

U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

28 March 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

On March 25, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released their 2025 Annual Report highlighting global developments related to religious freedom, and recommending designations for Countries of Particular Concern (CPC), Special Watch List countries, and others.¹ For the sixth year in a row, USCIRF recommended that the Department of State designate India as a CPC for engaging in and tolerating systemic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations. We write to you today to urge you to adopt this long-standing recommendation and designate India as a CPC.

Insurmountable Evidence of India's Attacks on Religious Freedom in the United States

USCIRF's report details the government of India's (GOI's) significant religious freedom violations within its own borders, but it also highlights the deeply concerning phenomenon of the GOI's transnational repression, or TNR, targeting religious minorities abroad—including in the United States.

As noted in USCIRF's report, the Department of Justice (DOJ) published a second indictment in October 2024 related to the attempted assassination of a Sikh American attorney in New York City in 2023, this time indicting a former Indian government employee—Vikash Yadav, then-officer of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)—in the attempted assassination. The indictment contained facts suggesting that more senior members of the GOI likely knew about and were potentially involved in the attempted assassination. Specifically, it implied that Yadav was in contact with "sources" in New York City who were tracking the movements of the intended victim, and that someone apparently more senior to Yadav, whom he referred to as "boss," was also involved in tracking the intended victim's movements. These allegations are in line with earlier reporting from the Washington Post indicating that U.S. intelligence agencies have assessed that more senior GOI officials, including then-chief of RAW, Samant Goel, and Prime Minister Modi's national security advisor Ajit Doval, were likely aware of the plot.

The indictment and related public reporting are compounded by developments out of Canada. Also in October 2024, the Canadian government ordered six Indian diplomats to leave the

¹ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, "2025 Annual Report," <https://www.uscirtf.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025%20USCIRF%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.



country, including India's top representative in Ottawa.² According to the Washington Post, they did so after finding that those diplomats were directly involved in gathering intelligence on members of the Sikh community who were later killed, threatened, or attacked by India's criminal proxies.³ That same month, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) broke from their general practice of refraining from publicly disclosing information about ongoing investigations, saying that they were motivated to address the public now due to "the significant threat to public safety" in Canada posed by the "breadth and depth of criminal activity orchestrated by agents of the Government of India."⁴ Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly stated that she hoped Canada's actions were "sending a strong message to other Western democracies that are dealing with this, because this is not only happening in Canada."⁵ Canada is not the first country to expel Indian agents; earlier last year, an investigation by the Australian Broadcasting Company revealed that Australia had expelled four Indian spies in 2020 for intelligence activities targeting defense technology politicians and airport security protocols.⁶

Taken together, the Canadian government's findings about the GOI's campaign of violence across Canada, our own government's allegations of at least one GOI-orchestrated assassination attempt on U.S. soil, and consistent public reporting indicating the involvement of senior-level members of the GOI in these unacceptable activities make clear that the GOI's violent targeting of religious minorities does not stop at its own borders.

The Importance of a CPC Designation

The Sikh community is grateful to the DOJ for bringing indictments against two of the individuals involved in plotting violence against Sikhs in the United States. But given how clear it is that there were more individuals involved, broader accountability measures are urgently needed. As noted by USCIRF in their 2025 Annual Report, the United States government and the GOI continued to strengthen their bilateral relationship in 2024, despite the constant flow of alarming revelations about the GOI's efforts to target religious minorities in the United States. Last February, for example, the State Department approved a sale of 31 armed drones, missiles, and

² Hanna Ziady, Paula Newton, and Tara John, "Canada Expels Indian Diplomats after Tying Agents to 'Serious Criminal Activity,'" CNN, Oct. 14, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/14/americas/canada-expels-indian-diplomats-intl-latam/index.html>.

³ Greg Miller and Gerry Shih, "Canada Alleges Much Wider Campaign by Modi Government Agents Against Sikhs," Washington Post, Oct. 14, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/10/14/canada-modi-sikhs-violence-india/>.

⁴ "RCMP statement on violent criminal activity occurring in Canada with connections to agents of the Government of India," Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Oct. 14, 2024, <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2024/rcmp-statement-violent-criminal-activity-occurring-canada-connections-agents-the>.

⁵ Id.

⁶ Maroosha Muzaffar, "Australia quietly expelled four Indian spies who targeted politicians and defence tech — report," Independent, June 18, 2024, <https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/australia-modi-indian-spies-sikhs-khalistan-b2564364.html>.



other equipment to India for almost \$4 billion.⁷ This came after then-Senator Benjamin Cardin placed a hold on the deal in response to news about the 2023 assassination attempt in New York, which he only removed after obtaining assurances from the Biden Administration of their commitment to obtaining credible accountability in that case⁸

Unfortunately, credible accountability has yet to come. In January, after more than a year of denying their involvement in the targeting of Sikhs abroad, the GOI's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) published a convoluted statement announcing the findings of the GOI's enquiry committee that was created to investigate the attempted assassination in New York City.⁹ In this statement, the MHA vaguely acknowledged that "the security interests of both India and the US" had been "undermined;" as a result, they recommend "legal action against an individual" and "functional improvements in systems and procedures as also initiation of steps that could strengthen India's response capability, ensure systematic controls and coordinated action in dealing with matters like this." The outgoing U.S. Ambassador to India under the Biden Administration, Eric Garcetti, called this statement "substantive" and "a really positive first step."¹⁰

In contrast to former Ambassador Garcetti, we are deeply concerned that the MHA's statement is nothing more than a superficial attempt by the GOI to claim that it is not accountable for transnational repression—in turn minimizing the significant role that high-ranking GOI officials almost certainly played in the 2023 plot and other instances of targeting Sikhs in North America. In our opinion, the body of evidence that has emerged from the Canadian government's own investigations into transnational repression makes it utterly unbelievable that the 2023 plot is the work of one individual and/or rogue elements. A foreign government that has been found by our Department of Justice, other nations, and major media outlets to be so intricately connected to efforts to kill, harm, or intimidate American citizens on American soil cannot be permitted to evade accountability by scapegoating one unnamed individual for an entire orchestrated campaign of violence with unspecific recommendations of "legal action." Of note, our concerns about the GOI's willingness to facilitate meaningful self-accountability are shared by Human Rights Watch.¹¹

⁷ "US approves \$4bn sale of armed drones to India," BBC, Feb. 1, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68150918>.

⁸ "Chair Cardin Statement on the Sale of MQ-9 Drones to India," Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Feb. 2, 2024, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/dem/release/chair-cardin-statement-on-sale-of-mq-9-drones-to-india>

⁹ "High Powered Enquiry Committee submits its report to the Government," Ministry of Home Affairs, Jan. 15, 2025, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2093056>.

¹⁰ Sachin Parashar, "Pannun probe substantive, led to outcomes we desired: US envoy," Times of India, Jan. 16, 2024, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/pannun-probe-substantive-led-to-outcomes-we-desired-us-envoy/articleshow/117307482.cms>.

¹¹ "India: Investigate Alleged Overseas Murder Plots," Human Rights Watch, Dec. 15, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/15/india-investigate-alleged-overseas-murder-plots>.



Simply put, we believe that prosecutions of individual operatives alone are insufficient to effectively hold the GOI accountable for its transnational targeting of Sikhs and to deter it from engaging in similar actions in the future. As articulated in a 2024 letter led by the Sikh Coalition and signed by 12 additional organizations representing Asian American and Pacific Islander communities around the country,¹² it is critical that the federal government address any and all acts of transnational repression through diplomatic strategies to hold perpetrator countries—including those that enjoy the status and associated benefits of being our political allies and strategic partners—accountable. For this reason, our organization continues to believe that the Department of State should accept USCIRF’s recommendation for the past six years and designate India as a CPC. As you know, doing so would encourage the U.S. government to adhere to more stringent sanctioning requirements regardless of political circumstances in either the United States or India. Until our government takes bold, unequivocal action to hold the GOI accountable and deter further acts of violence, harm, repression, or intimidation against U.S.-based Sikhs, we have no doubt that our community’s concerns will persist.

Moving decisively to address these events, however, is not just a matter of the safety and civil rights of Sikh Americans, but also Americans from numerous other communities. Traditional rivals and adversaries of the United States, like Russia, Iran, and China, must also know that the U.S. government will not stand for such operations being conducted within our borders. This behavior is a flagrant violation of our national security, our sovereignty, and internationally recognized democratic norms, and we cannot tolerate it regardless of the country or government from which it originates. For these reasons, your action now is imperative to America’s standing on the world stage.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, and your attention to this pressing matter. Our organization is prepared to meet with you and serve as both a resource and a thought partner if we can be of aid.

Best regards,



Graham F. West
Managing Director of Policy and Communications
The Sikh Coalition



Mannir Kaur
Federal Policy Manager
The Sikh Coalition

¹² Letter to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, House Committee on Homeland Security, and Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission from The Sikh Coalition et al., Mar. 25, 2023, <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Letter-on-TNR-from-the-Sikh-Coalition-and-Other-AAPI-Organizations.pdf>