

## **White House holds meeting with Sikh and Muslim community leaders**

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**Washington:** Senior White House officials will hold meetings with Sikh and Muslim community leaders, a US presidential spokesman said yesterday, as the country reels under a spate of hate-crimes directed against these communities in the aftermath of San Bernardino terrorist attack.

“The White House is routinely engaged in an active dialogue with faith leaders across the country. There are a number of engagements today. The President does not plan to participate in any of the meetings that are planned,” the White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest told reporters at his daily news conference.

“Cecilia Munoz will lead with representatives of the American-Sikh community to discuss how the administration is supporting that community and to discuss ways to work together to address concerns and challenges,” Earnest said. “Munoz is director of White House Domestic Policy Council.”

The White House had arranged a conference call with a broad array of faith-based organisations across the country after a number of hate crimes were reported in the country following the massacre of 14 people at a disability center in Southern California on December 2 by a Pakistani-origin Muslim couple, who investigators believe, were at least partially inspired by the Islamic State terror organisation.

In addition to this, there would be an in-person meeting convened with a smaller group of Muslim-American leaders, the press secretary said.

The American-Sikh community, numbering nearly half-a-million, has seen a spur in hate-crimes against them following the terror attack.

Last week, a Sikh temple in California was vandalised and a group of Sikh men were harassed by security staff and denied access to a stadium in San Diego city in California for an American football game because they were wearing turbans. Earlier in 2012, a white supremacist has opened fire at a Sikh temple in Milwaukee, killing six people.

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