

The Conduct of Lord Singh of Wimbledon	2
Appendix 1: Complaint from Mr Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK), 1 February 2019	5
Appendix 2: Letter from the Commissioner for Standards to Lord Singh of Wimbledon, 7 February 2019	8
Appendix 3: Letter from Lord Singh of Wimbledon to the Commissioner for Standards, 25 February 2019	10
Appendix 4: Transcript of Commissioner for Standards' Interview with Lord Singh of Wimbledon, 11 March 2019	14
Appendix 5: Letter from Lord Singh of Wimbledon to the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Lords' Interests, 28 March 2019	18

The Conduct of Lord Singh of Wimbledon

Background

1. On 4 February 2019 I received a complaint from Mr Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) alleging that Lord Singh of Wimbledon had breached the Code of the Conduct [Appendix 1]. Mr Singh alleged Lord Singh had breached the Code in two respects:
 - Failing to register his interest Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) in the Register of Lords' Interests; and
 - Failing to declare that Directorship as a relevant interest when intervening in the second day of the Grand Committee on the Offensive Weapons Bill on 30 January 2019.
2. The relevant interventions during the debate in the Grand Committee were:

Baroness Barran: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Lord for setting out the case for exempting all kirpans from the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. I can reassure him from the outset that both I and my noble friend Lady Williams would be delighted to meet representatives of the Sikh Council UK and other noble Lords as the noble Lord sees fit to discuss their concerns.

Before I go on, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Singh, and my noble friend—

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Could I just correct that to the Network of Sikh Organisations, not the Sikh Council?"¹

and

Baroness Barran: I thank my noble friend for her helpful explanation. I hope we can explore these things in detail when we meet, before too long, I hope.

The Sikh Federation (UK) and the Sikh Council UK raised concerns via the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Sikhs about the provisions.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I wish to put in context that the Sikh Federation (UK) is not a representative body of the Sikh community. Concerns have been raised by the Network of Sikh Organisations. They are trying to capitalise and muddy the waters. It would be helpful if the Government dealt with the Network of Sikh Organisations, which represents the vast part of the Sikh community.

Baroness Barran: I thank the noble Lord for his advice. As I mentioned earlier, the spirit of our meeting is that we will take his

¹ HL Deb, 30 January 2019, [col 326GC](#)

steer on who we should talk to about this. The point I raised simply reflected the fact that those organisations raised concerns with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on UK Sikhs about the provisions in the Bill.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: The All-Party Parliamentary Group and the Sikh Federation are one and the same thing. They are exactly the same, and everyone knows it.”²

3. I carried out a preliminary assessment of the complaint and decided to investigate both allegations.

Investigation

4. I wrote to Lord Singh on 7 February [Appendix 2], drawing his attention to the following parts of the Code:

- The requirement to include in the Register of Lords’ Interests all relevant interests, both financial and non-financial (paragraph 10(a) of the Code); and
- The requirement to declare when speaking in the House any interest which is a relevant interest in the context of the debate or the matter under discussion (paragraph 10(b) of the Code).

5. I also noted the description of a “relevant interest” set out in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Code:

“11. The test of relevant interest is whether the interest might be thought by a reasonable member of the public to influence the way in which a member of the House of Lords discharges his or her parliamentary duties: in the case of registration, the member’s parliamentary duties in general; in the case of declaration, his or her duties in respect of the particular matter under discussion.

12. The test of relevant interest is therefore not whether a member’s actions in Parliament will be influenced by the interest, but whether a reasonable member of the public might think that this would be the case. Relevant interests include both financial and non-financial interests.”

6. Lord Singh replied on 25 February [Appendix 3]. In his reply he explained that he had not registered his Directorship of the NSO as to do so would “suggest a permanent position”. He also explained that he had not declared his position as the “NSO has no political perspective” and that his interventions during the debate were made “as a Sikh and not as a member of any particular Group.”
7. To explore this further I met Lord Singh on 11 March 2019 [a transcript of that meeting is included as Appendix 4]. Following that interview Lord Singh agreed to speak to the Registrar of Lords’ Interests to discuss whether his Directorship of the NSO ought to have been declared. He also agreed that it would have been appropriate to have declared that interest during the Offensive Weapons debate.

8. It is my view that Lord Singh's Directorship of the NSO should have been registered when he entered the House in 2011 and should have been declared during the Offensive Weapons Bill debate.
9. However, the purpose of registration and declaration is to ensure that any influences on how a member of the House discharges their parliamentary duties are transparent. That Lord Singh is a prominent member of the Sikh community in Britain is well known and I do not think that his failure to register or declare his Directorship of the NSO was an attempt to conceal an influence on his actions in the House. I accept that Lord Singh's conclusions about registration and declaration were sincerely held.
10. In the light of this, I considered that the case could be resolved by remedial action. Remedial action usually involves "putting the record straight", for example by amending the Register of Lords' Interests, and the member making a formal apology to the chairman of the Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct.
11. Since my meeting with him, Lord Singh has taken advice from the Registrar of Lords' Interests and has updated his entry in the Register to include his Directorship of the NSO. He has also written a letter of apology to the chairman of the Sub-Committee on Lords' Conduct, Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood [Appendix 5].

Finding

12. This case involved breaches of the Code in relation to non-registration and non-declaration of a relevant interest. Lord Singh accepted that he should have taken advice from the Registrar of Lords' Interests earlier to ensure his Directorship of the NSO was properly registered. He has also accepted that his Directorship ought to have been declared. However, I believe there was no attempt to conceal an influence or mislead the House or public. The case was therefore resolved by remedial action. I am grateful to Lord Singh for his cooperation with this matter.

Lucy Scott-Moncrieff, CBE

Commissioner for Standards

APPENDIX 1: COMPLAINT FROM MR BHAI AMRIK SINGH, CHAIR OF THE SIKH FEDERATION (UK), 1 FEBRUARY 2019

Investigation of alleged breaches of the House of Lords Code of Conduct and Parliamentary rules - Lord Singh of Wimbledon

I am writing to you on behalf of the Sikh Federation (UK) and thousands of members and supporters up and down the country about the outrageous attack by Lord Singh on our organisation in the Grand Committee of the House of Lords debate on amendment 70 of the Offensive Weapons Bill on 30 January 2019.

In the debate Lord Singh used his privileged position to unfairly state: “that the Sikh Federation (UK) is not a representative body of the Sikh community”. Whilst we recognise Lords must be able to speak and criticise without fear of penalty they must use their right to freedom of speech responsibly.

Lord Singh was able to distastefully use his position in the debate to unfairly criticise our representative credentials of being a voice for the minority Sikh community knowing we were unable to reply. Anyone independently looking at the wealth of evidence available will be able to establish the Sikh Federation (UK) was established more than 15 years ago in September 2003 and is widely recognised as one of the leading voices of the Sikh community.

The public profile of the organisation relative to other Sikh organisations is second to none with extensive mainstream media coverage, a huge social media presence and regular international Punjabi media coverage. Every week the organisation delivers a one-hour current affairs TV programme to the community across Europe and publishes a detailed annual report of around 50-pages highlighting its activities that is readily available from our web site.

It is also indisputable the Sikh Federation (UK) is the only Sikh organisation that extensively engages with central government and Parliamentarians, but at the same time also regularly holds events in the community in Gurdwaras. Each year we organise a minimum of 6-8 national events as well as 40-50 local events at Gurdwaras, 2 or 3 well attended Parliamentary events, 2 or 3 events in Brussels and Geneva and help organise and support 2 or 3 large national Sikh protests.

We have more than 20 branches across the UK with local membership and leadership as well as a national leadership. The total membership and supporters are more than 10,000 Sikhs in the UK. Our formal local structure allows for extensive links to Gurdwaras with local members and supporters involved in voluntary work (seva) in over 100 Gurdwaras. We also have links with at least 30 national specialised Sikh organisations.

It is widely known by politicians, especially MPs and government that the Sikh Federation (UK) specialises in leading the lobbying of Parliamentarians on Sikh issues given its size, structure, links and following. This allows 150-200 MPs to be approached through constituents within a matter of days. Lord Singh as the life-time head of the Network of Sikh Organisations resents our influence and has been critical of us publicly since we were established over 15 years ago.

In the debate on the Kirpan referring to the Sikh Federation (UK) Lord Singh used his position to defame us by stating: “They are trying to capitalise and muddy the waters.” While we understand he can use parliamentary privilege to make groundless accusations, we are concerned that Lord Singh did not declare in the

debate his own personal interests in trying to discredit us and influence who in the Sikh community Ministers should meet.

The rights associated with the Kirpan is an issue of crucial importance to the Sikh community, especially Amritdhari or practising Sikhs. As far as we are aware Lord Singh may not wear a Kirpan and may not be an Amritdhari who fully understands its significance. Lord Singh also has perverse personal views when it comes to the Kirpan therefore his views must be taken with a pinch of salt.

Lord Singh has been the one and only lifetime Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) that he established more than 20 years ago. In the debate he interrupted the Minister when she said she would meet representatives of the Sikh Council UK by insisting she meet the “Network of Sikh Organisations, not the Sikh Council.”

At no point in the debate did he declare he was the one and only Director of the NSO. Lord Singh referred to the NSO on three separate occasions in his interruptions of the Minister and urged the Government to deal with the “Network of Sikh Organisations” which he claimed, “represented the vast part of the Sikh community”.

We have subsequently checked the Register of Lords’ Interests and found Lord Singh has not declared he is a Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations that he has openly promoted to Ministers in the House of Lords ahead of any other Sikh organisation. We firmly believe the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords require such declarations in the Register of Lords’ Interests to assist in openness and accountability.

In our opinion Lord Singh being the Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations should have been declared:

- (1) in the Register of Lords’ Interests, since he became a Lord in 2011 to make clear what are the interests that might reasonably be thought to have influenced his parliamentary actions for the last 7 years; and
- (2) in the Kirpan debate in the Grand Committee of the House of Lords on 30 January 2019, especially when addressing and attacking other Sikh organisations and advising ministers to only deal and meet with his organisation.

Lord Singh’s failure to make disclosures about his interests raises serious concerns about the way he has been exercising his parliamentary influence for more than 7 years and the negative impact this may have had on the Sikh community. By insisting that Ministers and officials only deal and meet with his own organisation and using his position in the House of Lords and as head of the NSO interchangeably to maintain his monopoly position.

We were also deeply upset how he personally attacked the All Party Parliamentary Group on UK Sikhs. In our view Lord Singh appears to have breached rules that bar members of the House of Lords to make offensive expressions about fellow Lords and members in the other House. The latest [Register of All Party Groups](#) shows all officers of the All Party Parliamentary Group on UK Sikhs are MPs or Lords. The Sikh Federation (UK) has provided the Secretariat support since 2005 when the group was set up. This is a similar arrangement to many other active APPGs where membership and decisions on priorities and activities is limited to Parliamentarians.

Lord Singh outrageously interrupted the Minister and stated in the Kirpan debate “The All Party Parliamentary Group and the Sikh Federation are one and the same thing. They are exactly the same, and everyone knows it.” Many in the Sikh community feel this statement shows he is not fit to remain in the House of Lords and must be disciplined following an investigation.

In our view this was an attack at a personal level primarily aimed at the Chair of the APPG, Preet Kaur Gill, the first Sikh woman MP. Lord Singh has been targeting her and the APPG ever since she became the Chair as he has seen her as a threat to the monopoly he has established over many years on Sikh issues in Parliament and with Government. Lord Singh’s attack in the Grand Committee of the House of Lords on fellow Parliamentarians and the APPG is totally unacceptable.

Establishing the failure to declare his interests and the conflicts this has caused is relatively straightforward and not in doubt. However, we are more than happy to assist and provide further information during the investigation to assess the extent to which Lord Singh has abused his position over the last 7 years at the detriment to the Sikh community.

The Sikh Federation (UK) is requesting an investigation into whether Lord Singh has broken Parliamentary rules, including the Code of Conduct for members of the House of Lords.

APPENDIX 2: LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS TO LORD SINGH OF WIMBLEDON, 7 FEBRUARY 2019

I am writing because I have received a complaint from Mr Bhai Amrik Singh, Chair of the Sikh Federation (UK) alleging that you have breached the House of Lords Code of Conduct. The complaint relates to your participation of the committee stage of the Offensive Weapons Bill on 30 January in which you spoke about the Sikh Federation (UK) and the Network of Sikh Organisations without declaring an interest as the Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations. Mr Singh also argues that your directorship should be included in the Register of Lords' Interests. A copy of the complaint from Mr Singh is enclosed [Appendix 1].

I have carried out a preliminary assessment of the complaints. I have decided that there is sufficient *prima facie* evidence to investigate whether the House of Lords Code of Conduct may have been breached. In particular, I intend to investigate whether the following provisions of the Code of Conduct have been breached:

- The requirement to include in the Register of Lords' Interests all relevant interests, both financial and non-financial (paragraph 10(a) of the Code);
- The requirement to declare when speaking in the House any interest which is a relevant interest in the context of the debate or the matter under discussion (paragraph 10(b) of the Code).

In considering the allegations I will take into consideration paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Code which state:

“11. The test of relevant interest is whether the interest might be thought by a reasonable member of the public to influence the way in which a member of the House of Lords discharges his or her parliamentary duties: in the case of registration, the member's parliamentary duties in general; in the case of declaration, his or her duties in respect of the particular matter under discussion.

12. The test of relevant interest is therefore not whether a member's actions in Parliament will be influenced by the interest, but whether a reasonable member of the public might think that this would be the case. Relevant interests include both financial and non-financial interests.”

I also draw your attention to the seven general principles of conduct identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life and incorporated into the Code of Conduct.

I invite you to respond in writing with a full and accurate account of the matter in question. A response by 21 February would greatly assist me in investigating this matter in a timely fashion.

I would also wish to draw your attention to paragraph 130 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

Committee for Privileges and Conduct or the Commissioner, this would be a contempt of the House. An attempt to obstruct an investigation is a contempt of the House.”

In accordance with paragraph 122 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct a webpage on the parliamentary website will include basic information about the case.

**APPENDIX 3: LETTER FROM LORD SINGH OF WIMBLEDON TO
THE COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS, 25 FEBRUARY 2019³**

Your letter dated 7-2-19 re: Complaint by Chair of Sikh Federation UK

For reasons that will become apparent in the attached response, I feel that this complaint is entirely vexatious and a response to the mounting resentment of mainstream Sikhs to the divisive and extremist policies of the Sikh Federation UK.

I find it sad that the Federation should seek to smear someone whose work in promoting an understanding of Sikh teachings, on equality, including gender equality is applauded by Sikhs throughout the world and respected by wider society. I am a recipient of the UK Templeton Prize for furthering understanding between communities. Sadly, my work has incurred increasing anger of the Federation as it rejects their narrow political agenda.

I believe there is no substance in their smears and complaints and will address them in the attached response explaining the context in which they have been made.

3 Lord Singh submitted a number of attachments with his letter. These are not reproduced here.

Context of Complaint

A detailed note about the history and activities of the Sikh Federation UK is attached.

Brief information about the Sikh Federation UK

The Federation consists of a small group of opportunists who capitalise on the hurt felt by the Sikh community over the genocide of Sikhs in India in 1984 followed by some years of hard repression. Generous donations collected by the Federation to supposedly help victims' families were used by the Federation to promote their own interests. The Federation has also successfully played on a lingering distrust of the Indian government in claiming that that they will secure a separate homeland (Khalistan) for Sikhs in India.

At first, the Federation infiltrated and took over the funds of several gurdwaras, but growing disillusionment over their aggressive and factional politics has resulted in a rapid loss of influence. and in the last year they have lost control of gurdwaras in Leicester, Southampton and their stronghold in Wolverhampton. The Federation still has influence in a few gurdwaras in the West Midlands including the gurdwara of Federation supporter Preet Gill MP.

APPG FOR SIKHS

Preet Gill and the Federation work together to further the narrow Federation Agenda which has nothing to do with promoting an understanding of Sikh teachings or advancing interfaith understanding.

I have spoken to the previous Black Rod and Lord Bourne about my concerns over how four of the six Sikhs in Parliament were excluded from the AGM and election of officers. I have also asked the Labour Party to investigate the way Preet Gill and Federation are acting undemocratically to promote the myth that the Federation in any way reflects the concerns of the Sikh community in its divisive agenda.

Defeat over Attempt to label Sikhs an Ethnic Group

The Federation misused its position as Secretariat to get some MPs to support a major plank of its policy by pressurising the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to categorise Sikhs across the world, as a single ethnic group linked to Punjab, rather than the reality of a world religion open to all. They falsely claimed popular Sikh support.

I repeatedly asked Preet Gill for an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of this campaign with members of the APPG. I have been consistently refused.

The Federation have also refused to debate their rationale for calling Sikhs an ethnic group with me on Sikh TV. They simply smear those that disagree with them. The Federation do not like their policies challenged

They were outraged when the ONS published its Report rejecting the Federation claim, stating their own surveys showed it did not have mass support.

Their reaction was one of anger and abuse at those who disagreed with them. I was called an agent of the Indian government, a dinosaur and worse. They also accused the ONS of racism and said that John Pullinger, the Chief Statistician, should be dragged before the APPG to explain himself.

The Offensive Weapons Bill and their complaint about me.

The Federation put in a flawed amendment to protect the Sikh kirpan (sword) used in religious and cultural ceremony. When the bill came to the Lords, I got Labour and Liberals to support an amendment to correct the omission. 20 Sikh groups were appreciative and supportive. (see Attachment 2)⁴. The Federation took offence as it exposed flaws in their initial wording.

Debate in Grand Committee.

Immediately after the Second Reading, I met with the Minister Baroness Williams and her advisers to explain the important cultural omission. I offered my readiness to meet again at short notice before debate in the Grand Committee to discuss any concerns.

Unfortunately, no contact was made with me before the Bill went to Grand Committee and I assumed that this meant there would be no difficulty, I was unaware until it was mentioned at the Grand Committee, that **the government had instead been talking to the Federation and the APPG** who, claiming that they spoke for all Sikhs but were bent on sabotaging the Amendment which otherwise received unanimous support at the Committee.

My comment about the Federation was made following prompting by Baroness Verma, a government front bench member and herself a Sikh. She later told me about the bullying way the Federation had tried to make her support their demand for Khalistan. It was necessary to correct the discourtesy of the government beginning discussion on the Amendment with me and then continuing it with the Federation in a somewhat 'colonial' belief that they are all the same.

My comment that the Federation did not represent the Sikh community has been shown to be true by the independent ONS rejection of their claim to do so, and by the 20 organisations listed in Attachment 2. **The government has apologised for the discourtesy and misunderstanding in not coming back to me in writing, and twice at a meeting chaired by Baroness Williams on 15-2-19**

The Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO)

The Network of Sikh Organisations is a loose linking of Sikh gurdwaras to celebrate Sikh events and promote an understanding of Sikh teachings with emphasis on equality of all, including gender equality, rejection of all notions of race or caste, and of service to the wider community. It is run by an elected Executive. The following points are important in respect of the complaint:

- The Constitution does not allow promotion of any factional interest.
- My role is one of assistance as unpaid Director responsible to the Executive Committee. The Executive can remove me at any time without notice.
- **I believe it would be wrong to declare this in the Register of Interests as it would suggest a permanent position.** This is particularly important because the minutes of the AGM of the NSO held last month contained a note of my request that I be replaced as soon as possible.
- The NSO has no political perspective. It is simply a loose linking of Sikh groups to promote Sikh teachings

4 Reference is to a document that has not been published.

- In the Lords, when speaking from a religious perspective, **I speak ONLY of mainstream teachings of the Sikh Gurus. This is evident in all my contributions in the Lords** As required by Sikh teachings, I always try to address the concerns of all faiths and beliefs.
- **Bishops, when they stand to speak do not have to declare that they speak from a Christian perspective. Nor should a Sikh leader have to declare that he speaks from a Sikh perspective.**
- **At the Second Reading and at the Grand Committee I spoke as A Sikh and not as a member of any Group.**
- When the government mentioned that they were taking advice from the unrepresentative Sikh Federation, following prompting by Baroness Verma
- I did mention the NSO, but only in the context that they should talk to more mainstream groups. It was obvious from the comment and context of the Amendment and Debate, that I was speaking for the wider Sikh community. See Attachment 2⁵ for some of the organisations backing my amendment.

I shall be happy to provide any further clarification that may be required.

5 Reference is to a document that has not been published.

APPENDIX 4: TRANSCRIPT OF COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS' INTERVIEW WITH LORD SINGH OF WIMBLEDON, 11 MARCH 2019

Present

Lucy Scott-Moncrieff (House of Lords Commissioner for Standards)

Lord Singh of Wimbledon

James Whittle (Clerk assisting the Commissioner)

The Commissioner for Standards (Lucy Scott-Moncrieff): Lord Singh, thank you for coming to see me. As you know, I am investigating a complaint made about your intervention to the debate on the Offensive Weapons Bill on 30 January. Much of the complaint relates to the content of what you said. As you know, the Code of Conduct does not cover expressions of opinion made by Members, so I am not investigating that part of the complaint. However, an aspect of the complaint was that you did not declare your directorship of the Network of Sikh Organisations. Failure to register and declare relevant interests falls within my remit and this is the subject of this investigation. In your letter to me of 25 February, you confirm that you were an unpaid director of the Network of Sikh Organisations and gave your reasons for not having registered your interests and not having declared your interests when you spoke in the debate. This meeting is to give us an opportunity to try to reach agreement on what the code requires.

Dealing first with registration, you wrote in your letter that you had not thought that this was appropriate because your role is unpaid and you can be removed from it at any time. Category 10 of the code requires non-financial interests, including unremunerated directorships or other regular employment and acting as an officeholder or trustee in voluntary or non-for-profit organisations, to be registered. I quote: "The key consideration in determining relevance in respect of both registration and declaration of an interest is that the interest might be thought by a reasonable member of the public to influence the way in which a member of the House of Lords discharges his or her parliamentary duties ... A 'reasonable member of the public' is taken to mean an impartial and well-informed person, who judges all the relevant facts in an objective manner". The code also explains that the test is "not whether a member's actions in Parliament will be influenced by the interest, but whether a reasonable member of the public might think that this would be the case. Relevant interests include both financial and non-financial interests". So that is the code. Do you still think that it was not an interest that needed to be registered?

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I think you mentioned "regular employment" in the code.

The Commissioner for Standards: It refers to "directorships or other regular employment".

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Yes, "or other regular employment". First of all, I am not regularly employed. There are different definitions of "director". One is someone with authority to do things. I have absolutely no authority. The chair of the executive committee has the authority. I am asked, "Can you help with this and that?" I am used as the dogsbody.

The Commissioner for Standards: But still, do you not consider the fact that you have a role with the organisation as relevant?

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I do not, for two reasons. They are different organisations. Those bringing this complaint, the Sikh Federation—

The Commissioner for Standards: No, I am not concerned with that.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Let me explain. They have a particular view on Sikhism, on what should be done in the country and on politics. The Network of Sikh Organisations has no view at all. It runs things such as Albert Hall celebrations of major events. I help with things like that. There is no Network of Sikh Organisations view that differs in any way from the Sikh view.

The Commissioner for Standards: Well, except that it differs from the views of the federation.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I am talking about the Sikh view. The federation declares a particular path, which is really linked to Khalistan and the politics of India. But this is mainstream Sikhism. Nothing that I have said in the House would exceed my role in the NSO definition of director, when I am speaking on behalf of the Network of Sikh Organisations.

The Commissioner for Standards: It is not to do with speaking on behalf of the network. It is speaking from that place that you are a member of the network—

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: No. But that is no more than as a member of the Sikh community. It does not mean anything more than that. The constitution of the network is only about living the aims of Sikhism.

The Commissioner for Standards: Did it ever occur to you that it would be sensible to have a word with the registrar about your directorship, to see whether it was something that should be registered?

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: It may be in hindsight. As soon as I joined, I spoke to someone—I did not meet them; this was on the phone—about relevant interests and I declared a small amount that I was getting at the time helping to look after my daughter's property. That was sort of laughed out of court. I was told, "We don't want things like that". So I left it. This is something where, as a member of the network, I am doing nothing more than a member of the Church of England would do. If it is required, I am happy to do it. I think it would be wrong because, since I have been here, I have had many things to do in my parliamentary work. At the last AGM, I said, "Please find someone else to take this role".

The Commissioner for Standards: What does the role involve you in doing?

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I have been in this country since infancy and have some experience of the country, the people and how to get things done. I also have knowledge and expertise—well, you do not need expertise, just knowledge—of the Sikh religion, which is no more than the path of things that we should do or not do to make for a better society. It is nothing more than that. That is the Sikh religion in a nutshell.

The Commissioner for Standards: But you are asking them to replace you.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Yes.

The Commissioner for Standards: Why do they need to replace you if you are not doing anything?

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I am doing things—whatever I am told to do.

The Commissioner for Standards: What sort of things are you asked to do?

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: At the AGM, if it is left to the people who are running it, it will slip by for another year, to make sure that things are done according to the constitution. It is just onerous. There is too much else to do. I have had to cut down broadcasting to do this sort of thing.

The Commissioner for Standards: Would you be willing to have a conversation with the registrar about what is involved?

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Absolutely.

The Commissioner for Standards: It might be important to get his input into whether he thinks this is something that should have been registered.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Yes. Does that apply to all the other things that I do?

The Commissioner for Standards: He would be the right person to talk to about that, just to get it straightened out.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I am happy to do that.

The Commissioner for Standards: We now come to declarations, which is slightly different, in the sense that, if you have a registered interest, you should declare it at relevant times, but it can also be important to declare unregistered interests in particular circumstances where relevant. What we are looking at here are the four contributions that you made to the debate on 30 January. In the first of those contributions—you may not remember it, but I will show it to you—you were talking about the kirpan.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I remember it.

The Commissioner for Standards: As far as I am concerned, there is nothing there to suggest that you are doing anything other than speaking as a Sikh—as an eminent and knowledgeable person—about the religion, informing other people in the House.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Not from any perspective of Sikhism.

The Commissioner for Standards: Absolutely. I completely agree. But there are then three rather brief interventions, talking about the Sikh Federation, the Sikh Council, the all-party parliamentary group and the difference between the Network of Sikh Organisations and the Sikh Council. I completely understand that you were simply being informative, distinguishing between different groups, but at that point it seems to me that it would have been right to make a declaration—to say, “By the way, I am a director of the network”.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: That is possible. The background was that I had had a meeting with the Ministers and their officials and they had said that they would come back to me. Instead of coming back to me, they talked to these lobbying groups and did not come back to me as they should have done. The only logic that I can see in them doing that is, “They’re all the same”, which is not quite right. That is the logic.

I did not say anything at first. Baroness Verma was extremely upset when she heard that they had been talking to these people and not to me. She was gesticulating, saying, “They don’t represent the Sikh community”. That is what I got up to say, at her sort of pushing. Then I perhaps should have said, “By the way, instead of talking to these people, they should have talked to people like the network and, by the way, I am”—

The Commissioner for Standards: Yes.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: But in fact, my role in that meeting is different. I would say, “If you must go outside to talk to someone, talk to the network”. But my role in the debate was to speak for the Sikh community.

The Commissioner for Standards: I understand that and I realise from what you have just said that you were not expecting to have to make those distinctions.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: No. This is in the repartee and the quick exchange.

The Commissioner for Standards: The purpose of making declarations is not for the people who know to hear that you are making a declaration; it is for everyone in the wide world who might look at Hansard or who might be listening and who would not know what your position is necessarily. I think that you are accepting that it would have been sensible to say—

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: It would have been sensible. There are many unsensible things that I have done.

The Commissioner for Standards: So have we all. Fine. Is there anything else, James, that you think we should ask?

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: Can I just put that in context a little more to show how I felt at the time about their not coming back to me? In a subsequent meeting, the Minister apologised for not coming back to me and going to others, which was confusing the issue. The person who was responsible came separately to me to apologise. There were two apologies. They realised that they had done wrong. It is because of an error on their part that I blurted out, “This is wrong”.

The Commissioner for Standards: Absolutely—got that. Okay. Is that everything?

James Whittle: I think so.

The Commissioner for Standards: Let us turn off the tape.

**APPENDIX 5: LETTER FROM LORD SINGH OF WIMBLEDON
TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON LORDS'
INTERESTS, 28 MARCH 2019**

Grand Committee Meeting on the Offensive Weapons Bill 30-1-19

I am writing to you to apologise for an inadvertent omission during debate on this Bill.

Background

I spoke to government officials a little before Xmas, that without a suitable amendment, the Bill would make illegal the Sikh practice of awarding a kirpan (large sword) to a Sikh or non-Sikh in recognition of a notable contribution to the Sikh community or wider society. They promised to come back to me. This was more than a month before the Grand Committee. At the Committee, Baroness Baron for the government said that they had been taking advice from the Sikh Federation (an extremist Sikh grouping and the new name for a previously proscribed organisation).

Baroness Verma, a Sikh who was present at the meeting, was clearly affronted by this rudeness in not coming back to me as promised, made worse by the government taking advice from the Federation in a 'you are all the same' manner. In response to her prompting, I rose to say that they should have spoken to the (apolitical) Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO). On reflection, I should have made clear that I was Hon Director NSO.

The Minister and a Home Office official subsequently apologised for not coming back to me.

Although in the debate I was speaking for the wider Sikh community, I am writing to your Committee to apologise for my inadvertent omission.