



PRESS RELEASE

Canada India Foundation condemns ISIL's attack on Sikhs in Afghanistan

Urges Canada & India to accept Afghanistan's Sikh refugees



Toronto: Canada India Foundation has condemned the Islamic State's attack on Sikhs in Kabul that has killed 25 people on 25 March 2020. In a statement issued in Toronto today, Anil Shah, Chair, Canada India Foundation, said "Canada India Foundation condemns this heinous act. When the entire humanity is struggling against a deadly pandemic, such cowardly attack on the place of worship of a minority community reflects the diabolical mindset of the perpetrators and their backers. We stand firmly with our Canadian Sikh brothers and sisters to raise our voice against this inhuman act of terrorism."

Canada India Foundation has reiterated its demand that the Canadian government provide protection to Afghanistan's Sikhs by permitting them to immigrate to Canada as refugees. CIF had made this demand in July 2018 when 19 Sikhs and Hindus were massacred in Jalalabad, located on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Satish Thakkar, CIF's National Convener drew attention to India's new Citizenship Amendment Act that was recently passed by the Indian Parliament. "The CAA is precisely aimed at preventing such tragedies by protecting religious minorities in South Asia. We urge the Indian government to immediately come forward to help the Afghanistan-based Sikh families by offering them protection and a safe passage to India," he said.

According to various reports, thousands of Sikh and Hindu families from Afghanistan and Pakistan are keen to return to India taking the shelter that the new Citizenship Amendment Act provides. The CAA offers amnesty to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians persecuted in the theocratic states neighbouring India. India represents the sole rational and logically feasible place to seek shelter for these communities.

It is pertinent to note in this context that Sikhs have been the target of attacks by Islamist militants before in South Asia. Their community in Afghanistan numbers fewer than 300 families. In the late 1980s, there were about 500,000 Sikhs scattered across Afghanistan, many from families that had been there for generations, but most fled after years of civil war and the rise of Islamist militancy.

According to CBC, the Islamic State militant group claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement. Narender Singh Khalsa, a member of the Afghan parliament, said that up to 200 people had been trapped in the temple during the attack. Three suicide bombers attacked the Gurdwara when it was full of worshippers. It was only after several hours that the Afghan security forces could enter the precincts to rescue those trapped inside, but by then 25 people had already been killed.

Pankaj Dave, National Co-Convener, Canada India Foundation said, "In 2018, CIF had stated that just as Canada took the lead in accepting Syrian refugees, the Canadian government should accommodate members of the minority communities such as Sikhs and Hindus from Afghanistan and Pakistan to immigrate to Canada."

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