

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Statement on the Observance of Diwali

November 13, 2012

Today, here at home and across the globe, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and some Buddhists will celebrate the holiday of Diwali, the festival of lights. Diwali is a time for gathering with family and friends, often marked with good food and dancing. It is also a time for prayer and reflection about those less fortunate. It is a testament to the compassion of these communities that so many of them have helped those that have been devastated by Hurricane Sandy.

Many who observe this holiday will light the *diya*, or lamp, which symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. As that lamp is lit, we should all recommit ourselves to bring light to any place still facing darkness.

Earlier this year, we were reminded of the evil that exists in the world when a gunman walked into the Sikh *gurdwara* in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, and opened fire. In the wake of that horrible tragedy, we saw the resilience of a community that drew strength from their faith and a sense of solidarity with their neighbors, Sikh and non-Sikh alike. We also saw compassion and love in the heroic actions of the first-responders and the outpouring of support from people across the country. Out of a day of sadness, we were reminded that the beauty of America remains our diversity and our right to religious freedom.

To those celebrating Diwali, I wish you, your families, and loved ones happy Diwali and *Saal Mubarak*.

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