

# First Time Sikh Participation at South East European Prayer Breakfast

by Simran Singh Khalsa



Simran Singh with Muslim Imams and Mr. Kesić, an Orthodox Christian

## Practicing Unity

Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh representatives pray together for tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the Balkans.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Annual South-Eastern European Prayer Gathering

A group of 150 dignitaries and friends from 18 countries came together from May 22-24 in the Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual South East European Prayer Gathering. I was honored to be the first Sikh representative to attend, and joined our Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim

brothers and sisters to pray for tolerance and peace in the Balkans.

We met in a region that just a few years ago was overwhelmed by an unthinkable religious war. While there is no strong Sikh presence in the area, given the Sikhs' history, it seemed like an important place to contribute in prayer.

*The meetings took place in a region that just a few years ago was overwhelmed by an unthinkable religious war.*

## International Representation

In content, the event mirrored the US National Prayer Breakfast, which has taken place in Washington, DC for over 50 years. In South Eastern Europe, it is organized by senior regional leaders and the US Congressmen and Senators who sponsor the US gathering. Turnout was impressive, with government representatives from the Balkans, Europe, Russia, and North America joining together to reflect and pray.



National Assembly Speaker Radojčić, Simran Singh, Prime Minister Dodik and Mrs. Radojčić

*Throughout our history, Sikhs have experienced religious combat and discrimination, but have always valued those who see no boundaries between people.*



*Discussing Sikh History, the Principles of Jesus, and Regional Peace with US Congressman Aderholt, English MP Lord Hylton, and Bosnia's Council of People's Chairman Mr. Osmančević (not pictured)*

## Interdenominational Values

Our discussions emphasized acceptance, love, forgiveness, humanity, and prayer. These values were interdenominationally referred to as the Principles of Jesus. Listening to representatives of different faiths describe what these standards mean to them, I realized that they mirror what Sikhs understand to be the teachings of Guru Ram Das. The principles became the group's common denominator, and we spent three meaningful days together, parting as friends.

My personal hope is that as Sikhs we will do more to reach out in our communities, pray with others, and work towards the unity and peace that our Gurus, like the Masters and Prophets of many faiths, set out to achieve.

Resembling a Sikh's heart, the Hari Mandir Sahib has four doors to signify an invitation for people from all walks of life to come together and pray. We have also, throughout our history, experienced religious combat and discrimination, but have always valued those who see no boundaries between people.

***My personal hope is that as Sikhs we will do more to reach out in our communities, pray with others, and work towards unity and peace.***

*Simran Singh is a native of Hamburg, Germany. He spent 10 years living at Miri Piri Academy in Amritsar, India and currently resides in Washington, DC, where he works for Akal Security, Inc. and is an Ambassador for Sikh Dharma International. He can be reached via email at [simransingh@khalsa.com](mailto:simransingh@khalsa.com).*



*Simran Singh prays with participants*