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## SFJ's Response to UAPA Tribunal's Decision to Ban the Organization

January 9, 2020, Washington, D.C.

“Sikhs For Justice” (SFJ) [www.sikhsforjustice.org](http://www.sikhsforjustice.org) is an international human rights advocacy group which is spearheading Referendum 2020 campaign to realize the right of self-determination for Sikh people on the basis of the principle enshrined in UN Charter and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Referendum 2020 [www.referendum2020.org](http://www.referendum2020.org) is a political campaign launched by “SFJ” aiming to hold the first ever non-binding Referendum among the 25 million global Sikh community on the question of establishing Indian governed Punjab as an independent country – “Khalistan”.

1. On the issue of exercising Right of Self Determination through Referendum, the recent example of Bougainville is a case in point. A non-binding independence referendum was held in Bougainville, an autonomous region of Papua New Guinea, between 23 November and 7 December 2019. The referendum question was a choice between greater autonomy within Papua New Guinea and full independence, and voters voted overwhelmingly (98.31%) for independence.
2. Scottish Independence Referendum is yet another recent example wherein referendum was employed to gauge the will of the people of Scotland on the question of secession from United Kingdom.
3. SFJ's call for Referendum on the issue of Khalistan and exercising of Sikhs' right of self Determination is very similar.
4. SFJ's peaceful and democratic initiative of organizing Referendum on the issue of Khalistan as opposed to advocating to achieve the same through armed struggle as had happened in 80s and 90s, has so far met with a response from the Government of India which is marked with arrogance, abuse of laws and powers and total disregard for democratic values and appreciation for non-violent initiatives such as referendum.
5. SFJ believes and reiterates that countries, their boundaries and territories are neither divine nor written in stone and people of areas and regions comprising a country have the ultimate and superior say in this matter. Areas and regions sometimes come together to make union and sometimes part away to make independent countries. So long as the process of areas, regions and nations joining together to become a Union or parting away to become sovereign countries happens non-violently and peacefully, humanity is served and freedom of the will of the people prevails.
6. As Thomas Jefferson, the founding father of the United States and a key author of the US Declaration of Independence and the Constitution stated “If any state in the union will declare that it prefers separation, I have no hesitation in saying, “Let us separate.”
7. Being the powerful party in this situation, the responsibility lies on the shoulders of Government of India to take SFJ's call of Referendum as an effort to resorting to non-violent means for resolving political differences, whether real or perceived, instead of criminalizing such dissent.
8. History will be a judge on the fact that the initiative of organizing an unofficial referendum by a Sikh organization which means nothing more than to gauge the will of the Sikh people, was met with a response by the Government of that country which was very similar to response of the colonial power from which the said country had gained independence not long ago.
9. Is the Union of India, the new British Empire for the Sikhs who ask for voting on the question of establishing their independent homeland?

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