

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500
Via electronic delivery

October 18, 2024

Re: Reiterating Our Request for a U.S. Investigation into the Government of India's Actions

Dear Mr. President:

Over the past year, the Sikh community in the United States has been shaken by a series of alarming revelations that have validated longstanding community concerns regarding transnational repression efforts by the government of India (GOI) targeting the North American Sikh diaspora.¹ We write to you again today after learning even more about the deep-rooted, widespread, and violent nature of the GOI's targeting of Sikhs in the United States and Canada.

As you are well aware, this week, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) unsealed a second superseding indictment charging a now-former member of the Indian government, Vikash Yadav, with "directing" the 2023 assassination plot against U.S.-based Sikhs,² and Yadav remains at large.³ Additional context also came to light this week as a result of the Canadian government's investigations into the extent of the GOI's involvement in several crimes against Sikhs across their country.⁴ **In light of these critical developments, we wish to reiterate the need for the United States to publicly commit to formally investigating the extent of the GOI's involvement in the attempted assassination of a Sikh American in New York last**

¹ "So Many Targets' Contextualizing Modern Indian Transnational Repression Against the Sikh Community," The Sikh Coalition, <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/So-Many-Targets-Sikh-Coalition-TNR-Report.pdf>.

² United States v. Vikash Yadav and Nikhil Gupta, Sealed Superseding Indictment, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1373831/dl> S2 23 Cr. 289 (VM).

³ "Justice Department Announces Charges Against Indian Government Employee in Connection with Foiled Plot to Assassinate U.S. Citizen in New York City," United States Department of Justice, Oct. 17, 2024, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-against-indian-government-employee-connection-foiled>.

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>.



year, and in other confirmed and potential instances of threats, harassment, and coercion against U.S.-based Sikhs.⁵ While we appreciate that federal agencies would be unable to disclose sensitive details of such an investigation, we believe that confirming such an investigation is essential to deterring further transnational repression from the GOI and affirming to Sikhs in the United States that their civil rights are protected and that they themselves are safe to report instances of Indian transnational repression to U.S. law enforcement.

New Information from Canadian Authorities and Public Reporting

On Thursday, the DOJ unsealed a second indictment related to a 2023 plot to assassinate U.S.-based Sikhs. In this latest indictment, Vikash Yadav—who “was employed by the Government of India’s Cabinet Secretariat, which houses India’s foreign intelligence service, the Research and Analysis Wing”—is alleged to have “directed” the plot to assassinate a specific Sikh American. Per the indictment, Yadav recruited Nikhil Gupta, an alleged arms and narcotics trafficker and the subject of the first unsealed indictment, and told him to hire a hitman to target this individual.

Of note, language in the indictment further validates the concern that Yadav and Gupta had “so many targets” for potential transnational repression within the United States. It also makes clear that there were additional parties involved in the conspiracy, including someone that Yadav refers to as “boss” as well as other individuals who were providing real-time updates as to the targeted Sikh’s location and movements throughout New York City. These data points indicate that there is clearly more investigative work to be done on at least two critical fronts. First, it is essential to understand what other street-level individuals (potentially with ties to organized crime—see below, given Canada’s investigation into similar connections) may have been involved in the plot and if they are still a danger to New York-based Sikhs. Second, and more importantly for long-term deterrence of Indian transnational repression, we must know what other GOI personnel, including diplomats and consular officials, were aware of and/or overseeing this plot at more senior levels.

On Monday, the Canadian government ordered six Indian diplomats to leave the country, including India’s top representative in Ottawa.⁶ According to new reporting by 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.⁷ That same day, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) broke

⁵ United States v. Nikhil Gupta, Sealed Superseding Indictment, S1 23 Cr. 289 (VM), <https://www.justice.gov/media/1326501/dl?inline>.

⁶ 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>.

⁷ 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/>.



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 GOI’s activities.⁸ The RCMP shared that they have uncovered information about the “breadth and depth of criminal activity orchestrated by agents of the Government of India, and consequential threats to the safety and security of Canadians and individuals living in Canada.” One such finding was that agents of the GOI have used individuals and businesses in Canada and elsewhere—sometimes by threatening and coercing them or their family members back in India—to collect information, and then used that information to target Sikhs in Canada.

The Washington Post expanded on this finding, stating that Canadian officials “described an operational ‘chain’ in which Indian diplomats in Canada collect intelligence on alleged Sikh separatists that is then used by [India’s Research and Analysis Wing, or ‘RAW’] to identify targets for attacks carried out by a criminal syndicate led by Lawrence Bishnoi . . .”⁹ Specifically, officials told reporters that they have uncovered evidence of the GOI’s involvement in home invasions, drive-by shootings, arson, and at least one additional killing—the murder of Sukhdool Singh, who was shot in Winnipeg two days after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau publicly acknowledged a potential link between the GOI and the murder of Sikh Canadian Hardeep Singh Nijjar last June. The Washington Post also reported that Ajit Doval, India’s national security adviser and “one of [Indian Prime Minister] Modi’s closest confidants,” admitted to Canadian officials during a meeting on Saturday that India used its diplomats in Canada to follow people, take pictures, “et cetera.”

Following the RCMP’s announcement, Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau was joined by Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly and Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc in emphasizing that the RCMP was sharing this information now despite the ongoing status of their investigations in an attempt to (1) keep Canadians safe, (2) disrupt the information sharing pattern involving Indian diplomats uncovered by the RCMP, and (3) ensure that Canadians feel safe knowing that the RCMP is acting on this matter.¹⁰ Of note, Minister Joly also 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.”¹¹

The Importance of a U.S. Investigation into the GOI’s Involvement in Targeting Sikhs

⁸ “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>.

⁹ See footnote 7.

¹⁰ “PM Trudeau accuses India of supporting criminal activity in Canada – October 14, 2024,” CPAC, Oct. 14, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdqgV-QjKnk>.

¹¹ Id.



We have written to you in the past to convey our concern for the safety of the Sikh community in the United States after the DOJ unsealed their indictment of Nikhil Gupta last November. Since last December,¹² we have requested that the United States conduct a thorough investigation into India's alleged covert activities against U.S.-based Sikhs, in addition to the DOJ's investigation into Nikhil Gupta's actions as a private Indian citizen, to ensure that India's ongoing self-investigation does not lead to an uncritical self-absolution of any wrongdoing. To be sure, the indictment of Yadav is a critical step forward—but a more wide-ranging investigation is still essential.

Public reporting has expressed that your administration is tracking the progress of the GOI's own investigation into this matter; specifically, before the indictment was unsealed on Thursday, a spokesperson for the Department of State told Reuters that they were "satisfied" to learn this that the GOI employee (now identified as Yadav) is "no longer an employee of the Indian government."¹³ Now that the information about Yadav's alleged misdeeds is public, however, public messaging that the United States is looking into other involved parties—including senior members of the GOI—is essential. **The GOI's firing of officials only after their egregious attempts at transnational repression cannot be the baseline for satisfactory conduct. If it is, India and other countries around the world will feel empowered to pursue their own interests within U.S. borders, knowing that they can simply disavow the direct perpetrators and claim ignorance of their activities without any higher-order consequences.**

The deeply alarming findings shared by the RCMP as a result of their multiple ongoing investigations of the GOI's involvement in criminal activity in Canada is further evidence to this point. Put simply, we do not believe that a government that has engaged in such an extensive campaign of coercion and violence elsewhere in North America can be relied upon to hold itself to account. Just like the Sikh community in Canada, Sikhs in the United States are facing an unprecedented moment during which they are questioning their own safety while attending their houses of worship, engaging in political discourse, or even just embodying their Sikh identities. As you are aware, on August 11, another Sikh activist and friend of Hardeep Singh Nijjar was targeted in a drive-by shooting in California.¹⁴ While state and federal law enforcement are still investigating this incident, it bears striking similarities to the assassination of Mr. Nijjar, and we are concerned that it may be the GOI's latest attempt to violently target Sikhs on American soil. **If the GOI is in fact continuing its extrajudicial targeting of Sikhs abroad, it cannot be relied upon to meaningfully hold itself to account for the attempted assassination in New**

¹² Letter from the Sikh Coalition to President Biden, Dec. 6, 2023, https://www.sikhcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Sikh-Coalition-12_06_23-POTUS-Letter-on-Transnational-Repression.pdf.

¹³ Daphne Psaledakis and Kanishka Singh, "US Calls Meeting with India on Foiled Sikh Murder Plot Productive," Reuters, Oct. 16, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-calls-meeting-with-india-probe-into-sikh-separatist-murder-plot-productive-2024-10-16/>.

¹⁴ Jaweed Kaleem and Jessica Garrison, "Shooting attempt on 'Khalistan' activist raises fears among Northern California Sikhs," Aug. 24, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-08-24/khalistan-shooting-sikh-northern-california>.



York. This belief is buttressed not only by our suspicions about the California shooting, but India's historic track record of impunity for human rights abuses in India, described by Human Rights Watch as a "thriving" pattern that is most evident in its extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, and other operations targeting Sikhs in Punjab between 1984 and 1995.¹⁵

Additional specific statements and actions by senior members of the Indian government have caused us to be skeptical of the GOI's investigation into its involvement in crimes against Sikhs abroad:

- According to Prime Minister Trudeau, the GOI has "repeatedly refused" to cooperate with the Canadian government's investigation into over a dozen threatening and violent acts in Canada, signaling the GOI's lack of interest in accountability for its involvement in targeting Sikhs abroad.
- On two separate occasions after the DOJ unsealed their indictment of Nikhil Gupta, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has bragged that the "new India comes into your home to kill you,"¹⁶ effectively asserting his approval of extrajudicial executions across borders.
- Bloomberg reported in March that the GOI was blaming "rogue operatives not authorized by the government"¹⁷ for the assassination attempt of a Sikh American in New York last year, which conflicts with the Washington Post's findings that high ranking members of the GOI likely approved of the assassination attempt.¹⁸ The Canadian government's labeling of six Indian diplomats, including India's high commissioner to Canada, as "persons of interest"¹⁹ in their investigations further suggests that the GOI's transnational targeting is a coordinated, intentional effort involving senior members of the GOI.

¹⁵ "Protecting the Killers: A Policy of Impunity in Punjab, India." Human Rights Watch, 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/10/17/protecting-killers/policy-impunity-punjab-india>; "Dead Silence: the legacy of human rights abuses in Punjab," Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, May 1, 1994, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/India0594.pdf>.

¹⁶ Andrew Phillips, "Opinion | 'This New India Comes into Your Home to Kill You.' Narendra Modi's Extraordinary Boast and the Death of a Sikh Activist," May 10, 2024, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/this-new-india-comes-into-your-home-to-kill-you-narendra-modis-extraordinary-boast-and/article_3fe781b8-0e36-11ef-b05d-937cf158aaaf.html; [@BaazNewsOrg] "Modi admitted in Parliament that India kills dissidents in other countries . . ." Twitter/X, July 2, 2024, <https://x.com/BaazNewsOrg/status/1808115776580092379>.

¹⁷ Sudhi Ranjan Sen and Anto Antony, "India Probe Finds Rogue Officials Involved in US Murder Plot," Bloomberg, Mar. 20, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-03-20/india-s-probe-finds-rogue-officials-involved-in-us-murder-plot>.

¹⁸ Miller, Greg, et al. "India's Intelligence Service Takes a Deadly Turn and Stuns Washington," The Washington Post, April 29, 2024, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/04/29/india-assassination-raw-sikhs-modi/>.

¹⁹ "Canada Expels India's Top Diplomat and Alleges Wider Diplomatic Involvement in Crimes," NPR, Oct. 15, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/10/15/g-s1-28245/canada-expels-indias-top-diplomat-and-alleges-wider-diplomatic-involvement-in-crimes>.



- The GOI and its proxies have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to conflate any Sikh with Khalistani²⁰ separatists, and any Sikh advocating for Sikh self-determination with extremists or terrorists. Several Indian media outlets labeled our own organization—a U.S.-based civil rights organization that takes no position on Khalistan—as “pro-Khalistani,” “separatist,” and “anti-India,” for simply attending a meeting convened by the White House to discuss transnational repression last month.²¹

For these reasons, **we urge your administration to protect U.S.-based Sikhs by formally committing to the investigation of the extent of the GOI’s involvement in all potential instances of transnational repression within our country.** We have previously sent you a full slate of recommended actions²² that your administration could take to address this matter, but it is our specific objective with this letter to emphasize the particularly urgent need for a federal investigation into the GOI’s covert activities and illicit targeting of American citizens and residents.

It is imperative that the Indian government is not permitted to absolve itself of accountability for its flagrant violations of human rights, the rule of law, and the sovereignty of our nation. Given the parallels between the GOI’s actions in Canada and the United States, and now knowing the magnitude of the threat that Canadian authorities believe the GOI poses to public safety, we believe that a federal investigation into the GOI’s actions is not only imperative to the safety of Sikh Americans, but to our national security. While we recognize, as ever, the tensions around these kinds of conversations with a political ally and strategic partner of the United States, we would argue that setting a standard of zero tolerance for transnational repression with our ‘friends’ sends a signal to our adversaries that is as necessary as it is powerful.

²⁰ Some members of the Sikh community advocate for the creation of a separate Sikh state called Khalistan. The Sikh Coalition does not take an institutional position on Khalistan, but firmly believes that all people have a right to free speech and a right to lawfully advocate for their beliefs.

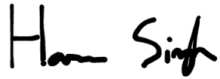
²¹ Abhishek Chakraborty, “In a First, White House Engages with Pro-Khalistan Groups, Gives Assurance,” NDTV, Sept. 21, 2024, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/in-a-first-white-house-engages-with-pro-khalistan-groups-gives-assurance-6617134>; “Why House Officials Met Pro-Khalistan Activists Ahead of Modi’s US Visit,” The Week, Sept. 21, 2024, <https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2024/09/21/white-house-officials-meet-pro-khalistan-activists-ahead-of-modis-us-visit.html>; “US Officials Met Sikhs Groups Before President Biden Hosted PM Modi, Here is How These Organisations are Khalistani Sympathisers,” Sept. 22, 2024, https://www.opindia.com/2024/09/pro-khalistani-elements-met-us-officials-at-white-house/#google_vignette; Anirban Bhaumik, “Before Biden-Modi Talks, US Officials Meet Anti-India Pro-Khalistani American Sikhs,” Sept. 21, 2024, <https://www.deccanherald.com/world/before-biden-modi-talks-us-officials-meet-anti-india-pro-khalistani-american-sikhs-3201244>.

²² “Sikh Coalition: Transnational Repression Federal Policy Recommendations,” Last updated September 2024, https://docs.google.com/document/d/11QHdQTclb6BSjV8Kehq0DCcc_9hww9XZKsxaDeYy_iE/edit?tab=.0.



Your leadership in this matter is crucial to safeguarding not only the Sikh community, but also the foundational values of our nation and our standing on the world stage. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Best regards,



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