Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 19, 2012

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

As you know, many Sikh-Americans have been subjected, unfortunately, to bigoted hate crimes. In the last year alone, two Sikh-American men in Sacramento were murdered, a Sikh Gurdwara in Michigan was defaced and a Sikh-American man was beaten in New York. These kinds of hate-motivated attacks have no place in the United States. To address this growing concern, we urge the Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation to begin recording and tracking hate crimes suffered by Sikh-Americans as part of its *Hate Crime Incident Report Form* (1-699).

According to its accompanying guide, Form 1-699 is designed to "assist the FBI in compiling timely, comprehensive, and accurate data regarding the incidence and prevalence of hate crime throughout the [n]ation." The *Report Form* not only serves as the primary mechanism by which the federal government collects and documents hate crimes committed in the United States, it also helps form the basis for decision-making on the deployment of law enforcement resources. Yet, our understanding is that the FBI may be relying on older forms which count hate crimes against Sikhs as anti-Islamic (Muslim) hate crimes. We believe that not including Sikhs within hate-crime data-collection may diminish the safety of the 500,000-strong Sikh-American community and weaken the quality of essential hate crimes data overall.

Numerous reports have documented how those practicing the Sikh religion are often targeted for hate violence because of their religiously-mandated turbans -- i.e. *because* of their Sikh identity, regardless of whether the attacker understands the victim to be Sikh or not. Sadly, victimization begins at a young age -- Sikh youth are among the most bullied in the nation, with approximately 3 out of 4 Sikh boys severely bullied in school. Given that this discrete community is so acutely susceptible to hate violence in the United States, we believe it is critically important for authorities to devise means of tracking crimes committed against Sikhs. We also believe, as do many leaders in the Sikh community, that doing so would further encourage affected community members to report hate crimes to law enforcement officials and strengthen relationships between communities, the FBI and the Department of Justice.

We understand that the Department of Justice has carried out a variety of outreach efforts in coalition with members of the 500,000-strong Sikh-American community. We applaud these very important efforts and strongly urge you to take the next step by making this administrative alteration. We understand there may be a few options for how to put this change into practice and would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this matter further.

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Sincerely,

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

Gary L. Ackerman
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Shelley Berkley
Member of Congress

Howard L. Berman
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
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CC: Robert Mueller, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation