



Dear Members of the International Khalsa Council and SDI Ministers,

August 14, 2020

Re: Follow-up Letter regarding Community Concerns about AOB Investigation

Sat Nam Dear Members of our 3HO, Sikh Dharma and KRI Community,

Over the last several weeks, the Siri Singh Sahib Corporation heard from a number of people expressing their concerns about the investigation by An Olive Branch (AOB) and from others supporting the investigation and AOB. In particular, an assertion has been made that the investigation was an "illegal investigation" because AOB does not have a Pennsylvania private detective license. As promised by the SSSC in its August 13 cover letter to the AOB report, this letter addresses the licensing concern and other concerns that have been raised.

An Olive Branch originated as a nonprofit program of the Zen Center of Pittsburgh. The Pennsylvania Private Detective Act of 1953 requires private detectives in Pennsylvania to have a license to perform many tasks, including activities that fall under a very broad definition of a "private detective business." That definition includes an investigation for the purpose of "obtaining information with reference to ... the credibility of witnesses or other persons." To obtain a license under the statute, an individual must generally have three years of prior law enforcement experience and meet other requirements.

The District Attorney's office in each of Pennsylvania's counties is responsible for enforcing the licensing statute in its county. Several weeks ago, the Allegheny County District Attorney's office received a complaint about AOB's activities and opened a file on the matter. Reportedly, the District Attorney's office independently investigated AOB's activities and also met with SSSC's local counsel. After considering, among

other things, that it did not appear that anyone in Pennsylvania was being investigated and that none of the activities under investigation occurred in Pennsylvania, the District Attorney's office concluded it had no legal interest in AOB's investigation and advised local counsel that it had closed its file.

So while it is true that AOB does not have a license issued under Pennsylvania's Private Detective Act of 1953, law enforcement in Pennsylvania is aware of and has familiarized itself with the nature and scope of AOB's investigation and does not intend to take any action concerning AOB's licensing status.

Regardless of how the Allegheny County District Attorney's office viewed AOB's investigation, any attempt by a state regulatory or law enforcement agency to interfere with AOB's investigation for SSSC would likely violate the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Under the First Amendment, the government is prohibited from interfering with a religious organization's decisions on matters related to internal governance, faith, and the organization's religious mission.

The SSSC's decision to conduct an independent investigation of the allegations of misconduct and hire AOB to do that investigation was based on the commitment to truth and fearless living that is required of us by our values as Sikhs. The investigation, moreover, focused on alleged sexual misconduct by the organization's founder and chief religious authority-misconduct that if true departs sharply from the teachings of Sikh Dharma. Conducting an independent investigation and hiring AOB to handle it were critical steps towards facing this crisis in a manner consistent with our religious teachings as Sikhs and to ensure the SSSC's integrity as a religious organization. SSSC's constitutionally protected right to choose its course of action in this context would therefore likely foreclose any legal action against SSSC or AOB under private detective licensing statutes or analogous laws of any state.

Aside from the private detective licensing issue, some members of the community have raised concerns that AOB's consultants are incompetent and unprofessional. As described in its report, AOB either interviewed or received written statements from almost 300 individuals and reviewed social media, lawsuits, publicly available information and other relevant documents. While AOB does not have a private detective license, AOB's consultants followed standard procedures for conducting an investigation, testing the credibility and motives of all reporters of harm and other witnesses, and seeking corroborating or refuting evidence and witnesses.

AOB's training and experience qualified them for this investigation. During the course of the SSSC's due diligence in selecting an investigator for this investigation, AOB was found to meet the critical requirements to be entrusted with completing this task including:

- Experience understanding the issues unique to spiritual or religious-based organizations.
- Experience investigating claims of sexual misconduct.
- Demonstrated relatability to reporters of harm as well as witnesses.
- Ability to instill confidence that all individuals in the matter will be treated with sensitivity and care.
- Service as an impartial third-party, unconnected with the SSSC organizations, lawyers, or law enforcement.

All of AOB's consultants have careers in fields that make them well qualified for the work required for this independent investigation. As professional mediators and facilitators, AOB's consultants know how to listen deeply and ask probing questions to tease out important details and distinctions in what people say. They also have graduate-level training and experience in gathering and analyzing qualitative data - data gained through interviews, observations and other sources - making them competent to conduct the investigation and synthesize their findings into a report. Their research backgrounds enable them to ask questions that are guided by social science knowledge, insight and practice, while their project management skills and experience support large-scale inquiries such as this one involving nearly 300 participants. Moreover, these consultants have performed similar investigations for two other organizations in the past, demonstrating their ability to do the work necessary in this matter.

Some members of the community also voiced concerns that the investigation was unfair because no representative was appointed to represent Yogi Bhanan. They asserted that, because Yogi Bhanan is not here to defend himself, a representative should have been appointed to defend him. They asserted further that the appointed representative would need to be provided with the details of every allegation and the identity of every reporter of harm so that the representative could then attempt to refute the allegations and challenge the reporters' credibility. The SSSC is not aware of any other posthumous investigation where such a representative was appointed or any principle of law or practice that would require a representative. Moreover, many of the allegations were publicly known from social media, a book, podcasts and interviews, and other public documents. Also, the very nature of the reports of harm-the fact that much of the alleged conduct occurred in private over a span of decades-does not support the usefulness of such a process.

As described by the CRT in a previous communication, all efforts were made through the investigative process to ensure that Yogi Bhanan's voice was heard through his students and family. While some of them chose not to participate, at least 140 people came forward to speak on Yogi Bhanan's behalf during the investigation, and AOB conducted more than 50 interviews specifically to explore his defense. In addition, AOB received and reviewed numerous written statements in support of Yogi Bhanan. Information related to possible motivations and the factual consistency of the allegations was gathered and assessed by AOB through questioning, fact-finding, and analysis.

In short, AOB's consultants followed best practices for conducting this type of investigation despite the subject of the investigation being deceased. They listened

carefully to the reporters of harm, witnesses, and all others who participated in the investigation. They tested the credibility and motives of everyone they interviewed, sought corroborating or refuting evidence and witnesses, and prepared a complete account of what they learned during the course of the investigation.

We appreciate all those who made the effort to express their concerns regarding the investigation, and we hope that the information in this letter helps to clarify the underlying issues.

Sincerely,

Board of Trustees
Siri Singh Sahib Corporation