

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

January 21, 2025

Re: Indian Transnational Repression Targeting Sikhs in the United States

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Sikh Coalition, the nation's largest Sikh civil rights organization. By way of background, the Sikh Coalition was founded in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, in response to a torrent of hate crimes against members of the Sikh religious community throughout the United States. Our mission since then has been to work towards a world where Sikhs and other religious communities in America can freely practice their faith without bias and discrimination.

We write to you today regarding the concerning matter of the government of India's (GOI's) transnational repression of the Sikh community in the United States, a breathtaking violation of U.S. sovereignty and bold attack on Americans, on American soil. Over the past two years, 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 targeting the North American Sikh diaspora,¹ including a growing body of evidence indicating that high ranking officials within the GOI were involved in actual and attempted assassinations of Sikh activists on Canadian² and U.S.³ soil, increased clandestine security and surveillance operations targeting Sikhs,⁴ and the use of a criminal syndicate to carry out a widespread campaign of violence and intimidation against Sikhs.⁵ To date, the

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 John Paul Tasker, "Trudeau accuses India's government of involvement in killing of Canadian Sikh leader," CBC, Sep. 18, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-indian-government-nijjar-1.6970498>.

³ "Justice Department Announces Charges in Connection with Foiled Plot to Assassinate U.S. Citizen in New York City," U.S. Department of Justice, Nov. 29, 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-connection-foiled-plot-assassinate-us-citizen-new-york>.

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.



Department of Justice has unsealed indictments⁶ of two Indian nationals, including a former employee of the GOI's foreign intelligence agency, called the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), for attempting to coordinate the assassination of a Sikh American activist in New York city last year. Several sources, including but not limited to those unsealed indictments by the DOJ, indicate that the GOI has targeted several members of the U.S.-based Sikh community for violence and coercion, and that individuals involved in these plots remain at large.

Last week, after more than one year of denying their involvement in the targeting of Sikhs abroad, the GOI's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) published a convoluted statement⁷ announcing the findings of the GOI's enquiry committee that was created to investigate the attempted assassination in New York City. In this statement, the MHA vaguely acknowledged that "the security interests of both India and the US" had been "undermined," and that 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 most recent U.S. Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, called this statement "substantive" and "a really positive first step" last week.⁸

In contrast to 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 last year's attempted assassination 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 (see more below) makes it utterly unbelievable that the 2023 U.S.-based assassination 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."

In light of the overwhelming and ever-growing body of evidence indicating that the GOI violated our national sovereignty, targeted Americans on American soil, and that the individuals responsible for these efforts remain at large, we urge your administration to take decisive action,

⁶ *United States of America v. Vikash Yadav and Nikhil Gupta*, S2 23 Cr. 289 (VM), Sealed Superseding Indictment, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1373831/dl>; *United States of America v. Vikash Yadav and Nikhil Gupta*, S2 23 Cr. 289 (VM), Sealed Superseding Indictment, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1373831/dl>.

⁷ "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>.

⁸ 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>.



and to remain skeptical of the GOI's effort to assign blame for its campaign of violence against Sikhs to others.

I. A Transnational Assassination Thwarted by the United States

On November 29, 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) unsealed an indictment—mentioned above—detailing charges against Nikhil Gupta, an Indian arms and narcotics trafficker, who was allegedly recruited by a representative of the GOI to plan at least one assassination of a Sikh American in New York City.⁹ Per text messages included in the indictment, the murder was to be timed around both assassination of Mr. Hardeep Singh Nijjar—a Canadian Sikh activist who was murdered in British Columbia earlier that year—and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's June 2023 state visit to the United States. Moreover, at least three additional similar plots were in the works; Gupta wrote to his contact (actually an undercover Drug Enforcement Administration agent) that there were “so many targets” to pursue.

One year later on October 17, 2024, the DOJ unsealed a second indictment against the then-RAW officer, a man named Vikash Yadav, who was directing this plot.¹⁰ Allegations in the indictment, along with public reporting, have suggested that more senior RAW officers and other individuals in Prime Minister Modi's government likely knew about the plans to assassinate Sikhs abroad. The DOJ's indictment states that Yadav shared with Gupta real-time intel on the movement of their intended victim, at one point telling Gupta that the targeted individual “is not at home according to our sources,” and advising Gupta to ensure “his presence before entering inside.” On the same occasion, Yadav also told Gupta that he “got the message from boss.” These allegations imply 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, who he referred to as “boss” and was presumably in or connected to the RAW, was also involved in tracking the intended victim's movements.

To the Sikh community in the United States, the DOJ's indictments were a welcome step towards recognizing and combating Indian transnational repression—but they also made it clear that a foreign government was actively targeting members of our community for assassination in our homeland, that individuals involved in these plots remain at large, and that they presumably remain a threat to our safety.

⁹ “Justice Department Announces Charges in Connection with Foiled Plot to Assassinate U.S. Citizen in New York City,” U.S. Department of Justice, Nov. 29, 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-connection-foiled-plot-assassinate-us-citizen-new-york>.

¹⁰ *United States of America v. Vikash Yadav and Nikhil Gupta*, S2 23 Cr. 289 (VM), Sealed Superseding Indictment, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1373831/dl>.



II. A Parallel Campaign of Violence in Canada

The United States was not the only country approaching a reckoning with Indian transnational repression in 2023. On September 18 of that year, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canadian intelligence agencies were “pursuing credible allegations of a potential link” between the government of India and the June 2023 murder of Mr. Nijjar in British Columbia.¹¹ Mr. Nijjar—a plumber, gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) president, and Khalistan¹² referendum organizer—was shot to death in his car outside of a gurdwara. His assailants, who riddled his body with 34 bullets, fled the scene on foot before escaping in a getaway car—details suggesting not just a premeditated murder, but a planned assassination.¹³

Roughly one year after Prime Minister Trudeau’s announcement, the Canadian government ordered six Indian diplomats to leave their country, including India’s top representative in Ottawa.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ On the same day, 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 due to “the significant threat to public safety” in Canada posed by the GOI’s activities.¹⁶ 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.

¹¹ John Paul Tasker, “Trudeau accuses India’s government of involvement in killing of Canadian Sikh leader,” CBC, Sep. 18, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-indian-government-nijjar-1.6970498>.

¹² 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.

¹³ Norimitsu Onishi and Ian Austen, “Two Hooded Gunmen, a Silver Getaway Car and a Slain Sikh Leader,” New York Times, Sep. 23, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/23/world/canada/canada-india-sikhs.html>.

¹⁴ 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>.

¹⁵ 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/>.

¹⁶ “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>.



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 [was] then used by RAW to identify targets for attacks carried out by a criminal syndicate led by Lawrence Bishnoi . . . 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 [Nijjar] murder.”¹⁷ The 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...that India used its diplomats in Canada to follow people, take pictures, “et cetera.” Shortly afterwards, Canadian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Morrison publicly confirmed that he told the Washington Post that Indian Home Minister Amit Shah had ordered a campaign of violence, intimidation and intelligence-gathering targeting Sikhs in Canada.¹⁸

Following the RCMP’s announcement, 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.¹⁹ 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.”²⁰

III. Further Evidence of the GOI’s Clandestine Activities Within U.S. Borders

Though the GOI had broadly denied any culpability in plots to assassinate Sikhs in the United States or Canada, a steady stream of reporting continues to provide evidence that this is not the case. Reporting has confirmed that Sikhs in the United States were warned about threats to their lives by federal law enforcement following Mr. Nijjar’s death—just as Mr. Nijjar himself had been.²¹ Moreover, the Washington Post’s interviews with dozens of “current and former senior officials in the United States, India, Canada, Britain, Germany and Australia” have provided additional critical insights, including the above mentioned point, since validated by the DOJ’s

¹⁷ See footnote 15.

¹⁸ “Canada alleges Indian Home Minister Amit Shah ordered campaign targeting Sikh separatists,” The Washington Post, Oct. 29, 2024, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/10/29/canada-india-amit-shah-sikh/364e1270-9644-11ef-939a-5dd38bf140e0_story.html.

¹⁹ “PM Trudeau accuses India of supporting criminal activity in Canada – October 14, 2024,” CPAC, Oct. 14, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdqQV-QjKnk>.

²⁰ Id.

²¹ Murtaza Hussain, “FBI Warned Sikhs in the U.S. About Death Threats After Killing of Sikh Canadian Activist,” The Intercept, Sep. 23, 2023, <https://theintercept.com/2023/09/23/sikhs-fbi-canada-india-nijjar/>.



second indictment and Canada’s additional allegations, that more senior RAW officers and other individuals in Mr. Modi’s government likely knew about the plans to assassinate Sikhs abroad.²²

The Post’s reporting in particular explores the context of the growing reach and changing philosophy (shifting to a strategy of “offensive defense”) of the RAW and other elements within Mr. Modi’s government, including Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval. The Post’s inclusion of former RAW chief Samant Goel as someone who likely green-lit the assassinations is particularly relevant given his documented role in GOI’s previous genocidal violence against Sikhs. Per human rights organization Ensaaf, which studies and documents the Sikh Genocide of 1984 and subsequent repression, “at least 128 enforced enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions were committed under [Goel’s] command during his tenure as Senior Superintendent of Police in various jurisdictions of Punjab in the 1990s.”²³

This general assertion that the GOI is increasingly willing to use transnational repression to accomplish policy goals is corroborated by an alleged memo from India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), leaked in December 2023, which “instructed its consulates in North America to launch a ‘sophisticated crackdown scheme’ against Sikh diaspora organizations,” including organizations in the United States.²⁴ The MEA memo lists the names of several members of the Sikh diaspora, including Mr. Nijjar, who was assassinated two months after the memo was issued. In the MEA memo, Sikhs’ expressions of free speech and political dissent were conflated with extremism and terrorism as the MEA mischaracterized its targeting of Sikhs abroad as a fight against Khalistani “extremism.”

More worryingly, the MEA memo admits India’s frustration with those who were “actively engaged in anti-India propaganda, attempting to degrade India’s international image” and that the United States and Canada were “asserting that these organizations have not committed any crime within their territories.” Nonetheless, the MEA memo identifies three requests of Indian missions and consulates in the United States:

1. Increase clandestine security operations, including a “sophisticated crackdown scheme” on Sikhs in the United States and Canada and increased surveillance between Sikhs and elected officials;
2. Influence authorities, think tanks, and political figures to foster a “favorable atmosphere”; and

²² Greg Miller, Gary Shih, and Ellen Nakashima, “An assassination plot on American soil reveals a darker side of Modi’s India,” *The Washington Post*, Apr. 29, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/04/29/india-assassination-raw-sikhs-modi/>.

²³ “Samant Kumar Goel,” Ensaaf, <https://data.ensaaf.org/official/S0024/detail/>.

²⁴ Murtaza Hussain and Ryan Grim, “Secret Indian Memo Ordered ‘Concrete Measures’ Against Hardeep Singh Nijjar Two Months Before His Assassination in Canada,” *The Intercept*, Dec. 10, 2023, <https://theintercept.com/2023/12/10/india-sikhs-leaked-memo-us-canada/>.



3. Cultivate a “vital force in the street” through U.S.-based organizations (including the U.S.-India Business Council, Indiaspora, among other organizations).

Mr. Modi makes no secret of his government’s ideological orientation, nor that it is willing to indulge in clandestine activities, including extrajudicial assassinations, abroad. On two separate occasions last year, Mr. Modi publicly bragged that the “new India comes into your home to kill you,”²⁵ effectively asserting his approval of extrajudicial executions across borders.

Taken together, the MEA memo, the emerging evidence in and research around the Canadian and U.S. investigations, and the continued hardline rhetoric from the GOI and its media apparatus make it clear: India is increasingly willing to engage in transnational repression.

IV. Conclusion

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. Accordingly, we respectfully request that your administration take action to pursue accountability for the GOI, and for all of the individuals involved in targeting U.S. Sikhs, regardless of the GOI’s most recent statement attempting to assign blame for an entire international campaign of violence to one unnamed individual. During your inauguration speech, you committed to moving with “purpose and speed” to bring “safety and peace for citizens of every race, religion, color and creed.”²⁶ To hold true to your commitment, it is crucial for your administration to pursue policy recommendations, including and beyond those appended to this letter, with regard to this issue.

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.

²⁵ 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>.

²⁶ Melissa Quinn, Caitlin Yilek, “Read the full transcript of Trump’s inauguration speech,” CBS News, Jan. 20, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-trump-inauguration-speech-2025/>.



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.

Respectfully,



Harman Singh
Executive Director
The Sikh Coalition



Mannirmal Kaur
Federal Policy Manager
The Sikh Coalition

- I. **Address the Government of India’s (GOI) attempt to assassinate a Sikh American in New York City and other acts of transnational repression meaningfully and decisively, without allowing it to evade accountability because of its status as a political ally and strategic partner.**
 - A. **The Department of Justice should push forward with their ongoing cases against both Nikhil Gupta and Vikash Yadav, while also conducting its own investigation into all other actors involved in the 2023 plot to assassinate U.S.-based Sikhs.** The Yadav indictment in particular alleges the involvement of other parties, including a “boss” as well as street-level operators who were tracking the target’s location. It is essential that both the firsthand perpetrators of transnational repression and those directing their behavior within foreign governments are held accountable, and no country should be able to absolve themselves of transnational repression.
 - B. **Specifically, the Department of Justice and Department of State should fully investigate the allegations that other, more senior officials within the RAW or elsewhere within the GOI were involved in the 2023 assassination plot—and charge, sanction, or expel individuals accordingly.**
 1. Holding foreign intelligence officers accountable for transnational repression is essential, as the United States has chosen to do before in



cases of transnational repression and foreign interference orchestrated by Russian²⁷ and Iranian²⁸ intelligence officers.

2. Of note, the Khashoggi Ban, 212(a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (“Khashoggi Ban”) and the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (GMHRA), both of which allow for foreign individuals to be prohibited from entering the United States and conducting property transactions.
3. The United States should also consider expelling Indian intelligence officers and/or diplomats as is relevant (as Canadian and Australian authorities have done) either to directly protect Sikhs under threat or send a broader message of disapproval to Delhi.

C. The Department of State should designate India as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). Recommended by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) since 2020,²⁹ designating India as a CPC on the basis of its worsening treatment of religious minorities will encourage the U.S. government to adhere to more stringent sanctioning requirements regardless of political circumstances in either the United States or India.

D. Obtain concrete assurances that India will cease its transnational targeting. Bilateral conversations with GOI representatives have to stay razor-focused on accountability, given the unprecedented and egregious nature of the plots against U.S.-based Sikhs documented by the DOJ and corroborated by public reporting. No country should be allowed to self-investigate or self-absolve from accusations of transnational repression. We are hopeful that you can lean on your strong personal relationship with Mr. Modi to receive such assurances in a public forum.

II. Enhance interagency coordination, community partnerships, and international collaboration to address and prevent transnational repression.

A. All federal agencies that work to combat transnational repression, including the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, Department of State, and the National Security Council, should enhance collaboration with international partners to combat Indian transnational repression. It is increasingly clear that other liberal democracies are unwilling to

²⁷ “Treasury Sanctions Russian Intelligence Officers Supervising Election Influence Operations in the United States and Around the World,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, June 23, 2023, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1572>.

²⁸ “Treasury Sanctions Iranian Intelligence Network Targeting Iranian-American Activist in the United States,” Sept. 3, 2021, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0343>.

²⁹ “USCIRF Deeply Concerned by India’s Transnational Repression Against Religious Minorities,” USCIRF, Dec. 15, 2023, <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-deeply-concerned-indias-transnational-repression-against>; “USCIRF Releases Report on India’s Collapsing Religious Freedom Conditions,” USCIRF, Oct. 2, 2024, <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-releases-report-indias-collapsing-religious-freedom-conditions>.



stand for the GOI's encroachment of the civil rights of Sikh diasporic communities, and some partners have a head start of years on the United States in terms of effectively countering this behavior.

1. At minimum, the U.S. government should enhance coordination and cooperation with Five Eyes allies specific to India's efforts to target Sikhs and other diaspora communities.
 2. The U.S. government must also commit multilateral support to Canada and the United Kingdom specifically in efforts to have India comply with investigations to determine India's role in transnational repression and foreign interference into domestic affairs at the national, state, and local levels.
- B. The National Security Council should continue to lead and grow its interagency working group on transnational repression.** Effectively addressing transnational repression requires interagency coordination.
- C. All federal agencies that work to combat transnational repression should engage with impacted communities to better understand their experiences and needs.** Federal agencies should continue to host listening sessions, roundtable discussions, and community calls to hear from impacted communities and, to the extent possible, facilitate transparency in their work to address transnational repression.

