



## **Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole and Acting Associate Attorney General Tony West Help Preview Justice Department's Sikh Cultural Competency Training**

On September 19, the Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS) previewed its newly revised Sikh Cultural Competency Training in Washington, D.C., which will be used across the nation to help reduce community tension based on race, color or national origin and respond to and prevent hate crimes. Specifically, the conciliators will use the training to inform and educate communities experiencing tension resulting from incomplete knowledge of Sikh community neighbors, as a resource to prevent violent hate crimes against Sikhs and other unfamiliar religious traditions, as well as training trainers who can then become additional resources available to the communities in need.

The event was attended by approximately 130 leaders of Sikh organizations, members of civil rights groups, guests from non-Sikh religious traditions, staff from various Justice Department components such as the Civil Rights Division and other federal agencies.

In opening remarks given by Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole, he observed that, following last month's tragic shooting in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, "...many do not understand the long history of the Sikh faith and culture in America." And that "... with greater understanding of that rich history and the contributions of Sikh Americans, there will be greater respect for our common humanity." Indeed, it was sentiments such as these that informed and guided the design and development of this cultural competency training. <http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/dag/speeches/2012/dag-speech-1209191.html>

The two-hour presentation covered the Sikh religion, identifying characteristics, articles of faith, addressing misperceptions and stereotypes and strategies for successful engagement and partnership with Sikh communities. The presentation's content is the culmination of many months of work by CRS' Sikh partners and CRS staff, including the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Sikh Coalition, and the United Sikhs. "The Community Relations Service, along with all of our partner organizations, are proud to have produced this training in our efforts to increase tolerance and reduce backlash incidents and violence in the Sikh and other affected communities," said CRS National Director Grande Lum.

Acting Associate Attorney General Tony West also gave remarks at the training preview, summing up the Justice Department's goal by saying, "We hope the training will inspire even broader collaborations in the communities across the nation and forge lasting partnerships among law enforcement, elected officials, non-Sikh communities, and their Sikh neighbors."

<http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/asg/speeches/2012/asg-speech-120919.html>