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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3214

COMMITTEE ON
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WEB PAGE
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August 20, 2014

Bill de Blasio
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

William J. Bratton
Police Commissioner
New York Police Department
One Police Plaza, Madison St.
New York, NY 10038

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Bratton:

Like many New Yorkers, I am deeply concerned about the increase in hate crimes committed against members of New York's Sikh-American community, and I urge you to develop a New York Sikh-American Action Plan to address this situation.

In the last two weeks alone, Dr. Jaspreet Singh Batra—a Sikh physician—was assaulted and injured in front of his elderly mother on Roosevelt Island, and Mr. Sandeep Singh—a Sikh business owner and father—was run over and seriously wounded by a driver in a pick-up truck in Queens. In both cases, the targets were subjected to bigoted slurs. These attacks sadly coincided with the second anniversary of the attack on the Oak Creek Gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, which killed six worshippers and seriously injured several others. And, they follow last year's brutal attack on Columbia University professor Dr. Prabhjot Singh that resulted in his hospitalization. Further, members of the Sikh community have shared with officials news of other instances of hate employed against them, which all too often were not reported to the authorities.

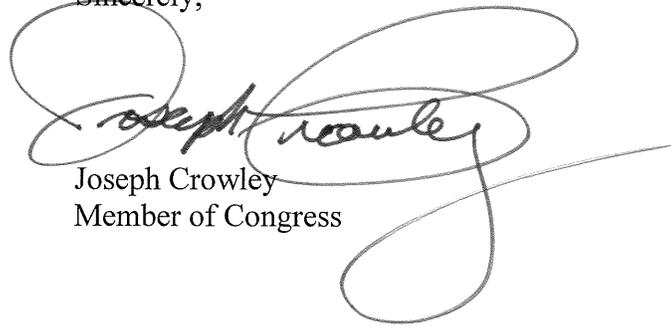
Taken together, these attacks have created a situation in which the families that comprise New York's Sikh community feel under siege – concerned even to carry out everyday activities like patronizing a restaurant, walking home from work or going shopping. Our city now faces a unique situation, in which a key community reports that they are living as targets for violent bigotry.

We all want this situation to come to an end, and I believe it requires the development of an action plan to address these legitimate concerns. For example, the City and NYPD could consider expanding security presence at Sikh places of worship for the time being so that attendees see the support of the authorities. The department could also consider designating a liaison to the Sikh community to serve as a conduit for community concerns and have the opportunity to explore more deeply the unique concerns of the Sikh community.

To further demonstrate support for the Sikh community, the City could also expand the service of observant Sikhs beyond the Metropolitan Transit Authority to include the NYPD. Turbaned Sikhs currently serve with distinction in the U.S. Army and are allowed to serve in the police department of Washington, D.C., as well as other major cities around the world, including London and Toronto, and NYPD could adopt a similar practice.

I look forward to working with you to prevent hate crimes, end discrimination, and create a safe environment for all New Yorkers. Thank you for your attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Crowley". The signature is stylized with large loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress