@SikhMessenger	@PreetKGillMP, others	1 January 2018	We are only willing to discuss what we recall from your comments at the @ONS consultation you prvsly referred to. Our Director Lord Singh is willing to debate either you or your colleague Dabinderjit on a Sikh television Channel. Can we contact your office to organise?
@SikhMessenger		24 January 2018	Our Director is willing to publicly debate both Dabinderjit of the @SikhFedUK and @PreetKGillMP on their @ONS 'ethnicity' campaign, let's organise / British Sikhs deserve an open and transparent debate on this issue

From	To	Date	Content
@PreetKGillMP	@SikhMessenger @SikhFedUK @ONS	24 January 2018	Your director is in breach of Equalities Act as on the record he referred to Sikhs in the West Midlands and all Gurdwara's to not observe the Sikh faith in accordance with his views. I wonder what their response would be? He had no evidence to support his views.
@SikhMessenger	@PreetKGillMP @SikhFedUK @ONS	24 January 2018	Do you agree to a televised public debate, yes or no? Of course this will also provide an opportunity to address smears against our Director
@SikhMessenger		28 January 2018	This will now be our third request for a public debate (preferably televised) on the Sikh 'ethnic' tick box with both @PreetKGillMP and @Dabinderjit of the @SikhFedUK
@SikhMessenger		30 January 2018	Dear @PreetKGillMP Please provide the 'on the record' evidence for the allegation leveled against our Director or apologise. We await your response to requests for a debate made on 01/01/18, 24/01/18 & 28/01/18. Thanks

From	To	Date	Content
@PreetKGillIMP		21 December 2018	This is not true I have the minutes of the January meeting where [VW] had proposed this as a way of addressing Public acceptability criteria. In that meeting [VW] was shocked at the statements made by Lord Singh which evidenced lack of knowledge by him in this area.
@SikhMessenger	@PreetKGillIMP @ONS and @SikhFedUK	21 December 2018	No official minutes were kept. Another smear. Please address the issues at hand. We request you focus on the subject matter, rather than individuals who disagree with your position. That said, we appreciate your efforts in other areas & hope to work together in the future.
@PreetKGillIMP	@SikhMessenger @ONS and @SikhFedUK	21 December 2018	Your wrong [VW] had a minute taker and I took my own minutes!! [VW] even prepared a short draft which I responded to as it omitted all the inappropriate discriminatory comments made by Lord Singh! I reminded [VW] of that.
@SikhMessenger	@PreetKGillIMP @ONS and @SikhFedUK	21 December 2018	It's [correcting the spelling of VW's name]. We have no further comment to make, but strenuously refute the allegations levelled against our Director in your tweet. Shame, our previous tweet was a genuine offer to work together on other areas where we share common ground & still stands.

From	To	Date	Content
@PreetKGillMP	@SikhMessenger @ONS and @SikhFedUK	21 December 2018	I will focus on the truth! The fact remains your Director has been a bully and misogynist as have you! Glad you have confirmed that you are tweeting using your director handle I wonder why? Why don't you use your personal one [staff member of the Network of Sikh Organisations]
@SikhMessenger	@PreetKGillMP @ONS and @SikhFedUK	22 December 2018	Please retract these serious allegations. Disagreeing on an issue does NOT equate to 'bullying' or 'mysogyny'.
[further Twitter user]	@PreetKGillMP @SikhMessenger and others	1 January 2019	That is extremely harsh. [The staff member of the Network of Sikh Organisations] is niether of those things. Not a nice thing to tweet !
@PreetKGillMP	[further Twitter user] @SikhMessenger and others	1 January 2019	I am not sure who you are, but standing up for a bully? Really? Then again twitter has many people who hide behind fake accounts.
[further Twitter user]	@PreetKGillMP @SikhMessenger and others	1 January 2019	Well there is nothing fake about me. I am well documented on the Internet. That aside you should be aware that accusing someone of 'misogyny' is accusing them of a hate crime. As a lawyer & someone with experience in libel law you may be in some difficulty!

From	To	Date	Content
@PreetKGillMP	[further Twitter user] @ SikhMessenger and others	1 January 2019	Not at all if I am bullied by a misogynist I am not afraid to call it out! A libel lawyer supporting someone without any facts speaks volumes! #bias
[further Twitter user]	@PreetKGillMP @ SikhMessenger and others	1 January 2019	Well actually, it is you that will have to produce the facts to prove your allegations!
@PreetKGillMP	[further Twitter user] @ SikhMessenger and others	1 January 2019	Not a problem!

Contact between Lord Singh and Ms Kaur Gill during the investigation

94. My letter to Lord Singh of 13 September 2019 launching the investigation included the following:

“Contact or communication with a complainant during an investigation risks constituting behaviour amounting to bullying or harassment, and therefore may be, in itself, a breach of the Code.

I would therefore ask that you do not contact Ms Gill in any way while this investigation is underway. This would include avoiding any contact by chance on the parliamentary estate.

In view of the substance of the complaint, I suggest that while the investigation is taking place, you do not make any public comments about Ms Gill, and do not encourage others to do so.”

95. On 20 January 2020, Ms Kaur Gill’s office wrote to my office:

“I am writing following a meeting we just had for the all party parliamentary group for British Sikhs to reconstitute the group. We put it on the all party notice and were expecting Lord Singh to come but, in light of your communications with him, be respectful or not say anything.

Unfortunately he was anything but, he interrupted Preet’s opening introduction (she is the chair) and repeatedly spoke over her.”

96. I wrote to Lord Singh on 27 January 2020:

“I am writing to remind you of my request that you refrain from any contact with Ms Gill whilst the investigation is ongoing.

As stated in my initial letter of 13 September, contact or communication with a complainant during an investigation risks constituting behaviour amounting to bullying or harassment, and therefore may be, in itself, a breach of the Code. This would also include any contact by chance on the parliamentary estate.

It appears you recently attended a meeting on 20 January concerning the All-Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs where Ms Gill was present and spoke. It is alleged that you interrupted Ms Gill’s introduction and repeatedly spoke over her during the meeting. As described to me, this appears to contradict the terms of the investigation process we have agreed.

Please can I have confirmation from you that you will not make any form of contact with Ms Gill whilst the investigation is ongoing?”

97. Lord Singh replied on 29 January 2020:

“I am saddened that you should have taken Ms Gill’s vexatious complaint at face value without consulting me. Lord Ranger who was present at the meeting can confirm that I never spoke to Ms Gill as an individual. I addressed the APPG through her as the Chair of the APPG for Sikhs. This was after she addressed me and others at the meeting. I believe that as a leader of Sikhs who represents Sikhs on all national occasions, I have a right to provide an input on issues affecting the Sikh community.

If you feel otherwise, on the basis of equity, both Ms Gill as Chair and I as Treasurer of the Group, should not attend future meetings until the issues between us has been resolved. The complaints procedure should not be used to stop me speaking at meetings.

As Lord Ranger will confirm, I spoke to the Group on 3 issues..

1. Ms Gill had come to the inaugural meeting with a list of proposed office bearers. I suggested that Lord Ranger with deep contacts in the Sikh community be added as a Vice Chair.

2. I queried if it was desirable that the Sikh Federation should continue as Secretariat, as its Chair Amrik Singh Gill was still continuing as Chair after having been fined more than £50,000 for keeping his tenants in his more than 100 properties in unsafe and hazardous conditions. My fear was that this might bring the APPG and Parliament itself into disrepute. Discussion ensued and it was agreed that the issue would be considered at the next meeting.

3. The Chair announced that Hate Crime against Sikhs would be a priority of the APPG. I offered the services of the Network of Sikh Organisations, which has considerable experience in this area, to help. The Chair indicated she would welcome the offer..

Taken to the extreme suggested in your letter, both I and Ms Gill should not be involved in the APPG until after the mediation. This is clearly unsatisfactory.

It is now more than 3 months since I immediately agreed to your suggestion of mediation on Ms Gill's earlier complaint. I have not been given any reason for the delay. It is clearly important that this is done quickly."

98. I replied on 3 February 2020:

"As you know the restrictions I suggested were to avoid the possibility of any further allegations of bullying and harassment during the investigation.

I am going to have to leave it to your own good judgement to decide how best to deal with APPG meetings. As Ms Gill has raised the complaint against you and is already concerned, she may contact me again and I have to deal with any allegations of bullying and harassment brought to me."

99. I also wrote to Ms Kaur Gill on 3 February 2020:

"I put your concerns about his attendance at the APPG meeting to Lord Singh.

In his response he stated:

"Lord Ranger who was present at the meeting can confirm that I never spoke to Ms Gill as an individual. I addressed the APPG through her as the Chair of the APPG for Sikhs. This was after she addressed me and others at the meeting. I believe that as a leader of Sikhs who

represents Sikhs on all national occasions, I have a right to provide an input on issues affecting the Sikh community.”

I don’t think I can take this much further but from the email sent by your colleague, [...], it is not clear to me whether you are making a further allegation of bullying or harassment. If you do decide to do so then please put in a formal complaint to me.”

100. Ms Kaur Gill replied on 4 February 2020:

“My concern is that he was told not to have contact with me and despite that Lord Singh attending the APPG meeting without seeking advise from the commissioner. In the interim we need an agreement in place.

He has never attended the APPG since 2005. I believe his attendance is to further undermine me and the work we are doing. Further evidence of this is that he has sent out an inaccurate note of the work the APPG has done to conservative MPs without seeking approval of APPG members.

I don’t think it’s fair that during an investigation I must continue to endure the undermining and bullying behaviour of Lord Singh. His self appointment of “as a leader of Sikhs” is evidence of the hierarchy at play. He is not an elected member.”

101. I wrote to Ms Kaur Gill on 23 March 2020 following an interview with Lord Singh. That letter included the following:

“We also discussed his attendance at the last APPG meeting, which he had not thought was included in his agreement not to contact you. He has now agreed to contact my office before attending any APPG meetings, which will give me an opportunity to discuss with him how he can contribute to any such meeting without breaching the restriction, which is now enforceable; on 16 March the House agreed a series of amendments to the Lords Code of Conduct, one of which included granting me the power to enforce access restrictions during ongoing investigations.”

APPENDIX 2: LORD SINGH'S RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT FACTUAL REPORT

Thank you for sending me the detailed documentation. I confirm that I find it a generally accurate record, but have provided some comments against items in the draft report in an attachment where I feel clarification might be helpful.

My Comments on Ms Gill's Complaint.

I believe that the complaint is wholly unfounded, vexatious and simply designed to smear a senior member of the community who has dared to challenge the right of the extremist Sikh Federation to speak for the wider Sikh community with policies harmful to Sikh interests. Personal attacks and ageist posts by the Sikh Federation, apparently condoned by Ms Gill, are no substitute for respectful debate.

I strongly believe the charge should be dismissed with appropriate disciplinary action being taken against Ms Gill for her gratuitous smears and cynical abuse of the Parliamentary Complain Procedure.

Anyone in public life inevitably experiences a degree of criticism, but Ms Gill's malicious smears of harassment and misogyny, to stop me voicing matters of concern to the Sikh community, has left me stunned and hurt. As I mentioned before, it is much easier to throw mud at someone than to completely remove it. More than the personal hurt, there is the hurt suffered by my family.

My 20-year-old granddaughter, aware of my work in advocating women's rights and my old-fashioned courtesy to women, was distraught and inconsolable when she stumbled across the abuse during the earlier lockdown. Her anger and bewilderment pained me more than the smears themselves.

Ms Gill's complaint has now been hanging over me for 15 months. I readily accepted the Commissioner's earlier suggestion of mediation to avoid further delay. I also felt mediation would help Ms Gill understand the inappropriateness of smearing those with different opinions and lead to a better working relationship. Ms Gill refused, hoping she could make her smears stick or create doubt in the Commissioner's mind.

In looking again at her complaint, I find a disturbing consistency in the way she weaponised her gender to smear, not only me, but **all who disagreed with her**. I mean it in the kindest way, but there is something almost pathological in her constant references to be the 'first non- white female Chair' of the APPG in a way that suggests that any criticism of her behaviour amounts to misogyny.

This is seen in the twitter feed attached to the documentation where she labelled a contributor who disagreed with her, as misogynistic. When another contributor to the discussion, who happened to be a lawyer, suggested to Ms Gill that her comment was a bit harsh and potentially libellous, she not only ignored the advice, but questioned the lawyer's credentials. Her complaint abounds with conspiracy theories, blaming me for anything others say or write about her autocratic behaviour.

When I first looked at the accusations levelled against me by Ms Gill, I saw all but one as vindictive smears that would be dismissed as such.

I was however concerned by her comment that in our meeting with [VW], I made the following comment: (Ms Gill's quotation marks): "**You know nothing about**

Sikhism, you are making lies that Sikhs drink alcohol", and that [VW] was shocked by my comment.

I knew that this was untrue, and the comment (in improbable English) was simply another attempt to smear me. I was however worried that the Commissioner might feel that I could have said something to that effect. I was therefore delighted to read that **[VW] had been invited to comment on her accusation. [VW] said that he had a clear recollection of the meeting and that I had said nothing of the sort. This was a deliberately manufactured smear, designed to prejudice the inquiry and harm the public image of a respected member of the Sikh community. I believe that this sort of behaviour, is not only highly libellous, but a gross abuse of the Complaints Procedure and should be reflected in firm disciplinary action.**

My main area of difference with Ms Gill, as she confirms, was about my attempts to get an open discussion on the merits or otherwise of Federation's claim that it represents the majority of the Sikh community in calling Sikhs a unique ethnic group. Ms Gill successfully used her position of Chair of the APPG to prevent the wider open discussion I desired and accused me of misogyny and harassment for trying. I do not believe that I was being unreasonable in saying that the APPG for Sikhs should be for **all Sikhs** and not for the extremist Sikh Federation.

Interestingly, ONS, Parliament, and now the High Court have endorsed the stand I took in saying that the Sikh Federation **does not** represent the wider Sikh community, who see Sikhism as a world religion that is not limited to an exclusive ethnic group.