

MEMORANDUM FROM SIKHS ACROSS THE EU
President of the European Commission

Ursula von der Leyen
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Brussels
Belgium

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Dear Ursula von der Leyen

Transnational repression by the Indian government targeting Sikh activists in the Diaspora and Emmanuel Macron's visit to India to celebrate India's Republic Day

Sikhs across the EU are deeply concerned with news that has emerged in recent months from the US, Canada and UK of transnational repression and interference by the Indian government to target and silence Sikh activists. The activists are highlighting widespread abuse of human rights in India and campaigning for the re-establishment of a Sikh homeland that existed for 50 years before the Anglo-Sikh Wars and annexation of the Sikh Kingdom by Britain in 1849.

Governments now know this transnational repression has involved assassinations, attempted assassinations, sharing of hit lists of Sikh activists living in the Diaspora by India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Indian television and targeting in India the families and homes of Sikh activists living in the Diaspora, including Sikhs in the EU.

It was reported that Justin Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister raised this very serious matter of transnational repression with Joe Biden, Emmanuel Macron and Rishi Sunak ahead of the G20 Summit in Delhi in September 2023. Both Justin Trudeau and Joe Biden have confirmed they raised in "no uncertain terms" with Narendra Modi at the G20 Summit their grave concerns about the actions of the Indian government on their soil.

Justin Trudeau's explosive statement in the Canadian Parliament a few days later on 18 September 2023 on Indian government involvement in the assassination of Sikh leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian soil three months earlier on 18 June 2023

has highlighted the Indian authorities are worryingly challenging the rule of law and sovereignty of other nations.

The Indian government has however refused to co-operate with the Canadian investigation since mid-August when Canada's national security and intelligence adviser Jody Thomas first went to Delhi and provided evidence and discussed their findings with her counterpart, Ajit Doval. She made another visit prior to and during the G20 Summit in Delhi but her counterpart refused to co-operate.

The Indian government despite calls by many nations rather than co-operate has admitted they were annoyed and upset with the Canadian government for making the matter public and they reacted by taking away diplomatic immunity and forcing more than 40 Canadian diplomats to leave India that is in breach of the Vienna Convention.

On 22 November it was [reported](#) in the Financial Times an assassination plot by the Indian authorities was thwarted in the US on another Sikh activist. This was confirmed later the same day by a White House spokesperson for the National Security Council.

On 29 November the US Department of Justice decided to unseal an explosive [15-page indictment](#). The US Department of Justice in a press release [stated](#) a senior Indian government intelligence officer based in India was directing assassinations of a number of Sikh activists in Canada and the US and there were many more targets.

The unsealed indictment mentions plans for "two or three jobs" (assassinations of Sikh activists in the Diaspora) every month. We believe these plans could include Sikh activists in the EU in countries like Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

The indictment confirmed the Indian government intelligence officer based in India shared within hours of the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar a video showing his bloody body slumped in his vehicle. Although the indictment and evidence held by law enforcement agencies in the US vindicates the allegations made by the Canadian government the Indian government is still refusing to co-operate. The Globe and Mail has reported arrests are expected in the coming weeks in the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar and the indictment is expected to expose the Indian government's direct involvement.

It has also emerged Joe Biden directed William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, to visit India in August to discuss the suspected assassination plot and press the Indian government to hold those involved responsible. Joe Biden raised the New York plot directly with Narendra Modi when they met at the G20 Summit on 14 September.

The Sikh Federation (UK) has submitted a complaint to the UN special procedures with respect to the extrajudicial killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada and met UN staff to discuss several other similar cases in the UK, Pakistan and the US. A complaint has also been submitted to special procedures with respect to the mysterious death of Avtar Singh Khanda in the UK on 15 June 2023. There have been numerous media reports in recent months of a cover-up in the UK, the failings of the West Midlands Police to properly investigate the matter and the Senior Coroner's failure to carry out an autopsy.

A [report](#) published in London for The Print, an Indian online newspaper has disclosed an Indian RAW intelligence officer, understood to be a former Indian police officer was expelled from the UK in the Summer at the request of British intelligence. This came before Justin Trudeau made allegations in the Canadian Parliament on 18 September and expelled the head of RAW in Canada and many believe it may be linked to the death of Avtar Singh Khanda.

We are deeply worried with not only transnational repression but India's shift from a democracy to an autocracy. The global rise of the extreme right wing Hindutva ideology of the Indian government and move to a Hindu Rashtra with escalating violence and discrimination across the country against religious minorities, women and Dalits has reached alarming levels. The weak or non-existent response from the Indian government over the last decade against the perpetrators has created an atmosphere of widespread impunity and evidence of regime complicity.

The independence of key institutions like the judiciary, media and progressive civil society associations has been increasingly undermined. The relentless attacks using state machinery and a captive media against critical voices, whether in opposition parties or in civil society including journalists, lawyers and activists has not gone unnoticed, despite the massive lobbying machine of the Hindutva regime.

The draconian response to the BBC documentary - India: The Modi question is a case in point. The closure in India of Amnesty International and Oxfam and the attack on Greenpeace on what appear to be political grounds has caused shock waves internationally. Trust in the regulatory institutions governing the market and the economy has also been shaken after the Adani scandal.

India has slipped precipitously on every index of democracy and freedoms. There is no month without reports (including op-eds in the most prestigious newspapers in the US, UK and France) triggering alarm over India's rapid democratic backsliding. Governments across the globe are increasingly worried the democratic credentials of India have been systematically destroyed leading to genuine fears about the security and stability of India as it approaches the 2024 elections.

Given the transnational repression by the Indian government and the deteriorating human rights situation in India Joe Biden declined an invitation to India's Republic Day celebrations on 26 January 2024 ahead of elections in India. We were therefore shocked Emmanuel Macron who has been personally briefed by Justin Trudeau on this matter has agreed to attend the celebrations as special guest of honour. This move undermines the tough stand the EU takes on such matters and the relationship with the US, Canada and other allies in the Five Eyes nations.

India's Republic Day marks the adoption of the Indian Constitution on 26 January 1950. When Britain created India and Pakistan in 1947, Clement Attlee the British PM offered Sikhs as separate homeland given the annexation of the Sikh Kingdom almost 100 years earlier in 1849 and Anglo-Sikh Treaties.

The Sikh leadership however at that time were made solemn promises and tricked by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru (India's first PM) on autonomy for the Sikh people and their homeland if they stuck with India. The Sikh homeland was divided by Britain between India and Pakistan during the disastrous Partition that led to over a million deaths and up to 20 million being displaced.

Emmanuel Macron and other world leaders must be aware Sikhs rejected the Indian Constitution in 1950 and have to date refused to sign and accept the Constitution as it fails to recognise the Sikh faith (the fifth largest faith of the world). Those responsible for creating the constitution unbelievably used it to try and assimilate Sikhs by describing them as Hindus.

We would be grateful if you could share our concerns with Emmanuel Macron ahead of his visit to India and ask him to reconsider attending Republic Day celebrations. If he does attend Sikhs across Europe, especially those in France expect him to show the strength and courage to raise transnational repression by the Indian government targeting Sikhs in the Diaspora as well as the deteriorating human rights situation in India that is very well documented by independent human rights organisations.

A delegation of Sikhs across the EU is keen to meet with you and your staff in the next few weeks to discuss our concerns, actions taken by the EU on the matters raised and what the EU can do to defend human rights in India and promote the universal ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. **Please suggest some dates and times for a meeting so we can arrange the Sikh delegation that will meet you.**

Submitted by Sikhs living in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and UK.