

ITALY: Italy bans Sikh migrant from carrying Kirpan

Italy's Supreme Court has ruled against a Sikh migrant who wanted to carry a ceremonial knife during a public procession.

By Isabelle Gerretsen

International Business Times (16.05.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2qrn0sU> – Sikhs argue that carrying a Kirpan, a ceremonial knife, is an important expression of their religious duty.

The Sikh man was appealing against another court's decision to fine him €2,000 (£1,700) after he was caught leaving his home in the town of Goito, northern Italy, holding a knife measuring almost 20cm (7.8in).

He argued that he was required to display both the knife and his turban publicly by his religion.

Sikhs have been following the custom of carrying a ceremonial knife since the 17th Century when Guru Gobind Singh commanded his followers to always wear five articles of faith: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (a wooden comb), Kara (an iron bracelet), Kachera (a cotton undergarment) and the Kirpan.

But the court in Rome ruled public safety superseded the man's rights to express his religious duty.

"An attachment to one's own values, even if they are lawful in the country of origin, is intolerable when it violates the laws of the host country," a court statement read.

"While the multi-ethnic society is a necessity, public safety is an asset to be protected," the court ruled, using this argument to justify a ban on a "weapon aimed at injury".

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