



# Sikh Federation (UK)

*Never flinch from performing righteous deeds*

## **International conference and press briefing in Geneva: Transnational repression by the Indian government targeting Sikhs in the Diaspora**

A half-day international conference has been organised for **Friday 13 March from 9.30am-1pm at the InterContinental Hotel Genève**, 7 – 9 Chemin du Petit Saconnex, CH-1209 Geneva. This will be followed by a press briefing from **2.30-4.30pm at the Geneva Press Club**, Domaine de Penthes, Chemin de l'Impératrice 18, 1292 Pregny-Chambésy, Geneva.

There are a limited number of spaces for leading journalists to attend the half-day conference. If you would like to attend the conference please email [sikhfederationuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sikhfederationuk@yahoo.co.uk) ASAP

A detailed report on transnational repression by the Indian government will have its public release at the press briefing. A victim who has had numerous threat to life warnings by the Canadian authorities will be speaking about the lived reality of transnational repression at the press briefing.

The report on transnational repression will form the basis for complaints to be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council. Please confirm by email if you will be attending the Geneva Press Club event so we can make suitable arrangements.

Sikh representatives from over a dozen countries will be joined at the conference and/or press briefing by staff from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, at least two Special Rapporteurs and their staff, several permanent missions and a number of leading NGOs.

### **Please join us to understand:**

- **why Sikhs in the Diaspora are being targeted by the Indian government**
- **Modi's policy of transnational repression as a last resort**
- **response expected by the global Sikh community from governments, the international community and civil society organisations**

Transnational repression is not a new phenomenon but is on the increase and rapidly expanding, especially in stable democracies. In the 56<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, Volker Türk, the UN Commissioner for Human Rights indicated the trend of transnational repression against certain individuals and communities was becoming a global one and urged States to have “zero tolerance” for such actions.

Transnational repression can take various forms and result in a range of threats and acts and members of diaspora communities and those living in exile are particularly affected. It also has a ripple effect on the broader community owing to its chilling effect.

For over 40 years and in particular since the Indian army assault on Sri Harmandir Sahib in June 1984 and the demand for Sikh independence, Khalistan the Indian government specifically targeted Sikhs in large numbers in the Sikh Diaspora. The Indian authorities gathered intelligence on masse through its operatives on Sikhs in the Diaspora supporting Sikh independence or were publicly critical of the Indian government’s actions. It is estimated the Indian authorities collected information and created files for tens of thousands of Sikhs across the globe.

India has widely used surveillance and intimidation to target its Sikh opponents and human rights activists abroad. For those who were most outspoken they introduced a blacklist that had the names of several hundred prominent Sikhs. These Sikhs were forced to live in exile and organisations in which they operated were targeted through pressure on foreign governments.

For example, for those with Indian passports, the passports were not renewed and the host government was pressured not to give them nationality and passports rendering them stateless and restricting their travel and activities. There is prominent Sikh in the UK in his 70s who has been waiting for over 40 years for British nationality and a passport. He has been an elected Labour Councillor for over 30 years, has never been arrested or charged, was security cleared when he worked in a Young Offenders Institute before he retired and has served as the local Mayor.

After Narendra Modi came to power in May 2014 he ordered Ajit Doval, his National Security Adviser to target Sikhs in the Diaspora. The Indian authorities have submitted dossiers to “friendly” governments to successfully pressure them to impose restrictions on opponents to appease India. Two of those named in dossiers submitted to the UK and Canada were killed in June 2023.

Initially the strategy also involved compromising certain individuals by agreeing to remove their names from blacklists in return for them to stop being critical of India or visit India and become supportive of the Modi regime. For others less prominent there have been threats to cancel passports or revoke Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards unless they supply information on opponents or cease their “anti-India” activities and in some cases start to “work” for the Indian authorities.

The Indian authorities have also been harassing, arresting or detaining family members in India to try and silence their Sikh critics abroad. A disinformation campaign to demonise and label peaceful

activists as extremists or terrorists for simply exercising the freedoms and rights they enjoy has become commonplace.

The Sikh Diaspora in “friendly” Western nations and despite the restrictions, threats and challenges posed by the Indian government has become more vocal on the right to self-determination and Sikh independence and been the backbone in supporting mass farmer protests in India.

India has therefore become increasingly impatient and frustrated with foreign governments for not doing enough to silence its Sikh opponents. PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have sanctioned Ajit Doval to use non-state actors and criminal networks to embark on a campaign of transnational repression, involving assassinations and death threats to target its Sikh opponents and critics abroad.

It has been reported agents of the Indian government have eliminated up to 70 opponents abroad through extrajudicial killings on foreign soil in recent years. Many of these killings have taken place in Pakistan that is not seen as a “friendly” nation. Sadly, this has attracted little global interest.

In recent years there have been a number of high profile Sikh activists targeted through assassinations or plots to kill in the Sikh Diaspora in “friendly” countries that has forced many States to question the threat posed by the Indian government’s transnational repression.

The Indian government has taken the radical step of totally compromising the sovereignty and the rule of law in these “friendly” nations by targeting Sikh activists. The Indian government is not accountable and they continue to deny their involvement despite evidence where arrests have been made and cases have come to court.

The assassinations and plots to kill Sikh activists campaigning for Sikh independence in Canada, US, UK and other Western nations since June 2023 should have been a wake-up call in these “friendly” countries and resulted in co-ordinated global action to challenge India’s transnational repression and force them to be accountable.

In April 2024, Narendra Modi while campaigning in the elections used the following chilling words in a speech: “We no longer send dossiers, we go into their homes to kill them.” This was a timely reminder for all “friendly” nations that have had dossiers from the Indian government.