

**Statement for the Record from
The Sikh Coalition**

**United States Commission on
International Religious Freedom**

**Hearing on Deteriorating Religious
Freedom Conditions in India**

May 7, 2026

The Sikh Coalition respectfully submits this statement for the record in connection with the above-referenced hearing before the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).¹ As a civil rights organization that represents the Sikh community in the United States and addresses violations of civil rights and liberties, we seek to ensure that religious freedom and democracy are mutually advanced for Sikhs and other communities both in the United States and abroad.

This submission draws attention to an escalating pattern of transnational repression and religious freedom violations affecting Sikh communities, with particular focus on actions linked to the government of India. Since 2023, a series of developments—including a foiled assassination plot targeting a Sikh American in New York, the killing of a Sikh activist in Canada, and mounting evidence of coordinated intimidation, surveillance, and violence across North America—have raised urgent concerns about the safety and civil liberties of Sikh diaspora communities. These incidents reflect a broader and deeply concerning convergence of domestic repression within India and extraterritorial transgressions abroad. As this statement outlines, the persistence of impunity for past atrocity crimes combined with the expanding use of state power to suppress dissent, poses a direct challenge to international religious freedom and to the security of U.S.-based Sikhs.

I. Department of Justice's Indictment Against Indian Government Official

The unfolding prosecution of the 2023 assassination plot targeting U.S.-based Sikh dissidents has exposed alarming evidence of a coordinated campaign of Indian transnational repression. In 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed its initial indictment against Nikhil Gupta, an Indian arms and narcotics trafficker, detailing his role in a conspiracy to assassinate Sikh American activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York.² The indictment contained allegations that corroborate India's alleged role in the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian Sikh activist who was murdered in Canada in June 2023. Gupta's communications in the indictment revealed involvement in at least three additional assassination plots beyond the foiled New York operation. Additionally,

¹ By way of background, the Sikh Coalition is the largest Sikh civil rights organization in the United States. Our organization was founded in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, in response to a torrent of hate crimes and acts of discrimination against Sikhs throughout the United States. In the 25 years since, our mission has been to work towards a world where Sikhs and other religious minorities in America can freely practice their faith without bias, bigotry, and backlash.

² U.S. Department of Justice. "U.S. Attorney Announces Charges Justice Department Announces Charges in Connection with Foiled Plot to Assassinate U.S. Citizen in New York City." *U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York*, November 29, 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-connection-foiled-plot-assassinate-us-citizen-new>.



the DOJ unsealed a superseding indictment in 2024 charging Vikash Yadav, a former government of India employee and officer in India's foreign intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), with coordinating the plot.³ The allegations in the indictment indicated that Vikash Yadav coordinated with individuals surveilling the intended victim in New York and reported to a higher-level figure—referred to as “boss”—who was likely a senior Indian government official overseeing the operation. These findings align with reporting by *The Washington Post*,⁴ which cited U.S. intelligence assessments indicating that then-RAW chief Samant Goel authorized the operation while senior officials, including National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, were likely aware of the plot.⁵ The DOJ further characterized the New York plot as only “one of a series of murders that the conspirators planned of Sikh dissidents” across North America.⁶

In February 2026, Gupta pleaded guilty to his role in the murder-for-hire scheme, reinforcing the credibility of underlying allegations that he acted under the direction of an Indian state actor to assassinate at least one U.S.-based Sikh activist.⁷ Federal authorities have made clear that Nikhil Gupta did not act alone: FBI Assistant Director Roman Rozhavsky described him as a “key participant,” while FBI Assistant Director in Charge James C. Barnacle Jr. stated that Gupta was “facilitating a foreign adversary’s unlawful effort to silence a vocal critic of the Indian government.”⁸ Concern over the implications of this plot had reached the highest levels of U.S. policymaking in the past; in early 2024, the then-Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, former Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland, explicitly linked approval of a pending U.S. arms sale to India to assurances from the U.S. government that India would pursue a thorough investigation resulting in “credible accountability.”⁹ Despite these assurances, however, meaningful accountability remains elusive. Vikash Yadav continues to evade arrest under a U.S. federal warrant,¹⁰ and higher-ranking Indian officials credibly implicated in public reporting and intelligence assessments have yet to be investigated or held responsible. Efforts by the government of India¹¹ to portray Yadav as a rogue actor are not only inconsistent with the weight of available evidence, but also obscure the broader chain of command behind this operation. Until all responsible individuals—including those at senior levels—are fully investigated, apprehended, and prosecuted, justice in this case remains unfinished, and the threat to Sikh communities across North America will endure.

II. Escalating Evidence of Indian Transnational Repression in Canada

³ 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>.

⁴ Greg Miller & Gerry Shih, “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/>.

⁵ Editorial Board, “A murder plot that cannot be ignored: India must come clean at last,” *The Washington Post*, Apr. 30, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/04/30/india-murder-assassination-plot-investigation/>.

⁶ *United States v. Gupta*, 1:23-cr-00289, Motion in Limine (S.D.N.Y. Sep 22, 2025), ECF No. 109, p. 22, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.600440/gov.uscourts.nysd.600440.109.0.pdf>.

⁷ Stephanie Kirchgaessner, “Indian man accused of plot to assassinate US activist pleads guilty,” *The Guardian*, Feb. 13, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/13/nikhil-gupta-assassination-plot-pleads-guilty>.

⁸ U.S. Department of Justice, “Indian National Pleads Guilty To Plotting To Assassinate U.S. Citizen In New York City,” *U.S. Attorney’s Office, Southern District of New York*, February 13, 2026, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/indian-national-pleads-guilty-plotting-assassinate-us-citizen-new-york-city>.

⁹ “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>.

¹⁰ “Vikash Yadav,” *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/counterintelligence/vikash-yadav>.

¹¹ “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>.



Since 2023, Canada has emerged as a central locus of Indian transnational repression with developments that carry direct implications for the United States given the cross-border nature of the underlying networks and operations. The June 2023 assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia marked a turning point,¹² with subsequent investigations by Canadian authorities identifying credible links between Indian officials and their repressive tactics against the Sikh diaspora. By October 2024, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) publicly stated that it had “strong evidence” tying a broader campaign of violence and intimidation on Canadian soil to the “highest levels” of the Indian government,¹³ including the use of diplomatic and consular channels to collect intelligence on Sikh dissidents and relay that information to criminal networks carrying out violent acts. Reporting by *The Washington Post* further indicated that this campaign of violence was authorized by senior Indian officials, including India’s Home Affairs Minister Amit Shah.¹⁴ These findings were, in turn, reinforced in early 2025 by Canada’s federal foreign interference commission, which concluded that Indian activities primarily targeted the approximately 800,000 members of the Sikh diaspora in Canada,¹⁵ while a later report by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) identified transnational repression as central to India’s foreign interference activities in Canada.¹⁶ Parallel concerns were raised internationally in a 2025 communication by United Nations Human Rights Council special rapporteurs, who warned of “continuing, systematic attacks” against Sikh activists in North America, which include surveillance, harassment, intimidation, and the planning of physical violence.¹⁷

Throughout 2025, this campaign manifested in a sustained wave of violence and coercion in Canada, including over 100 reported incidents targeting Sikh individuals through extortion, shootings, and threats.¹⁸ Canadian authorities linked much of this activity to the Bishnoi criminal network, later designated a terrorist entity by Canada, with law enforcement assessments indicating that the Bishnoi gang was acting “on behalf of the Indian government.”¹⁹ Developments in 2026 have only heightened these concerns. Canadian authorities have continued in issuing warnings of credible threats against not only Sikh activists but also their families,²⁰ a pattern that has also emerged in the UK.²¹ Reporting by *The Globe and Mail* vindicated that Indian consular officials in Vancouver played a direct role in supplying the intelligence used in Mr. Nijjar’s

¹² John Paul Tasker, “Trudeau Accuses India’s Government of Involvement in Killing of Canadian Sikh Leader,” *CBC News*, Sep. 18, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-indian-government-nijjar1.6970498>.

¹³ Catharine Tunney, “RCMP Says Evidence Links Violent Activity to ‘Highest Levels’ of Indian Government,” *CBC News*, Oct. 25, 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/rcmp-duheme-india-highest-levels-1.7363981>.

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

¹⁵ Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions, *Final Report, Volume 1*, Jan. 28, 2025, https://foreigninterferencecommission.ca/fileadmin/report_volume_1.pdf.

¹⁶ Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *CSIS Public Report 2024*, Mar. 2025, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/images/2024publicreport/newest/Public_Report_2024-ENG.pdf.

¹⁷ UN Special Rapporteurs, “Joint Letter of Allegation Addressed to India (AL IND 10/2024),” Nov. 19, 2024, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29509>.

¹⁸ Rumneek Johal, “There’s a Wave of Violence Targeting Canadian Sikhs, and the Government Seems Powerless to Stop It,” *PressProgress*, Nov. 18, 2025, <https://pressprogress.ca/wave-of-violence-targeting-canadian-sikhs/>.

¹⁹ Public Safety Canada, “Government of Canada Lists the Bishnoi Gang as a Terrorist Entity,” Sep. 29, 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2025/09/government-of-canada-lists-the-bishnoi-gang-as-a-terrorist-entity.html>.

²⁰ Dan Sabbagh, “Canadian Sikh Activist Faces Fresh Death Threats on Eve of Carney Visit to India,” *The Guardian*, Feb. 26, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/feb/26/moninder-singh-sikh-separatist-activist-death-threats-carney-india-canada>.

²¹ Haroon Siddique, “Sikh Activist in UK Told to Increase Security over Hindu Nationalist Threats,” *The Guardian*, Jan. 12, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/jan/12/sikh-activist-uk-increase-security-hindu-nationalist-threats>.



assassination, including through coercive information-gathering practices.²² Notably, the same Indian intelligence official implicated in the U.S.-based assassination plot—Vikash Yadav—has been identified as connected to elements of the Canadian operation, reinforcing the conclusion that Indian transnational repression has been coordinated across North America. Despite the scale and seriousness of these findings, no Indian diplomatic or consular officials have been criminally charged, and implicated individuals remain beyond the reach of accountability.

All of these developments cannot be viewed in isolation from the United States. The same networks, actors, and methods identified in Canada have been directly implicated in the foiled New York assassination plot, underscoring the integrated, North America-wide scope of this repression campaign.²³ Canadian authorities thoroughly made public how Indian diplomatic personnel and consular infrastructure had gathered intelligence on Sikh activists;²⁴ this intelligence was then operationalized through intermediaries, including organized crime groups like the Bishnoi gang.²⁵ If such methods were employed through Indian consulates in Vancouver and elsewhere in Canada, it raises urgent and unresolved questions as to whether similar activities have occurred through Indian diplomatic missions in the United States in connection with plots targeting Sikh Americans.²⁶ There are already documented instances of U.S.-based Indian consulates interfering in lower-stakes matters related to the Sikh diaspora, including the exertion of immigration pressure on Sikhs critical of Prime Minister Modi and efforts to commemorate historical anti-Sikh violence by the Indian state.²⁷

For U.S. policymakers, the implications are clear: The pattern of transnational repression documented in Canada is neither geographically contained nor operationally distinct from threats facing Sikh communities in the United States. Instead, it reflects a cross-border campaign in which intelligence, coercion, and violence are all being deployed in a coordinated manner against the Sikh diaspora. Absent meaningful accountability and preventive measures, the same mechanisms used to target Canadians may continue to be deployed within the United States, posing ongoing risks to civil liberties, national sovereignty, and the safety of Sikh Americans.

III. Emerging Threats to Sikh Americans: Transnational Repression on U.S. Soil

Evidence emerging from U.S. investigations and parallel reporting indicates that the threat of Indian transnational repression is taking a broader and ongoing campaign targeting Sikh communities within the United States. As outlined in the indictment related to the New York assassination plot, there remains an ongoing threat of assassination against an unknown number of U.S. Sikhs,

²² Robert Fife & Steven Chase, “Evidence Links Indian Officials at Vancouver Consulate to Killing of Sikh Activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar,” *The Globe and Mail*, Mar. 1, 2026, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-hardeep-singh-nijjar-evidence-india-vancouver-consulate-killing-sikh/>.

²³ Al Jazeera, “Canada Labels India’s Bishnoi Gang as ‘Terrorist’ Organisation,” *Al Jazeera*, Sep. 29, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/29/canada-labels-indias-bishnoi-gang-as-terrorist-organisation>.

²⁴ Atul Dev, “‘Lawrence Is Karma’: The Gangster Who Became an Icon of Modi’s India,” *The Guardian*, Apr. 23, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/apr/23/lawrence-bishnoi-gangster-icon-modi-india>.

²⁵ Stewart Bell, “RCMP Report Says Bishnoi Gang ‘Acting on Behalf of’ Indian Government,” *Global News*, Jan. 13, 2026, <https://globalnews.ca/news/11609940/rcmp-report-bishnoi-gang-acting-on-behalf-of-indian-government/>.

²⁶ Jaskaran Sandhu & Karam Singh, “How Indian Agents Are Operating Out of Indian Consulates to Target Sikhs in the West,” *Baaz News*, Dec. 11, 2023, <https://www.baaznews.org/p/indian-consulates-indian-intelligence-nexus>.

²⁷ Sikh Coalition, “So Many Targets: Contextualizing Modern Indian Transnational Repression Against the Sikh Community” (Second Edition), Nov., 2024, <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/v2.0-So-Many-Targets-Sikh-Coalition-TNR-Report.pdf>.



supported by an international criminal network that includes individuals linked to the government of India.²⁸ Public reporting has reinforced these concerns. A leaked April 2023 memorandum from India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reportedly instructed consulates across the United States and Canada to implement a "sophisticated crackdown scheme"²⁹ targeting Sikh diaspora organizations, including in the United States, explicitly naming individuals such as Hardeep Singh Nijjar—who was assassinated shortly thereafter—and framing lawful political expression on Khalistan³⁰ as extremism. The memo further recommended cultivating a "force in the street" that has since been presumably deployed to routinely intimidate Sikh activists, elected officials³¹ and gurdwara leaders.³²

These concerns are further amplified by the growing role of Indian government-linked criminal networks operating within the United States. Recent reporting indicates that the Bishnoi gang, listed as a terrorist entity by Canada, has expanded its operations into the United States, including California, where it has engaged in coordinated campaigns of extortion and intimidation targeting Sikh communities.³³ Investigations have linked the network to a wider pattern of threats in which Sikh business owners are coerced through violence or threats directed at their family members both in the United States and in India. Federal authorities, including the FBI, have warned of a marked increase in such activity, noting that individuals have been threatened with physical harm or death if extortion demands are not met.³⁴ The manifestation of Indian transnational repression through criminal proxies, a pattern that was already documented in Canada, now appears to be manifesting within the United States, reinforcing concerns that tactics used to surveil, intimidate, and harm Sikh activists in neighbor countries are beginning to be replicated domestically.³⁵ In this context, the presence and expansion of such networks on U.S. soil underscores the urgent need to treat these developments not as isolated criminal phenomena, but as components of a broader pattern of Indian transnational repression with direct implications for U.S. sovereignty and the safety of Sikh Americans.

IV. Anti-Sikh Atrocity Crimes and Rising Authoritarianism in India

²⁸ Sarah N. Lynch, Wa Lone & Jorge Garcia, "Some U.S. Sikhs Fear Modi Government Is Threatening, Surveilling and Doxxing Them," *Reuters*, Aug. 13, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/some-us-sikhs-fear-modi-government-is-threatening-surveilling-doxxing-them-2024-08-12/>.

²⁹ Murtaza Hussain & 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/>.

³⁰ The demand for self-determination by Sikhs to create a homeland called Khalistan has roots in the historical and cultural differences between the Punjabi Sikhs and the Indian state. Sikhs have a distinct identity and many believe that their rights and interests have been ignored or suppressed by the Indian state for more than four decades. Therefore, the demand for self-determination is not just a political issue, but also a cultural and social one. Genocidal violence by India targeting the Sikh community also plays a significant role in legitimate requests for self-determination.

³¹ Murtaza Hussain, "As Modi Visits D.C., Sikh Americans Say Surveillance and Threats Continue," *Drop Site*, Feb. 14, 2025, <https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/as-modi-visits-dc-sikh-americans>.

³² Sikh Coalition, "On Transnational Repression and Religious Freedom," *Sikh Coalition*, Oct. 27, 2025, <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/blog/2025/on-transnational-repression-and-religious-freedom/>.

³³ Gagandeep Singh, "How Gangs Connected to India Are Terrorizing a California Immigrant Community," *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 18, 2026, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-04-18/how-gangs-connected-to-india-are-terrorizing-california-immigrant-community>.

³⁴ Kryss Shahin, "FBI Warns of Extortion Scheme Targeting People of Indian Descent," *ABC10*, May 7, 2024, <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/crime/fbi-warning-targeted-indian-descent-extortion/103-57596491-104b-498d-b43b-31bdbb697ceb/>.

³⁵ Leyland Cecco, "Canadian Intelligence Accuses India over Sikh's Killing as Carney Meets Modi," *The Guardian*, Jun. 18, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/18/canada-india-assassination-carney-modi>.



The current landscape of repression facing Sikh communities—both within India and across the diaspora—cannot be understood without the context of the Indian state’s longstanding failure to deliver accountability for past atrocities and crimes against humanity. This most notably includes the Indian Army’s assault on Punjab in June 1984 (also known as Operation Blue Star),³⁶ the Sikh Genocide of November 1984, and the subsequent “decade of disappearances” thereafter³⁷ which resulted in thousands of unaccounted Sikh deaths.

Decades of impunity have enabled the consolidation of a repressive state apparatus that continues to operate with little restraint, increasingly relying on extrajudicial methods, expansive counterterrorism laws, and digital censorship to suppress Sikh political and religious expression. More than forty years after the 1984 atrocities, meaningful accountability has remained elusive. In terms of the Sikh genocide, despite hundreds of registered cases and many more without formal reports, only thirteen have resulted in actual convictions,³⁸ while many alleged perpetrators, including current and incumbent leaders of the Indian National Congress (INC), have evaded justice entirely.³⁹ Judicial processes have been marred by delayed investigations, witness intimidation, political interference, and the destruction or manipulation of evidence.⁴⁰ Even in recent years, charges against senior political figures such as Jagdish Tytler have faced repeated delays, with trials still pending decades later⁴¹ and INC leaders recognized by eyewitnesses of leading mob violence, such as Kamal Nath, have continued to hold prominent political office of the party, reinforcing perceptions of systemic impunity.⁴²

This failure to reckon with past crimes is compounded by the absence of key legal frameworks. India has yet to codify crimes such as genocide or crimes against humanity into domestic law, despite being a signatory to the Genocide Convention. As a result, the scale and nature of the 1984 Genocide has never been formally recognized within India’s legal system, nor has there been a comprehensive effort to establish truth commissions, ensure reparations, or guarantee non-recurrence.⁴³ Survivors continue to be denied their fundamental rights to justice, acknowledgment, and redress—and as a result, the legacy of impunity has directly shaped contemporary patterns of repression. In present-day India, Sikh activists are increasingly subjected to expansive national

³⁶ Mallika Kaur, *Faith, Gender, and Activism in the Punjab Conflict: The Wheat Fields Still Whisper*, Palgrave Macmillan, Jan. 14, 2020.

³⁷ “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>.

³⁸ Nirbhay Thakur, “41 Years After 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots, Just 13 Murder Convictions; Panels Outnumber Convictions,” *The Indian Express*, Nov. 1, 2025, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/41-years-after-1984-anti-sikh-riots-murder-convictions-fewer-number-panels-violence-10339547/>.

³⁹ People’s Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), “Delhi 1984: The Long Aftermath, 41 Years of Criminal Injustice, Apathy and Struggles of Survivors”, Nov. 17, 2025, <https://www.pudr.org/publicationsn-files/2025-11-Delhi%201984-the-long-aftermath.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Jaskaran Kaur, “Twenty Years of Impunity: The November 1984 Pogroms of Sikhs in India” (2nd ed.), Ensaaf, Oct. 2006, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/67532240c7f81eadd182badb/6760f1b8dd836b3d8029cb9a_20years-2nd.pdf.

⁴¹ U.S. Embassy New Delhi, “Delhi Diary, March 10–14 (08NEWDELHI790),” *WikiLeaks*, Mar. 14, 2008, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08NEWDELHI790_a.html; Arvind Gunasekar, “Not Enough Sikhs Killed, Said Congress’s Jagdish Tytler To Mob: CBI Case,” *NDTV*, Aug. 5, 2023, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/congress-jagdish-tytler-charged-with-murder-by-cbi-in-1984-anti-sikh-riots-case-4271748>.

⁴² 1984 Sikh Archive, “Congress Party Leaders,” *1984 Sikh Archive*, <https://1984sikh-archive.org/perpetrators/congress-party-leaders/>; Manoj Mitta & H. S. Phoolka, “The Case Against Kamal Nath,” *Outlook India*, Apr. 8, 2010, <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/the-case-against-kamal-nath-news-265003>.

⁴³ Human Rights Watch, “India: No Justice for 1984 Anti-Sikh Bloodshed,” *Human Rights Watch*, Oct. 29, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/29/india-no-justice-1984-anti-sikh-bloodshed>; Human Rights Watch, “India: Prosecute Those Responsible for 1984 Massacre of Sikhs,” *Human Rights Watch*, Nov. 2, 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/11/02/india-prosecute-those-responsible-1984-massacre-sikhs>.



security laws, particularly the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the National Security Act (NSA). These laws, characterized by broad and ambiguous definitions of terrorism, enable prolonged detention without charge and have been widely criticized by UN experts.⁴⁴ Sikh political and religious expression, especially advocacy related to Sikh self-determination or Khalistan, is frequently conflated with extremism, resulting in unjust surveillance, arrest, and prosecution under counterterrorism frameworks.

High-profile cases underscore these concerns. Jagtar Singh Johal,⁴⁵ a British national detained in India since 2017, has been described by UN experts as enduring arbitrary detention amounting to psychological torture, with calls for his immediate release following years of incarceration without credible evidence.⁴⁶ Similarly, Amritpal Singh Khalsa, a Sikh political leader and elected Member of Parliament, remains detained under national security laws following extended preventive detention, raising serious concerns about the denial of political representation to hundreds of thousands of voters in Punjab and the undermining of their democratically expressed mandate.⁴⁷ Alongside legal repression, reports of extrajudicial violence persist. Recent allegations surrounding the custodial killing of a young Sikh student, Ranjit Singh, in Punjab—reportedly staged as a police encounter—have sparked public protests and renewed scrutiny of Indian security force practices.⁴⁸ Such incidents reflect the recurrence of a broader pattern documented over decades, including enforced disappearances, secret cremations, and unlawful killings during the Punjab conflict that lasted until 1995. To date, calls for independent investigations and truth-seeking mechanisms into these abuses remain largely unmet.⁴⁹

Digital authoritarianism has emerged as an additional and increasingly central pillar of this repressive ecosystem. In 2026, the Indian government steadily expanded its control over online speech through amendments to information technology regulations and granting broad censorship powers to multiple government ministries that can now order content takedowns.⁵⁰ These rules impose stringent compliance timelines on platforms—which can require removal of content deemed problematic within hours—effectively incentivizing over-censorship and limiting due process.⁵¹ Journalists, activists, and minority voices, including Sikhs,⁵² have reported increased surveillance, account restrictions, and content removal, often linked to politically sensitive

⁴⁴ U.S. Mission to the United Nations Human Rights Council, “Statement at the Universal Periodic Review of India (41st Session),” Nov. 10, 2022, <https://uprmeetings.ohchr.org/Sessions/41/India/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁴⁵ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, “Jagtar Singh Johal,” USCIRF, <https://www.uscifr.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/jagtar-singh-johal>.

⁴⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “India: UN Experts Warn Jagtar Singh Johal’s Prolonged Detention Amounts to Psychological Torture,” OHCHR, Apr. 25, 2026, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/04/india-un-experts-warn-jagtar-singh-johals-prolonged-detention-amounts>.

⁴⁷ Shivam Patel, “Jailed Sikh Separatist Wins Seat in India’s Election, Family Wants Him Freed,” Reuters, Jun. 4, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/jailed-sikh-separatist-wins-seat-indias-election-family-wants-him-freed-2024-06-04/>.

⁴⁸ Surjit Singh, “Rights Groups, Opposition Leaders Seek Probe into Gurdaspur Encounter,” *Hindustan Times*, Feb. 27, 2026, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/rights-groups-opposition-leaders-seek-probe-into-gurdaspur-encounter-101772132954010.html>.

⁴⁹ Romesh Silva, Jasmine Marwaha & Jeff Klingner, “Violent Deaths and Enforced Disappearances During the Counterinsurgency in Punjab, India: A Preliminary Quantitative Analysis,” Human Rights Data Analysis Group (Benetech) & Ensaaf, Jan. 26, 2009, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/67532240c7f81eadd182badb/6760ec9b4eff15182cd8cc21_ViolentDeathsReport.pdf.

⁵⁰ Cherylann Mollan & Umang Poddar, “India’s Plan to Regulate Online Content Creators Sparks Free Speech Concerns,” BBC News, Apr. 14, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce9mx2j3xlxo>.

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, “India: Proposed Rules to Expand Online Censorship,” *Human Rights Watch*, Apr. 17, 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/04/17/india-proposed-rules-to-expand-online-censorship>.

⁵² Joti Kaur Rekhi, “Pegasus Project Suggests Sikh Journalists Are Government Targets,” *Baaz News*, Jul. 26, 2021, <https://www.baaznews.org/p/joti-kaur-rekhi-pegasus-project-suggests>.



expression. Internet shutdowns, platform blocking, and legal threats have contributed to a shrinking digital space for dissent, a trend reflected in India's ranking of approximately 151 out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, where it is classified as a "very serious" situation for press freedom.⁵³ Delhi is increasingly characterized as a global leader in internet shutdowns, using the tactic to attempt to repress civil society and peaceful demonstrations (e.g. the historically large farmer's protests that occurred in 2020 and 2021).⁵⁴ These measures not only suppress domestic expression but also have extraterritorial implications, particularly when diaspora voices are targeted or silenced online.⁵⁵

Importantly, this domestic environment of legal repression and impunity is not confined within India's borders. As highlighted in prior sections, transnational repression targeting Sikh communities abroad mirrors these internal practices. The same narratives that criminalize Sikh political expression within India are deployed internationally to justify surveillance, intimidation, and, in some cases, violence against diaspora activists. United Nations experts have explicitly warned that with such a grand scale of rights violations against religious minorities, "India risks becoming one of the world's main generators of instability, atrocities and violence."⁵⁶ Against this backdrop, India's cross-border actions contribute to a hostile environment both abroad and within Punjab itself, linking domestic and transnational repression as part of an integrated strategy to criminalize Sikh dissent. Absent meaningful accountability for past and present violations, this trajectory is likely to persist. The continued failure to investigate atrocity crimes, reform abusive legal frameworks, and safeguard fundamental freedoms risks further entrenching a system in which repression operates with impunity and creates instability both within India and across borders.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the pattern of abuses outlined in this statement reflect an evolving campaign that links repression within India to foreign interference targeting Sikh communities abroad. From assassination plots and extrajudicial violence to coercive surveillance and digital censorship, these developments collectively demonstrate a troubling willingness to extend repression beyond national borders, with direct implications for the safety of Sikh Americans and the integrity of U.S. sovereignty. USCIRF has repeatedly raised alarm over India's escalating violations of religious freedom, including transnational repression via a specific callout statement in 2023.⁵⁷ Most recently, in its 2026 Annual Report, USCIRF explicitly recommended that India be designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for engaging in severe religious freedom violations against religious minorities—marking the seventh consecutive year such a recommendation has been

⁵³ Reporters Without Borders, "India," *Reporters Without Borders*, <https://rsf.org/en/country/india>.

⁵⁴ Ananya Bhattacharya, "India Shuts Down the Internet Far More Than Any Other Country," *Rest of World*, Sep. 27, 2024, <https://restofworld.org/2024/india-internet-shutdown-record/>.

⁵⁵ World Sikh Organization of Canada, "Enforcing Silence: India's War on Sikh Social Media", Jul. 20, 2020, <https://www.worldsikh.org/enforcing-silence-india-war-on-sikh-social-media>.

⁵⁶ Fernand de Varennes, "Testimony Before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing on India," *U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom*, Sep. 20, 2023, <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Fernand%20de%20Varennes%20Testimony.pdf>.

⁵⁷ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, "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>.



made.⁵⁸ The report cited ongoing, systemic abuses both within India and abroad, and further advised targeted sanctions against entities such as India's external intelligence agency, RAW and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), including asset freezes and entry bans to the United States.

VI. Recommendations

In light of the growing body of evidence and credible reports of transnational repression propagated by the government of India, the Sikh Coalition recommends the following actions:

- **Congress: Pass legislation and enforce existing laws to address the threat of TNR.**
 - Mark up and pass the Transnational Repression Policy Act (H.R. 4829/S.2525). This bill would establish an official definition of transnational repression, promote robust interagency coordination, and provide critical outreach to impacted communities.⁵⁹
 - Reintroduce and pass the Transnational Repression Reporting Act (H.R. 9707 in the 118th Congress).⁶⁰ This bill would direct the Attorney General to submit annual reports and ensure that the federal government tracks and publicly reports TNR cases within a given time frame.
 - Of note, both of these bills were supported by Human Rights Watch and reflect their policy recommendations regarding TNR.⁶¹
 - Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to hold offenders of TNR responsible beyond visa restrictions. The Khashoggi Ban permits visa bans and is the only federal statute that addresses TNR directly. However, Congress could do more to explicitly authorize sanctions against individuals and entities engaged in TNR: There is further legal precedent through the Global Magnitsky Act,⁶² the Child Soldiers Accountability Act, and the Khashoggi Ban to deny visas to foreign officials implicated in human rights abuses. These should be applied to Indian officials credibly linked to TNR, including senior diplomats expelled by Canada in October 2024.
- **Congress: Provide institutional support and oversight to effectively combat TNR.**
 - Support the documentation efforts of USCIRF by permanently reauthorizing the congressional body and passing legislation to reduce presidential authority to waive taking action against CPCs based on longstanding human rights concerns.

⁵⁸ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, "United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2026 Annual Report", Mar. 2026, https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2026-03/USCIRF_2026_AR_3326_NEW.pdf.

⁵⁹ Congress.gov. "H.R.4829 - 118th Congress (2025-2026): Transnational Repression Policy Act." August 1, 2025.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/4829/text>.

⁶⁰ Congress.gov. "H.R.9707 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Transnational Repression Reporting Act of 2024." September 19, 2024.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/9707/text>.

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch, "We Will Find You": A Global Look at How Governments Repress Nationals Abroad, February 22, 2024,

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/22/we-will-find-you/global-look-how-governments-repress-nationals-abroad>.

⁶² Congress.gov. "Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Sanctions: The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act." May 10, 2025.

<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10576>.



- Ensure greater congressional oversight into TNR by amending Section 6 of the Arms Export Control Act to include a reporting requirement of any instances where the President declines to enforce the law that would prohibit arms transfers to any
- country determined to be engaged in a consistent pattern of acts of intimidation against individuals in the United States.
- **Congress: Prioritize measures that protect all Americans against TNR and limit foreign government interference.**
 - Craft legislation that prohibits a government from employing a registered lobbyist if its country has been designated as a CPC and/or has engaged in TNR to intimidate or harass individuals in the United States.
 - Provide rights-based asylum pathways for permanent legal status for individuals targeted for translational repression.
 - Provide greater protections for Americans who are targeted for TNR but have not yet obtained citizenship. (This loophole leaves Americans who are targeted by TNR while abroad with little assistance from the U.S. State Department, which could force them to seek assistance from the state that is perpetrating TNR.)
 - Improve and clarify public grant resources to authorize use for defending against acts of translational repression, including the Nonprofit Security Grant Program and other federal victim support services.
- **Congress and the Administration: Hold offenders of TNR accountable through multilateral actions.**
 - Provide public assurances to a thorough and complete investigation into India's alleged covert activities against Sikhs to address the safety and security concerns of
 - Sikhs, other Indian diaspora communities, journalists, human rights advocates, dissidents, and religious minorities in the United States.
- **Congress and the Administration: Per USCIRF's longstanding recommendation, the Department of State should designate India as a CPC, and take appropriate follow-up action after designation.**
 - Impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for severe violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) by freezing those individuals' assets and/or barring their entry into the United States under human rights-related financial and visa authorities.
 - Establish a screening process to block diplomatic visas for individuals with a record of targeting the Sikh diaspora. Diplomats already in the U.S. who engage in TNR should be expelled or held legally accountable.

