

NEW YEAR NEW AGENDA - DECONSTRUCTING THE NARRATIVE OF TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AGAINST INDIA

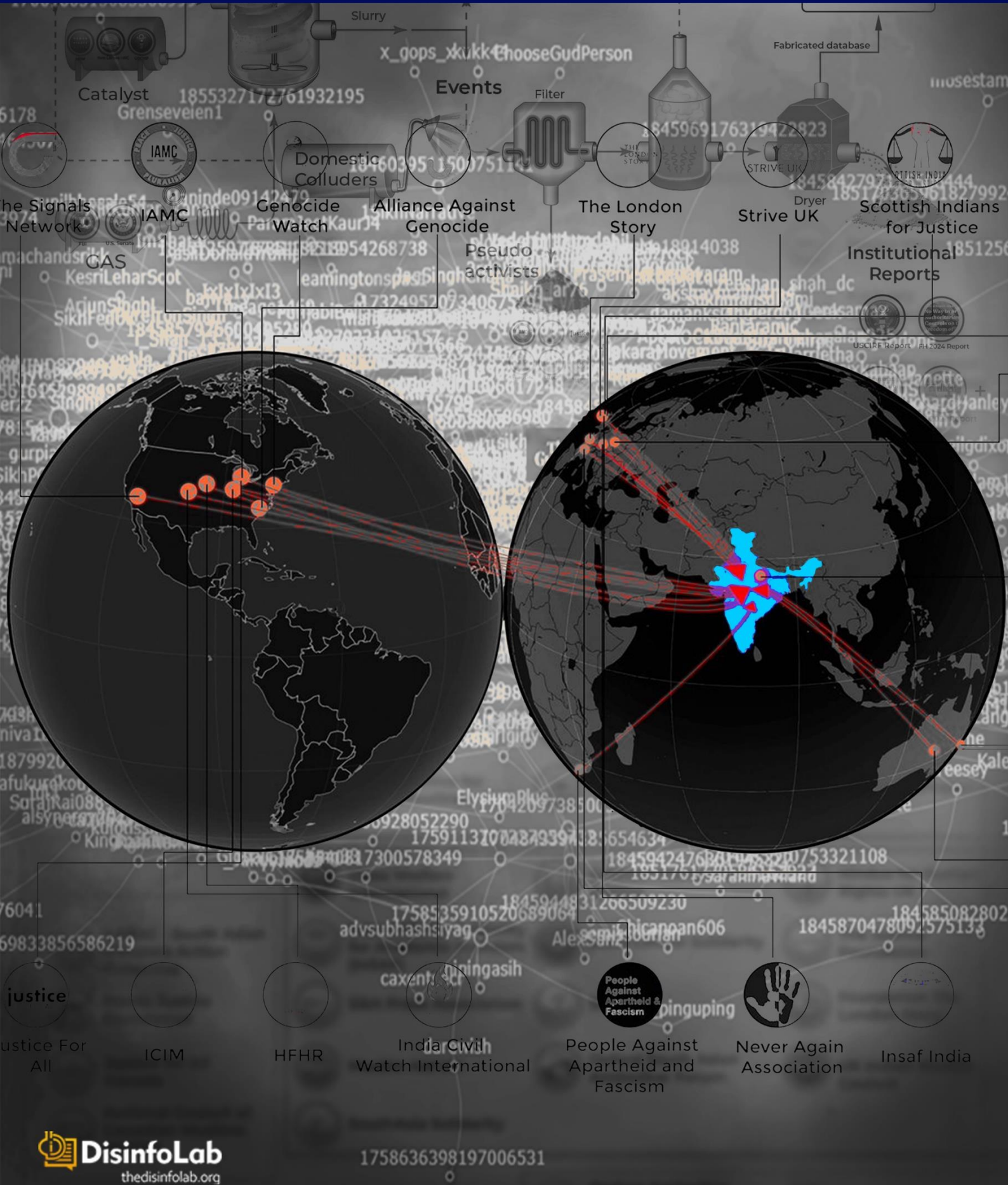


Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Part 1: New Buzzword in Geopolitical Arena	5
Chapter 1: What Is Transnational Repression?	6
Tracing the Origin of Transnational Repression.....	6
Chapter 2: Transnational Repression & India	9
G20 Event and Tropes used to accuse India of TNR	9
What was India Accused of?	10
Role of Western Media in downplaying the Khalistan Movement.....	12
The Reality- Evolution of the Khalistan Movement and its Menace	15
Chapter 3: What is Five Eyes or FVEY Alliance?	16
Chapter 4: Western Media & TNR Accusation on India	18
TNR & role of Western Media.....	18
Data Speaks Volumes	22
Chapter 5: Freedom House: A Central Reference Point	23
Part 2: TNR and Freedom House Dogma	27
Chapter 6: Freedom House- Not an NGO!	28
Not so Independent Freedom House	30
Chapter 7: Genesis of Transnational Repression	32
To counter the misuse of INTERPOL?	32
TRAP Act of 2021	33
Chapter 8: Making TNR a Global Narrative	35
Endorsement of TNR Spearheaded by the US.....	37
Chapter 9: Weaponizing Khalistan Issue to Target India	40
Freedom House & Weaponization of the Khalistan Issue	41
Paramjeet Singh Pamma- Terrorist to an ‘Activist’	41
A Khalistani Terrorist.....	42
Chapter 10: TNR Accusation Begins to Take Shapes	46
Part 3: The Real Motive	48
Chapter 11: Summit for Democracy 2023	49
Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF)	50
Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)	51
USIPI	51
Creating Victim Card Literature	53
Chapter 12: Freedom House Special Report 2024	56
The Special Report 2024	60
Chapter 13: Transnational Network of Anti-India Orgs	64
Conclusion	66

Introduction

Over the last few months, there have been several incidents and subsequent news reports on them seemed to have tainted India's diplomatic persona globally. For a layman, these incidents might seem to have happened in isolation starting September 2023, which are as follows:

On September 18, 2023, **Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau** accused the government of India of carrying out the killing of a Sikh leader in British Columbia in June 2023. Various media outlets including the New York Times, Associated Press, BBC, New York Times, The Guardian, and CBS News etc. reported this,^{1 2 3 4} The 'Sikh leader' referred to by the Western media was Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a pro-Khalistan ideologue who was already on Canada's no-fly list and bank accounts frozen by the Canadian agencies.⁵⁶ Cut to the present, in October 2024 Canadian PM Justin Trudeau while testifying in front of the foreign interference injury alluded to the fact that allegations was made based on no "hard evidence" but just "intelligence."⁷

On September 22, 2023, **United States State Department Secretary Antony Blinken** held a press conference and spoke about the accusations leveled by the Canadian PM against the government of India on September 18, 2023. This was later used to level a new brand of narrative against India.

On November 22, 2023, the **UK-based** daily newspaper broke an exclusive story headlined, '**US thwarted plot to kill Sikh separatist on American soil**' reporting how the US authorities thwarted a conspiracy to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, an American and Canadian citizen in the US.⁸ Pannun was subsequently interviewed by TIME magazine and other US, Australian, and Canadian media.⁹

On June 13, 2024, the **UK-based** Centre for Information Resilience (CIR) released a report '**Return of RealSikhs: the fake network targeting Sikhs across the world despite platform takedowns**.'¹⁰ The OSINT investigative report claimed to expose a nexus of at least 53 identities and more than 100 accounts across various social platforms running a coordinated campaign against Sikhs living abroad. The report appeared to be an effort

¹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/canada-india-justin-trudeau-sikh-activists-murder-hardeep-singh-nijjar/>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/18/world/canada/canada-india-sikh-killing.html>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/18/credible-evidence-india-behind-killing-of-canadian-sikh-leader-says-trudeau>

⁴ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-canadian-authorities-have-intelligence-that-india-was-behind-slaying/>

⁵⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-shared-nijjar-file-but-canada-just-put-him-on-no-fly-list/articleshow/103878033.cms>

⁶ <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/canada-news/story/hardeep-singh-nijjar-khalistan-canadian-no-fly-list-bank-account-frozen-tribute-in-parliament-canada-trudeau-2558395-2024-06-27>

⁷ https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/nijjar-killing-trudeau-admits-he-had-no-proof-on-indian-govt-s-involvement-124101601422_1.html

⁸ <https://www.ft.com/content/56f7d6d6-6a93-4172-a49e-d8a91991e29d>

⁹ <https://time.com/6339942/india-gurpatwant-singh-pannun-sikh-separatist-qa/>

¹⁰ <https://www.info-res.org/post/return-of-the-realsikhs-the-fake-network-targeting-sikhs-across-the-world-despite-platform-takedown>

to overlook and at the same time promote the agenda of the Khalistan movement against India in the name of exposing an insignificant number of social media handles.

CIR claims to be an independent organization, DisinfoLab found that both of its two founders: **Ross Burley** and **Adam Rutland**, have been associated with the UK government. However, it was not the first time CIR had published such a report. Earlier on November 24, 2021, CIR published a report titled '*Revealed: "Real Sikh" influence network pushing Indian nationalism*' published on November 24, 2021.¹¹ The report was an attempt at whitewashing the actual problem of Khalistani extremism against India while undermining India's sovereignty.

On June 17, 2024, the **Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)**, an Australian public broadcasting service via its *Four Corners* investigative series published an investigative article and a documentary '*Spies, secrets and Threats: How the Modi regime targets people overseas*'. The report, co-authored by former South Asia correspondent Avani Dias, alleged that the Indian government was surveilling Sikh individuals in Australia. While the investigation portrayed certain Khalistani figures like Gurpatwant Singh Pannun and Hardeep Singh Nijjar as activists rather than separatists, it notably minimized the concerns surrounding the Khalistan movement and appeared to present a favorable view of pro-Khalistan elements operating within Australia.¹²

On October 15, 2024, **New Zealand** became the first country to respond to Canadian PM Justin Trudeau's call for support from the Five Eyes Alliance nations. While with a disclaimer, NZ backed Canada in its allegations against India.

On November 17, 2024, Khalistani separatists organized the Khalistan referendum for the first time in New Zealand. It is to be noted that all aforementioned nations, viz, the US, the UK, Australia, and Canada, have already had several rounds of the Khalistan Referendum being conducted.¹³

These recent geopolitical tensions surrounding India have generated significant public attention, with surface-level observations potentially suggesting impropriety on India's part. However, a deeper analysis by regional experts and those specializing in South Asian affairs reveals a more nuanced situation.

The systematic and sequential nature of these developments suggests careful orchestration rather than isolated incidents, particularly when examined through the lens of intelligence and security cooperation frameworks.

If one collated and summarised how it happened strategically, like in clockwork, he/she would attribute it to witnessing bearing hallmarks of the Five Eyes methodology—the Five Eyes alliance in action.

¹¹ <https://www.info-res.org/post/revealed-real-sikh-influence-network-pushing-indian-nationalism>

¹² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-06-17/modis-indian-government-accused-of-spying-silencing-critics/103974414>

¹³ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/indonz/534118/auckland-referendum-on-khalistan-attracts-thousands>

Part 1: New Buzzword in Geopolitical Arena

Chapter 1: What Is Transnational Repression?

Transnational repression is often described as a type of political repression conducted by a state outside its borders. It often involves targeting political dissidents or critical members of diaspora communities abroad and can take the forms of assassinations and/or enforced disappearances of citizens, among others.

Tracing the Origin of Transnational Repression

The origin of 'Transnational Repression' (TNR) does not go very far back. Before 2016, similar practices were described using terms like *extraterritorial repression*, *transnational authoritarianism*, *extrajudicial actions*, etc.,

The formalization of the terminology only happened gradually after Sociologist Dana M Moss (Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame) coined this term in 2016 in her paper titled, "***Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of The Arab Spring***"¹⁴

However, the formalization of "transnational repression" as a term only happened after 2016 and is often attributed to the work of Western think tanks and researchers focusing on global authoritarianism trends, particularly in response to countries like China, Russia, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia escalating their targeting of dissidents abroad. These countries have been at the helm of TNR accusations for various reasons. Subsequently, the Wikipedia page for Transnational Repression was also created on November 10, 2019.¹⁵

China for instance has been accused of TNR for its extensive use of digital surveillance, intimidation, and coercion against dissidents living abroad, particularly Uyghur activists.¹⁶

Western think tanks have also accused Russia of TNR for the Russian government's efforts to control its diaspora and exiled citizens, journalists, activists, and political opponents. **Russia** has been accused of using methods such as hacking, disinformation, and physical threats.¹⁷ There are dedicated Wikipedia pages for Russia and China for Transnational Repression.^{18 19}

Turkey is another country that has been accused of TNR by Western think tanks in the last few years. The Turkish government has a history of targeting journalists, academics, and political opponents living in exile, often through intimidation, harassment, and legal proceedings.^{20 21}

¹⁴ <https://academic.oup.com/socpro/article/63/4/480/2402855>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Transnational_repression&action=info

¹⁶ <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2024/02/29/autocracies-are-exporting-autocracy-to-their-diasporas>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/feb/16/china-russia-and-cambodia-top-list-of-regimes-targeting-critics-in-exile>

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transnational_repression_by_China

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transnational_repression_by_Russia

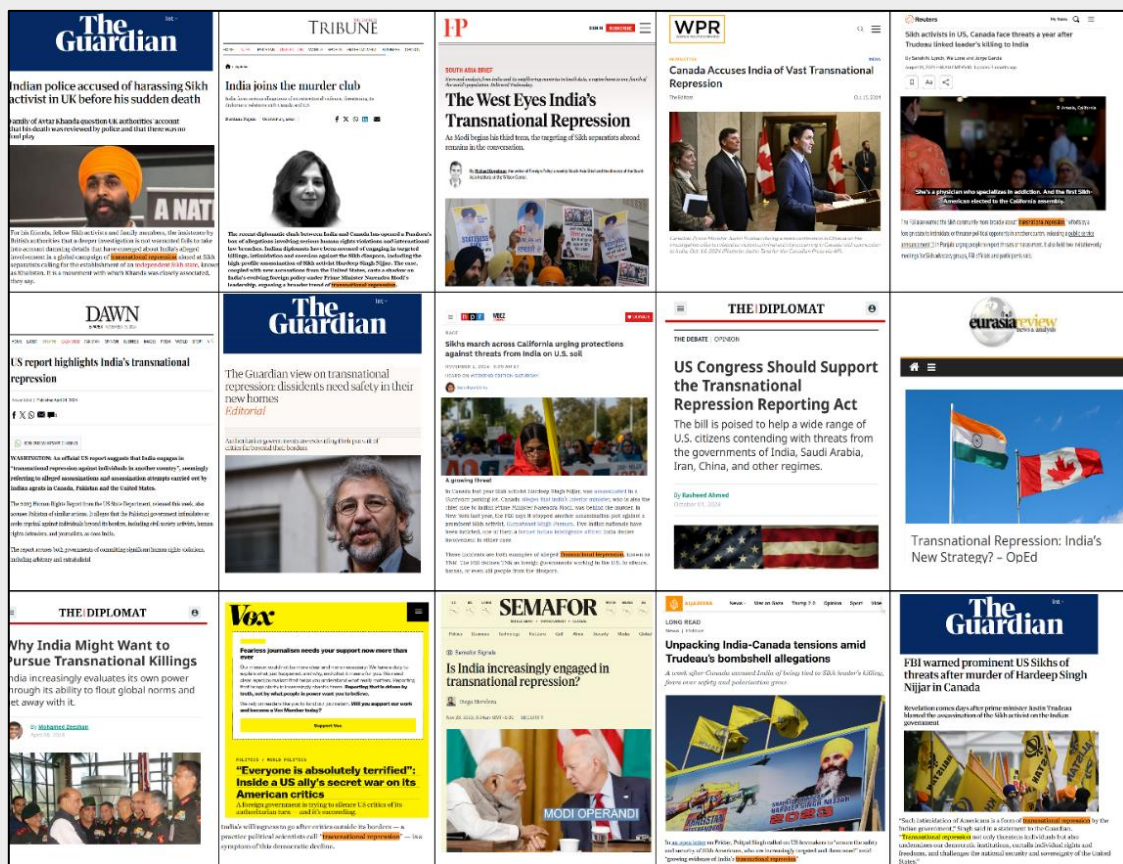
²⁰ <https://jwf.org/exiled-journalists-from-turkey-challenges-and-opportunities/jwf-2024-events/>

²¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/turkey>

Likewise, Iran has also been accused of TNR for using a variety of tactics, including cyberattacks, surveillance, and physical threats, to silence dissidents abroad, particularly those advocating for human rights and regime change.²²

Similar cases have been found in countries like Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Rwanda, Vietnam, Equatorial Guinea, and Ethiopia. Cases of TNR accusations are being pursued by the US State Department against these countries simultaneously from 2021-22 to the present. And as per the US-based thinktank, Freedom House, some 44 countries have been documented as committing transnational repression since 2014.

Over the last few months, a plethora of articles have been published by Western media portals including The Washington Post, New York Times, CBC News, The Guardian, etc.,

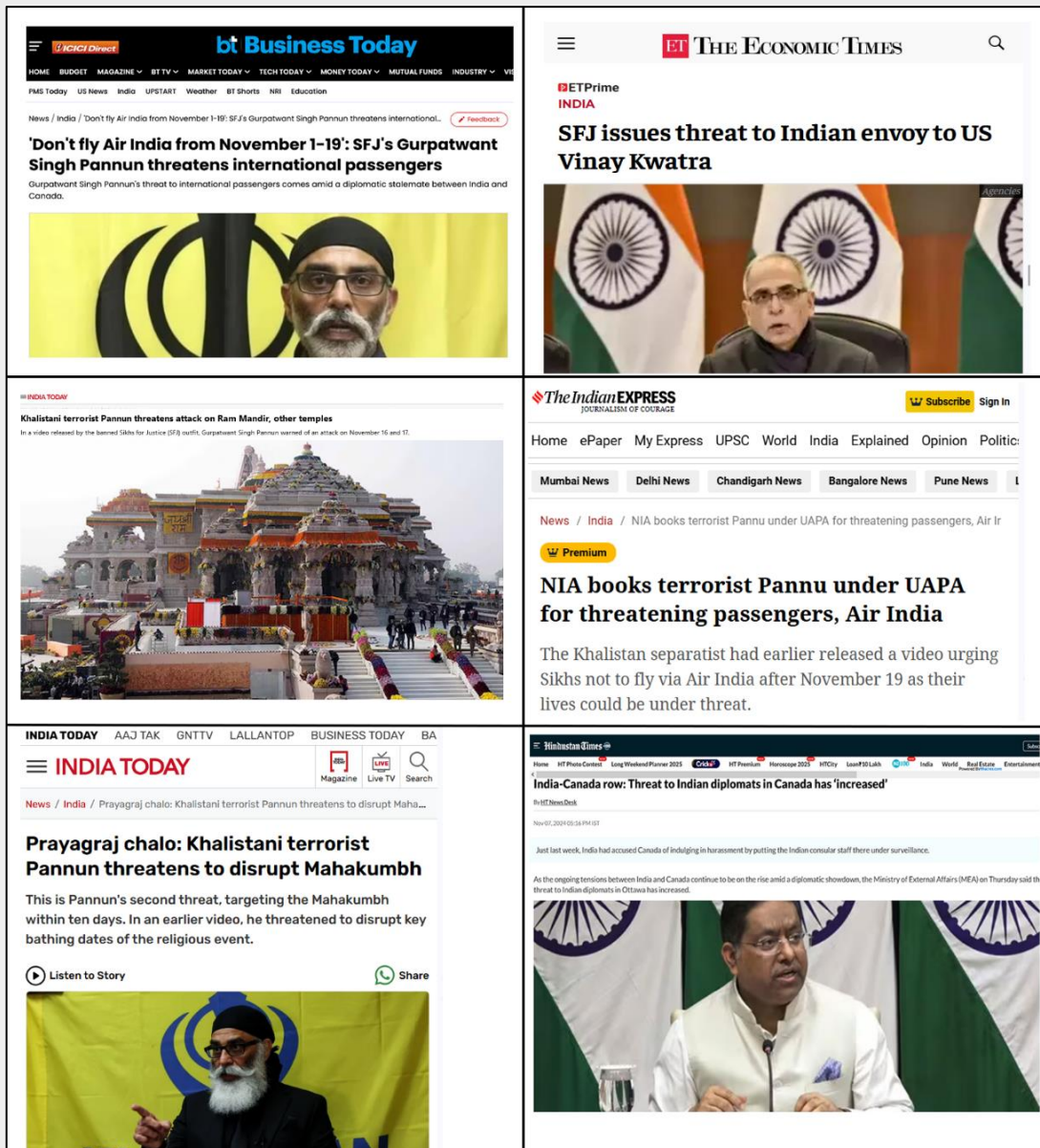


India is the latest country to be included in the list of countries accused of Transnational Repression. The FBI included India as one of the perpetrators of TNR in late 2023 and into 2024 the U.S. Department of Justice published an indictment alleging the Indian government's attempt for assassination for assassination plot of a Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun and that of the anonymous killing of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar who was shot at on June 18, 2023.^{23 24}

²² https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FH_TransnationalRepressionReport2021_rev020221_CaseStudy_Iran.pdf

²³ <https://web.archive.org/web/20240828142047/https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/transnational-repression>

²⁴ <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/transnational-repression>



Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, the founder of the banned Khalistani separatist organization Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), has repeatedly issued threats against Indian interests and diplomats. In 2023, he was booked by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in for threatening Air India passengers when he warned Sikh passengers against flying the airline after November 19. Pannun's pattern of threats continued into 2024, including renewed warnings against Air India flights between November 1-19, threats against Indian Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra, and his plans targeting the recently inaugurated Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and disruption of Mahakumbh in Prayagraj. While he had been at it before that, these threats have primarily emerged against the backdrop of strained diplomatic relations between India and Canada, following Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau's allegations regarding Indian officials' involvement in the killing of terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Amid the row, The Ministry of External Affairs noted that there has been a significant increase in threats to Indian diplomats. Security measures at several Indian airports, including Ahmedabad, Amritsar, and Delhi's IGI Airport, were enhanced in response to these threats, following discussions between the Ministry of Home Affairs and the multi-agency centre.

Chapter 2: Transnational Repression & India

In the last few months, there has been a surge in articles, reports, and Op-Eds mainstreaming and accusing India of Transnational Repression. The term ‘Transnational Repression’ has been used to target India for over a year since 2023. During our investigation, we scrapped over 170 articles, Op-Eds, and papers published between 2023 and 24 that accused India of Transnational Repression (TNR).

So much so that organizations like the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Human Rights Watch, and even the 2023 Human Rights Report from the US State Department published reports accusing India of the growing trend of transnational repression.^{25 26}

The first-ever allegation of TNR on India roots back to the diplomatic friction between India and Canada since September 2023 over the Khalistani movement and the killing of pro-Khalistani group Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

G20 Event and Tropes used to accuse India of TNR

The escalation of diplomatic tensions between India and Canada began right after the culmination of the G20 Summit in New Delhi in 2023, and so did the discourse on the Transnational Repression allegation against the government of India.

The G20 Summit is an annual international forum for the governments and central bank governors of 20 major economies worldwide. India hosted the 18th edition of the G20 Summit on September 9-10, 2023 in New Delhi. The G20 Summit was attended by several prominent world leaders including then-US President Joe Biden, then-UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, then-Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Premier Li Qiang from China, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and the host Prime Minister Narendra Modi.²⁷

The 18th G20 Summit culminated on September 10, 2023, with leaders of all the participating countries departing subsequently. However, Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s visit was marked by a range of India-Canada ties across different sectors, including the most pressing issue, Khalistan. Trudeau’s visit was overshadowed by criticism from the Indian counterpart for “strong concerns” over pro-Khalistan and “anti-India activities” in Canada.²⁸

²⁵ <https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscirf-deeply-concerned-indias-transnational-repression-against>

²⁶ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/india/>

²⁷ <https://www.g20.in/en/g20-india-2023/new-delhi-summit/new-delhi-summit.html>

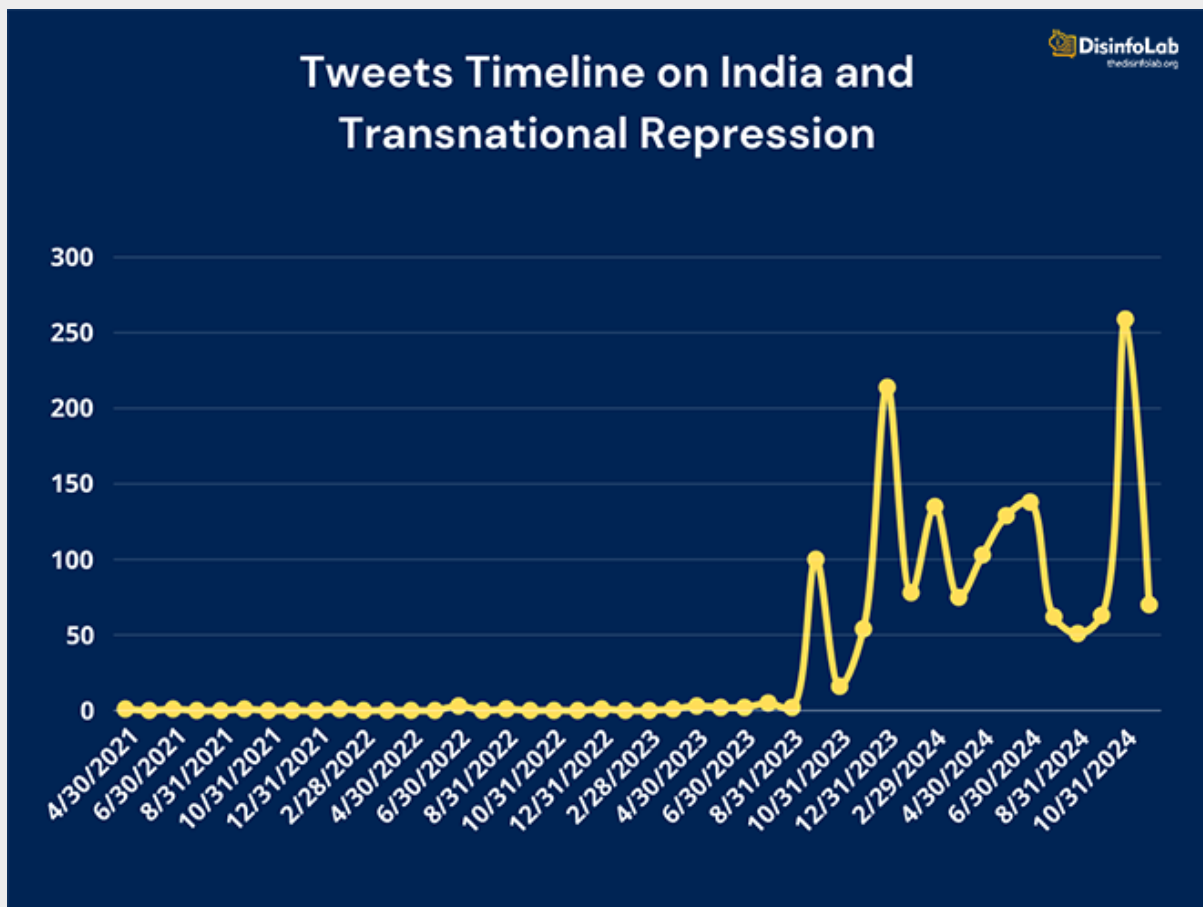
²⁸ https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/justin-trudeau-s-g20-visit-plane-troubles-diplomatic-tension-backlash-123091200659_1.html

What was India Accused of?

On September 18, 2023, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused India of involvement in the assassination of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a claim based on intelligence. This accusation came shortly after Trudeau visited India for the G20 Summit in New Delhi.²⁹

Following the allegations, social media platforms saw a surge in discussions about the deteriorating diplomatic relations between India and Canada. Our analysis revealed that many posts focused on the terms 'Transnational Repression' and 'India.'

A graph illustrating this trend shows a significant increase in conversations around these keywords beginning immediately after the G20 Summit, with multiple peaks in activity extending through to November 2024.



Our analysis of social media revealed that the bulk of the posts concerning India-Canada diplomatic relations were largely triggered by the Khalistan issue, which has been a central cause of the tension between the two nations. The accompanying word below highlights the central themes of the discourse, with 'Khalistan' as the focal point, accompanied by keywords like 'Transnational Repression' and 'India', along with relevant hashtags.

²⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/18/credible-evidence-india-behind-killing-of-canadian-sikh-leader-says-trudeau>



Moreover, the Canadian Prime Minister's accusations against the Indian government led to a wave of news articles, which in turn sustained and amplified the social media buzz surrounding this issue.

It is pertinent to note that Hardeep Singh Nijjar was the head of the pro-Khalistan outfit Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF), a terror outfit designated in India.³⁰ Nijjar was a close aide of Gurpatwant Singh Pannun (Sikhs for Justice) and was involved in the preparation of the Khalistan Referendum in British Columbia in cooperation with the US-based Sikh for Justice (SFJ). Nijjar entered Canada with a counterfeit Visa as 'Ravi Sharma' and went on to marry a Canadian citizen in order to obtain Canadian citizenship. During that time, he was also associated with the UK-based pro-Khalistani outfit Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and maintained close ties with Jagtar Singh Tara, a former chief of KTF, who had been involved in the assassination of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh. Nijjar was found to be providing financial assistance to Jagtar Singh Tara.³¹ Moreover, Nijjar was also put on the no-fly list of Canada and the US while the Canadian agencies froze his bank accounts.^{32,33}

Following the accusations by Justin Trudeau, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) rejected the allegations leveled by the Canadian Prime Minister on Hardeep Singh Nijjar's

³⁰ <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1900222>

³¹ [khalistan: From entering Canada on fake papers to being the latest face of the Khalistani movement: The life of Hardeep Singh Nijjar - The Economic Times](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/india/khalistan-from-entering-canada-on-fake-papers-to-being-the-latest-face-of-the-khalistani-movement-the-life-of-hardeep-singh-nijjar-the-economic-times)

³² <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/canada-news/story/hardeep-singh-nijjar-khalistan-canadian-no-fly-list-bank-account-frozen-tribute-in-parliament-canada-trudeau-2558395-2024-06-27>

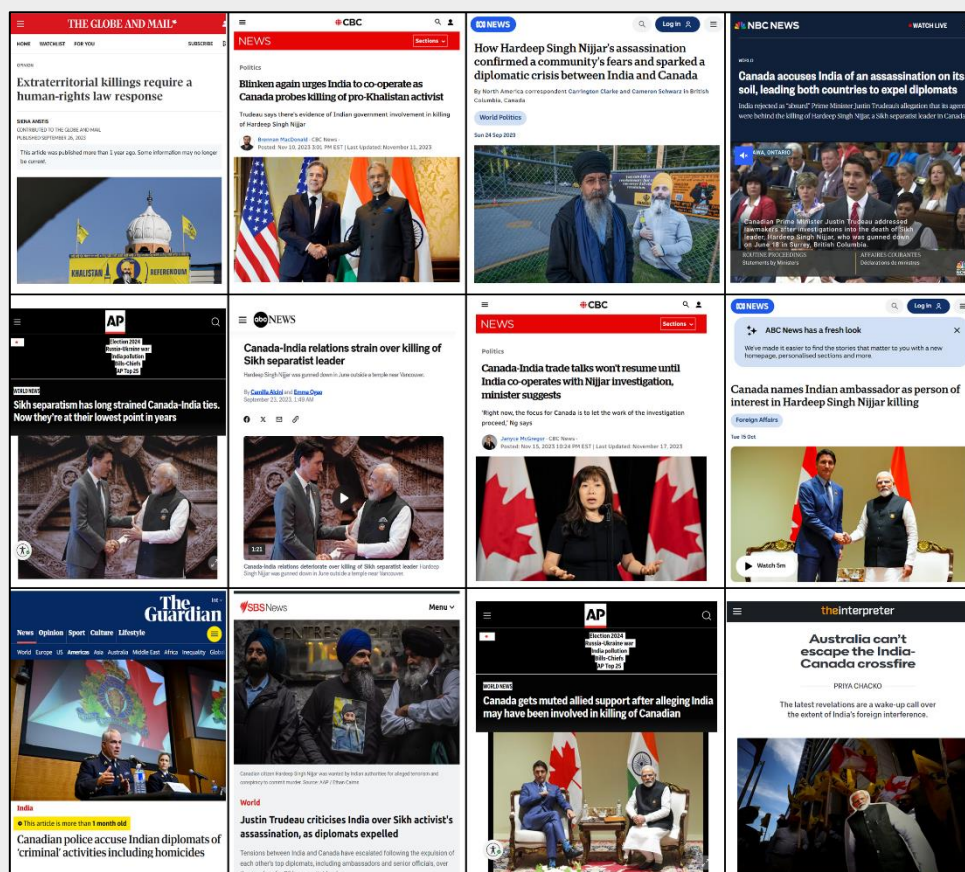
³³ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/canada-india-spat-hardeep-singh-nijjar-was-put-on-the-us-no-fly-list-in-2019-say-sources/videoshow/103909615.cms?from=mdr>

killing.³⁴ A year later, on October 16, 2024, Justin Trudeau acknowledged that he had only intelligence and no “hard evidentiary proof” when he alleged the involvement of Indian government agents in the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar last year.³⁵

India and Canada’s diplomatic have deteriorated under Justin Trudeau’s Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) government in the last two years. India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) hit out at Justin Trudeau for his “cavalier behavior” as the reason for the diplomatic fallout between the two countries. India also rejected the claims made by Trudeau saying that Canada had presented “no evidence whatsoever” to support its “serious allegations” and that these “preposterous” allegations were a “strategy of smearing India for political gains” by the Trudeau government.³⁶

Role of Western Media in downplaying the Khalistan Movement

It is pertinent to note that while India considers the Khalistan movement as a security threat to India’s sovereignty, western media, on the other hand, has for years looked into the Khalistan issue as a ‘Sikh Independence’ movement, while downplaying the militancy and terror angle of the Khalistan movement. The Western media has been going about this bias for years, which could be influenced by their audience's perspectives or their perception of geopolitical interests, especially when it comes to reporting on issues pertaining to India.



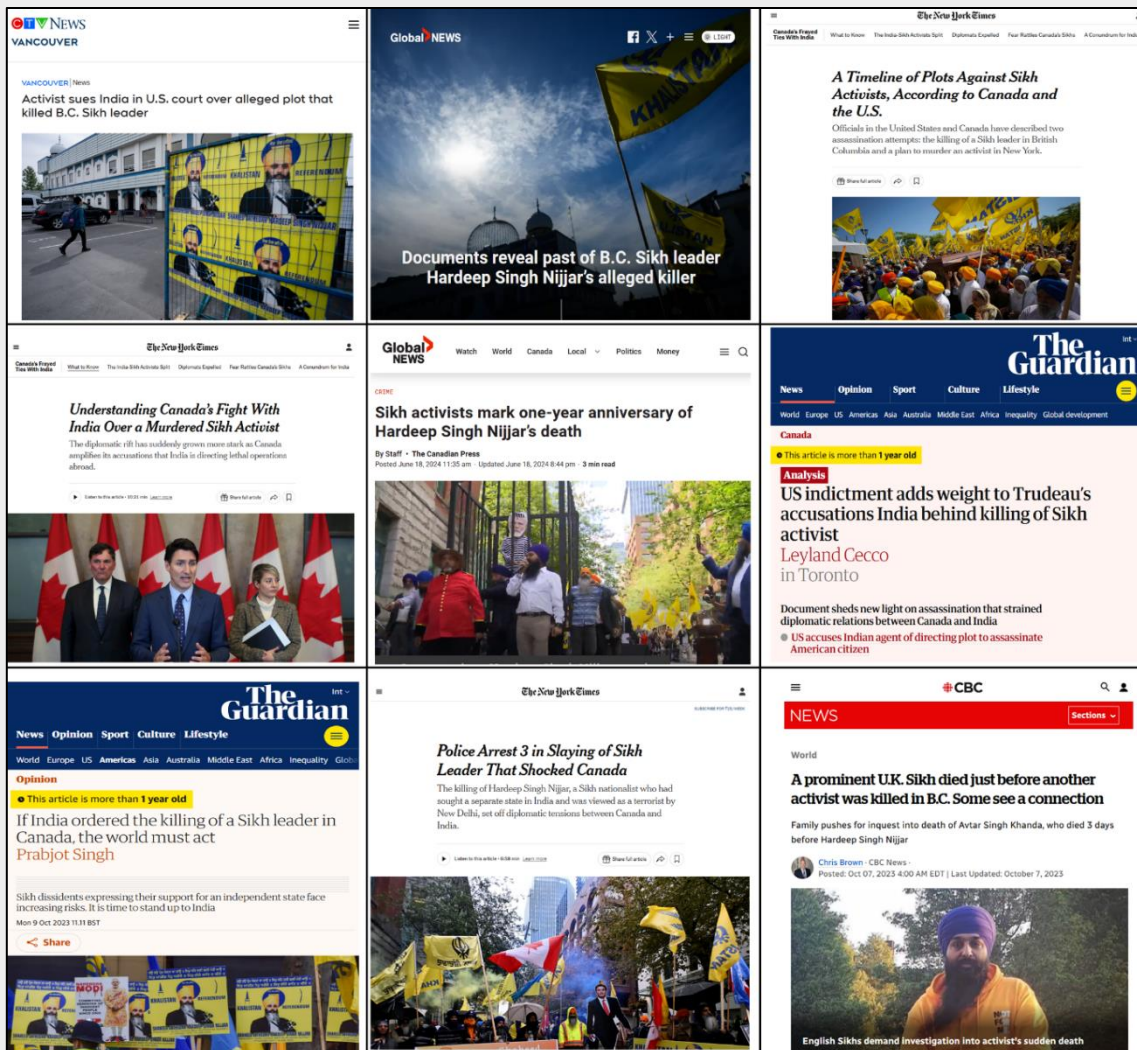
³⁴ <https://x.com/MEAIndia/status/170396327532997458/>

³⁵ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/had-no-evidence-only-intel-before-going-public-with-nijjar-allegations-trudeau-9624102/>

³⁶ https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/38417/Indias_response_to_diplomatic_communication_from_Canada

Western media has often been caught peddling narratives which in turn shapes a counter-narrative in reality. The coverage on the Khalistan movement is one prime example on how it has rather been biased in favor of the Khalistan movement. These Western media outlets gave a platform to pro-Khalistan separatists and downplayed the violence and terrorism associated with the movement. In November 2021, the BBC legitimized the Khalistan movement as the ‘Sikh Independence’ movement and went on to whitewash Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) and Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. The report was originally published by the UK-based Center for Information Resilience (CIR) and was duly dissected by DisinfoLab based on facts, bias, fallacies, and the actual propaganda peddled by CIR and BBC.^{37 38}

Similarly, the case of Hardeep Singh Nijjar was portrayed with utmost bias, with every Western media giving him varying descriptions and professions, deliberately leaving out the very obvious fact that he was a pro-Khalistani radical and chief of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) which is a banned terror entity in India. Some media called him ‘Sikh Activist’ while others called him a ‘Canadian citizen’, and some media went on to characterize him as a ‘plumber’ and whatnot.



³⁷ <https://www.info-res.org/app/uploads/2024/11/Analysis-of-the-RealSikh-Network.pdf>

³⁸ <https://thedisinfoLab.org/a-puppet-too-valuable/>

Reuters
 How the killing of a **Sikh plumber** in Canada led to a diplomatic war with India
 September 23, 2023 7:50 PM GMT+5:30 · Updated 2 months ago

Los Angeles Times
 Who was Hardeep Singh Nijjar, whose killing has divided Canada and India?
 An image of **Sikh independence activist** Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was killed three months ago, is featured on a banner outside a Sikh temple in British Columbia, Canada. (Darryl Dyck / Canadian Press)

The Intercept
FBI WARNED SIKHS IN THE U.S. ABOUT DEATH THREATS AFTER KILLING OF CANADIAN ACTIVIST
 The FBI visits took on a new urgency after Canada alleged Indian government involvement in the assassination of a Sikh separatist on Canadian soil.
 Nazka Hussain
 September 23, 2023, 1:26 p.m.

BBC NEWS
 Who was **Canadian Sikh leader** Hardeep Singh Nijjar?
 @ 2 October

The Guardian
FBI warned prominent US Sikhs of threats after murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada
 Pritpal Singh, a 69-year-old US citizen who serves as a coordinator for the American Sikh Caucus Committee, confirmed to the Guardian that he and two other associates were called by the FBI just days after the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the **Canadian citizen** who was ambushed on 18 June just outside his place of worship in Surrey, British Columbia.

Amid straining diplomatic ties between India and Canada, Canadian media amped up its twisted coverage of Nijjar. **The Globe and Mail** in its coverage called Nijjar a plumber, and a community activist. Other Western media like the UK State-funded BBC, The Guardian, The Washington Post, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, etc., had similar reporting.

The Reality- Evolution of the Khalistan Movement and its Menace

The Khalistan movement has been a pressing issue for India for years, which for years has created a range of problems for India, from funding and political support for separatist groups to strained international relations and security concerns. However, over the last 4-5 years, the Khalistan movement has soared up in the West against India. The pro-Khalistan groups such as Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) which is based in the US, and also has offices in Canada, the UK, and Australia have been at the center of anti-India and pro-Khalistan activities over the last few years. From organizing the 'Khalistan Referendum' in these countries, the SFJ has been able to get a free pass from security agencies and authorities. At the same time, the notorious group continues to issue death threats and threats of terror attacks on Indian airlines with impunity.

The Khalistan movement which calls for a sovereign Sikh state has been a weapon for targeting the sovereignty of India for over five decades and running. The initial engagement between Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Khalistan movement began in the 1970s when the ISI identified the issue as one of the key fault lines as potential leverage against India. The ISI established contacts with separatist leaders and terrorists abroad and started providing logistical support and safe havens to Khalistani extremists.

While this was in motion for years to come, the pro-Khalistan network with financial and logistical support was able to expand in countries including the US, UK, Canada, and Australia. The 1980s witnessed the Khalistan movement's transformation from political activism to militant separatism. Cut to the present, the pro-Khalistan movement has found haven in these FVEY alliance countries which have now supported Canada's claims against India.³⁹ Pro-Khalistani outfits like SFJ continue to issue terror threats to India including bombing of India's airlines.^{40 41}

³⁹ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-canada-row-uk-says-indias-cooperation-is-right-next-step/article68760246.ece>

⁴⁰ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/khalistani-terrorist-gurpatwant-pannun-fresh-warning-international-passengers-dont-fly-air-india-2620288-2024-10-21>

⁴¹ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/video/pro-khalistani-group-claims-responsibility-for-blast-near-delhi-school-2620299-2024-10-21>

Chapter 3: What is Five Eyes or FVEY Alliance?

In geopolitical terms, FVEY is an acronym that stands for "Five Eyes," a multilateral intelligence alliance comprising five English-speaking countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. This intelligence-sharing partnership emerged during the Cold War era, specifically during World War II, and was formalized through the UKUSA Agreement in 1946.

The roots of FVEY can be traced to World War II when it was formed to counter the Soviets during the Cold War via sharing signals intelligence (SIGINT) and conducting collaborative electronic surveillance. Since then, it has grown into a highly secretive alliance addressing global threats such as terrorism, cybersecurity, and other international security challenges. For years, there were many concerns regarding the privacy, security, and methods of working of this intelligence alliance which at the same time remained shrouded in mystery all that time. However, the alliance became more widely known to the public when it was embroiled in a major controversy in 2013 following the disclosure of classified documents by a former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor, Edward Snowden.⁴²

Another key talking point from this is how the Khalistan movement has been weaponized to arm-twist India globally in the last 3-4 years. Earlier, it was Pakistan-sponsored, but now this secessionist movement has found a haven in the West primarily in these FVEY countries.

The Khalistan issue was the leading trope for accusing India of Transnational Repression over the last 15 months. Following Canadian PM Justin Trudeau's statement (September 18) blaming the Indian government behind the killing of Khalistani Hardeep Singh Nijjar, four days later, on September 22, 2023, then-U.S Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a press conference accused India of TNR.^{43 44}

These events gave precedence to a barrage of articles peddling a certain narrative about India. This barrage of articles by the Western media namely, the BBC, The Washington Post, New York Times, CBC News, Associated Press, The Guardian, Global News, etc., peddling stories accusing the Indian government of 'Transnational Repression (TNR).'

But it did not happen in a day. It was a result of the churning of a plethora of articles, hammering the same narrative again and again, so it would become more prominent in the coming months to the present. Our investigation led us to conclude how the Transnational Repression (TNR) narrative upon India began with the Khalistan issue at the center and began to change forms in the subsequent months. This report casts light on how the branding of TNR was done in such a way that now it has been normalized into other forms as well, and used by other anti-India groups as a defense mechanism.

Indian government via diplomatic channels has several times reached out to these governments to take action against the Khalistani extremism on their respective soil. In

⁴² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/02/nsa-files-spying-allies-enemies-five-eyes-g8>

⁴³ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-a-press-availability-38/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/23/india-canada-row-blinken-calls-on-delhi-to-cooperate-in-push-for-accountability-over-killing>

February 2024, India raised its demand that pro-Khalistani outfits in the U.S. be investigated for instigating violence against India, as senior officials met for the India-U.S. Homeland Security Dialogue (HSD).⁴⁵ Earlier on November 11, 2023, it was reported that during the 2+2 ministerial meeting between India and the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, India's Ambassador to the US raised concerns about terror threats issued by the US-based pro-Khalistani outfit Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) to Air India flights.⁴⁶ There were still continuous threats to India's airlines by the US-based Khalistani outfits.⁴⁷

The collage features several news snippets:

- CBC NEWS:** "Hundreds gather in Vancouver to protest crackdown in India's Sikh-majority state"; "Police release bodycam footage from Brampton temple protest"; "Khalistani Separatists Target Toronto Kalibari in Mississauga, Create Ruckus, Disturb Worshippers"; "RCMP shutdown of Surrey protest supporting Indian farmers unconstitutional: lawyer".
- NDTV:** "Indian Envoy Cancels Event After Khalistani Supporters' Protest In Canada".
- The Tribune:** "Protests planned for Modi's visit to attend G7 summit in UK"; "Tricolour set alight, stamped on at London Khalistan rally"; "Video: 'Khalistan' supporters, Indians clash in Australia; 2 arrested"; "Brisbane's Indian Consulate forced to close down by Khalistan supporters as Police watched on"; "India slams vandalism of three Hindu temples in Australia and glorification of anti-India terrorists"; "Indian Consulate in Brisbane targeted by Khalistan goons beside two Temples threatened in Sydney and Melbourne".
- The Hindu:** "Hindu Temple defaced with pro-Khalistan graffiti in California's Hayward"; "CCTV video shows how tricolour was pulled down at Indian high commission in UK"; "I-Day: Separatist Sikh outfits protest outside Indian high commission in London".
- The Print:** "Indian journalist 'attacked' at pro-Amritpal protest in Washington, embassy condemns 'wanton violence'".
- CityNews:** "RCMP shutdown of Surrey protest supporting Indian farmers unconstitutional: lawyer".
- The Times of India:** "Indian consulate in San Francisco set on fire by Khalistan supporters; US calls it criminal offense".

A world map at the bottom highlights Canada (red), the UK (blue), and Australia (yellow) with callout lines connecting to the relevant news items. The map also labels the USA, India, and New Zealand.

⁴⁵ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/at-homeland-security-dialogue-india-us-discuss-khalistan-groups-curbing-drug-trafficking-and-illegal-migration/article67896559.ece>

⁴⁶ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-briefs-us-about-khalistan-concerns-us-seeks-cooperation-in-nijjar-probe/articleshow/105133398.cms>

⁴⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/khalistani-terrorist-gurpatwant-singh-pannun-issues-warning-against-flights-says-dont-fly-ai-flights-from-nov-1-19/articleshow/114432253.cms?from=mdr>

Chapter 4: Western Media & TNR Accusation on India

The international media landscape has witnessed a remarkable convergence of narratives surrounding the narrative of transnational repression in the context of India, a discourse that gained significant momentum following the G20 Summit in New Delhi in 2023. The diplomatic tensions between India and Canada, sparked by accusations of extrajudicial actions, became a catalyst for a complex and twisted media narrative. Western media was quick to jump into it.

As noted, the pivotal moment arrived with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's accusations regarding the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in September 2023, within days of the conclusion of the summit. This event triggered a cascade of international media coverage that predominantly portrayed India as a perpetrator of transnational repression, without substantive evidence. The narrative was further amplified in November 2023 when the United States claimed to have thwarted an alleged assassination plot against another Khalistani terrorist and leader of the separatist group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.

TNR & role of Western Media

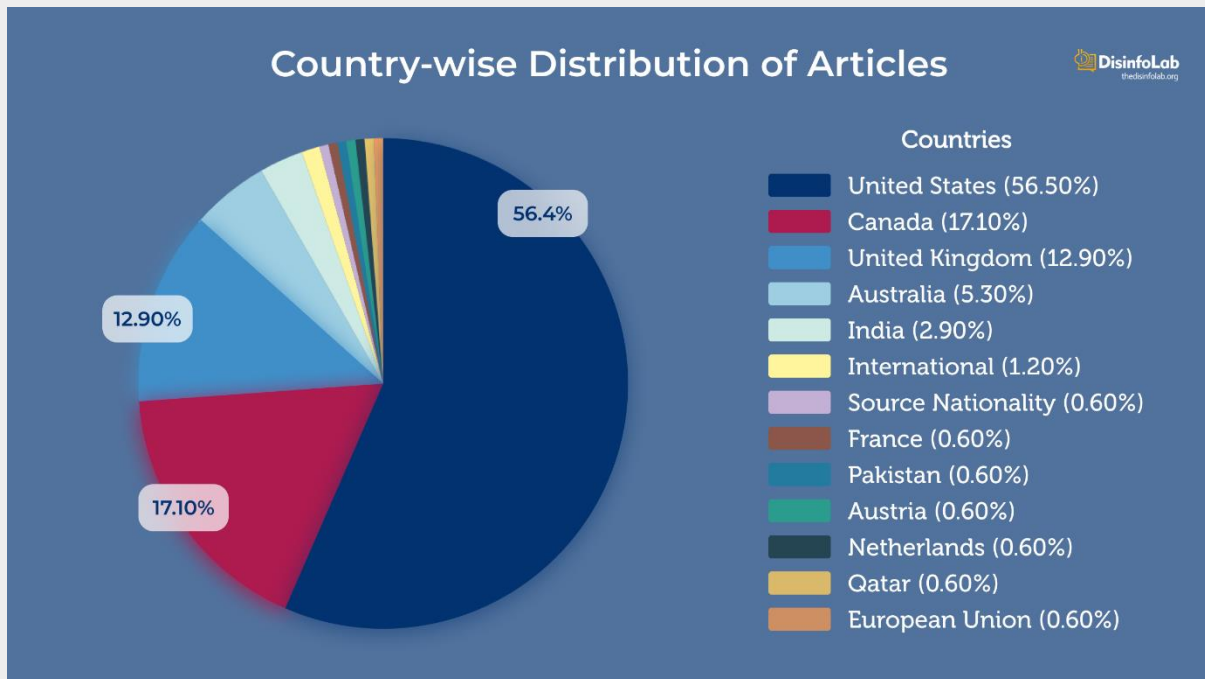
In the intricate world of international media, patterns often emerge that reveal more than what appears on the surface. Journalism, ideally a beacon of truth, sometimes becomes a prism through which geopolitical narratives are carefully crafted and projected. What a media portal can present and what it chooses to present has a colossal impact in the world of geopolitics.

As noted in the previous sections, over the past fifteen months, a discernible pattern has emerged in international media reporting regarding India. While it is not a problem that foreign media portals criticize the governments of other countries, it becomes an entirely different story when it starts hammering a certain label or accusation targeted against them to suit a certain narrative. These reports predominantly focus on sensitive issues such as the Khalistan movement, press freedom, and minority rights all building up towards the ultimate allegation- **Transnational Repression**. The Khalistani issue became the pivotal topic for manufacturing literature and media reporting by international portals to pin this narrative against India.

Recently the way the Western media has been doing their own versions of coverage about India has presented an intriguing pattern of reporting. The choice of painting India as a draconian, repressive nation through all these portals didn't seem to be limited to just a couple of portals of even one country. The reports were being manufactured in bulk and not just in one nation, it was a shared thing. This demanded our attention and we started studying and accumulating the data. What began as seemingly disconnected articles gradually revealed a more coordinated narrative-building exercise.

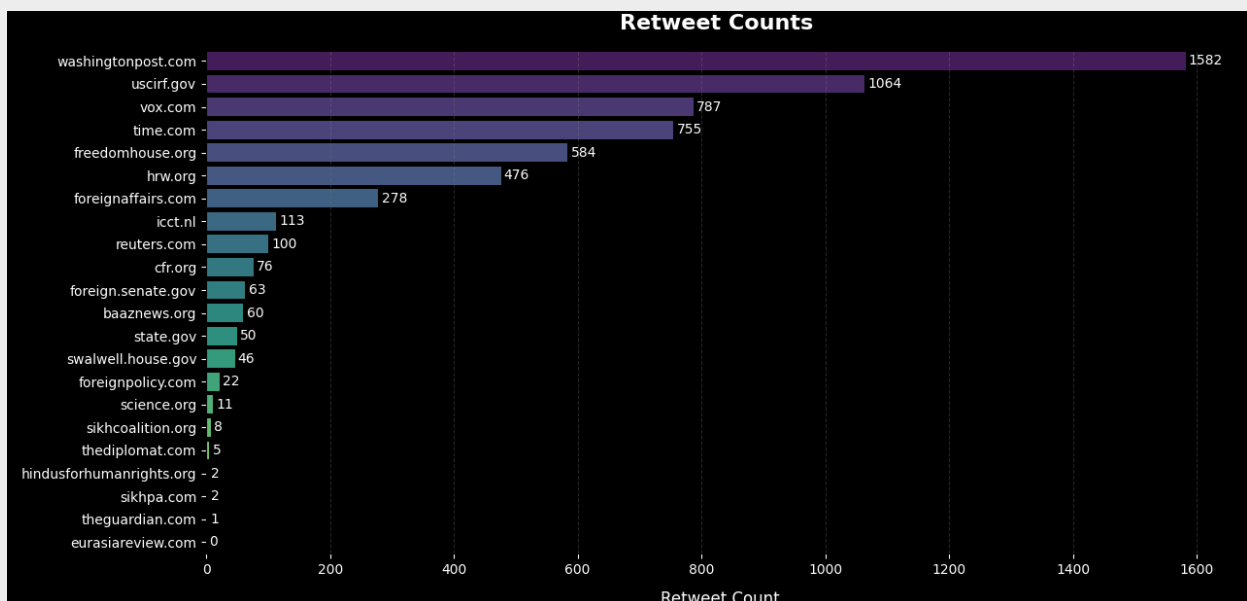
A comprehensive analysis of these media reports reveals a consistent pattern of selective storytelling. Prominent news portals of the nations including the **United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia**, notably all part of the Five Eyes Alliance—demonstrated a striking tendency to romanticize separatist figures while overlooking the complex national security challenges faced by India. Pannun, for instance, was

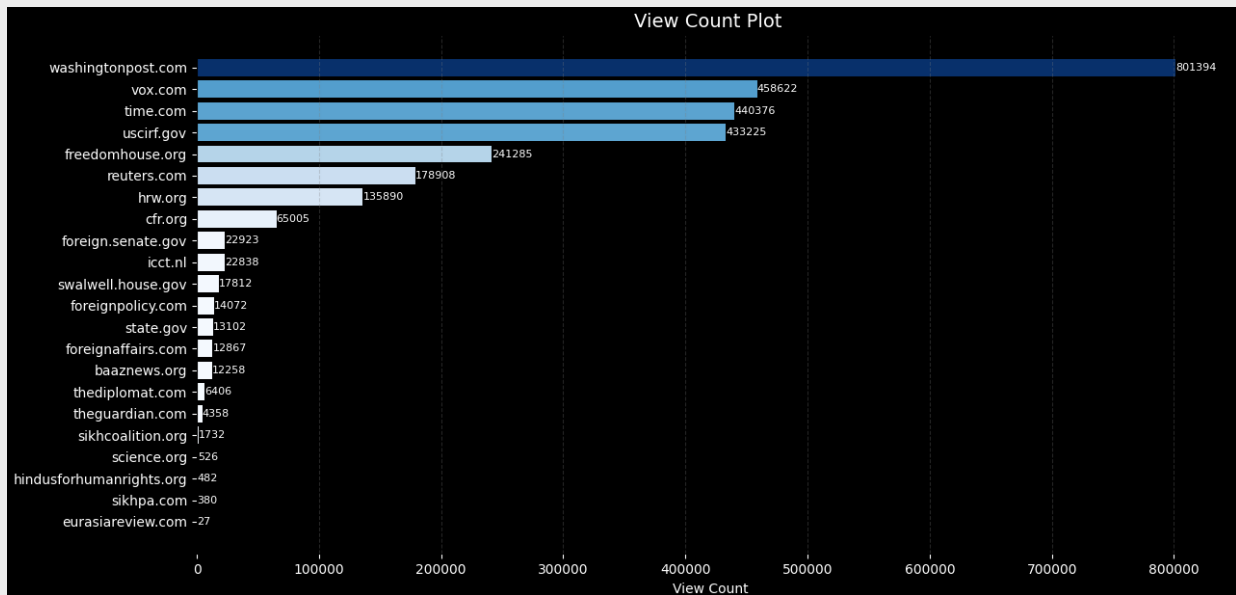
systematically portrayed as an activist or citizen, with media outlets sidestepping his role in separatist movements.



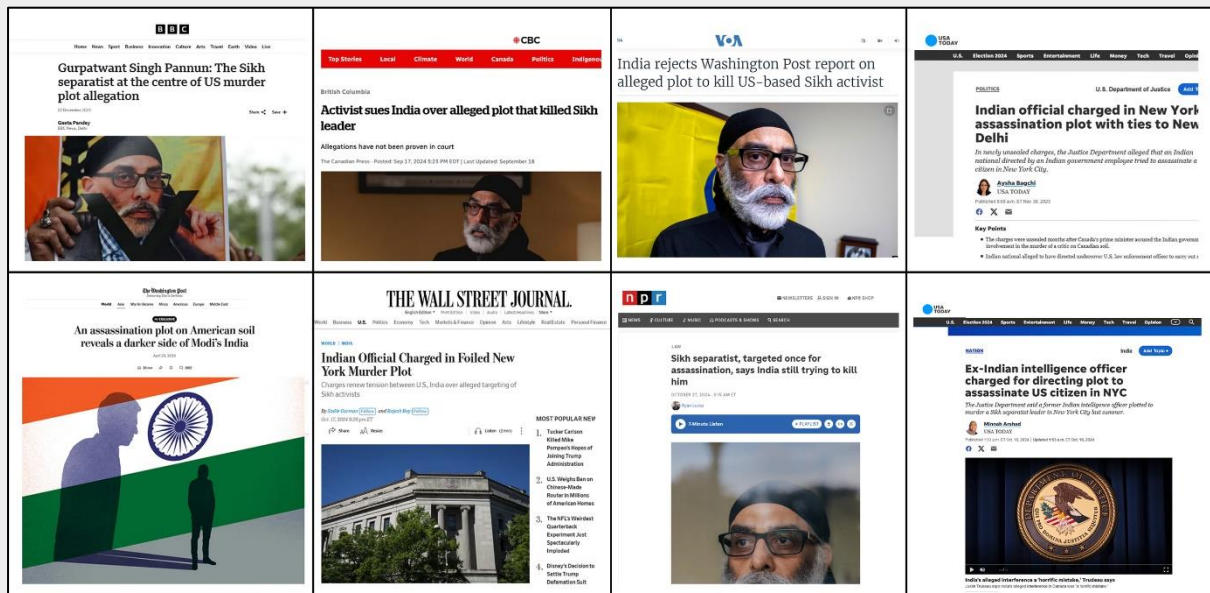
To further analyze the impact and engagement of the articles, we collected tweets sharing these articles from X (formerly Twitter), focusing on topics like India, Sikhs, Khalistan, etc. along with 'Transnational Repression.'

The collected data included retweets and view counts, which were used to create bar graphs for a comparative engagement analysis. This helped identify high-engagement articles and understand the divergence between retweets (active sharing) and views (passive reach).





The consistent theme across these media reports appears to be a concentrated critique of India's governance and diplomatic strategies. The media's approach to Pannun showcased a remarkable synchronicity. The Financial Times in the UK was the first to break the story of a thwarted assassination plot against Pannun in the US, a move that raises eyebrows given the sensational nature of the reporting.⁴⁸ Subsequently, media outlets from TIME magazine to CTV News and Australia's ABC News provided platforms that seemed more interested in amplifying allegations and making a hero out of a Khalistani radical, portraying Pannun as anything but a terrorist who has been fuelling the separatist agenda. In their reporting and articles, Pannun was a star activist, not a separatist, who threatened Indian diplomats every other day.



The Pannun case is just one example. The reporting on the killing of the terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar also exemplifies the media's selective narrative construction. Remarkably, news outlets demonstrated a chameleon-like approach to his identity, with reports

⁴⁸ <https://on.ft.com/3GdmEj8>

oscillating between portraying him as a simple plumber by the likes of Canadian portals The Globe and Mail and US portals Financial Times & USA Today, and an activist and Sikh Leader as per most Western media portals including, to name a few, BBC, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and PBS. What was conspicuously absent from most mainstream narratives was his documented background as a figure associated with terrorist activities threatening India's national security. These journalistic gymnastics effectively whitewashed the complex security implications, transforming a dangerous separatist into a sympathetic victim of transnational repression.

The collage consists of four news article screenshots:

- Top-left (Reuters):** Article titled "How the killing of a Sikh plumber in Canada led to a diplomatic war with India". The text mentions "Sikh plumber" and "diplomatic war with India".
- Top-right (Los Angeles Times):** Article titled "Who was Hardeep Singh Nijjar, whose killing has divided Canada and India?". It features a photo of a banner for "KHALISTAN" and "REFERENDUM" with "JATHEUSH HARDEEP SINGH NIJJAR" written on it.
- Bottom-left (The Intercept):** Article titled "FBI WARNED SIKHS IN THE U.S. ABOUT DEATH THREATS AFTER KILLING OF CANADIAN ACTIVIST". The text states "The FBI visits took on a new urgency after Canada alleged Indian government involvement in the assassination of a Sikh separatist on Canadian soil."
- Bottom-right (The Guardian):** Article titled "FBI warned prominent US Sikhs of threats after murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada". The text mentions "Pritpal Singh, a 69-year-old US citizen who serves as a coordinator for the American Sikh Caucus Committee, confirmed to the Guardian that he and two other associates were called by the FBI just days after the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the Canadian citizen who was ambushed on 18 June just outside his place of worship in Surrey, British Columbia."

The inconsistency in Nijjar's media representation is telling. Whereas media portals had ample opportunity to delve into his connections with separatist movements, terrorist activities, and security threats, they instead chose a narrative that painted India as an aggressor. This approach not only oversimplified a nuanced geopolitical issue but also potentially provided tacit support to separatist agendas by delegitimizing India's national security concerns.

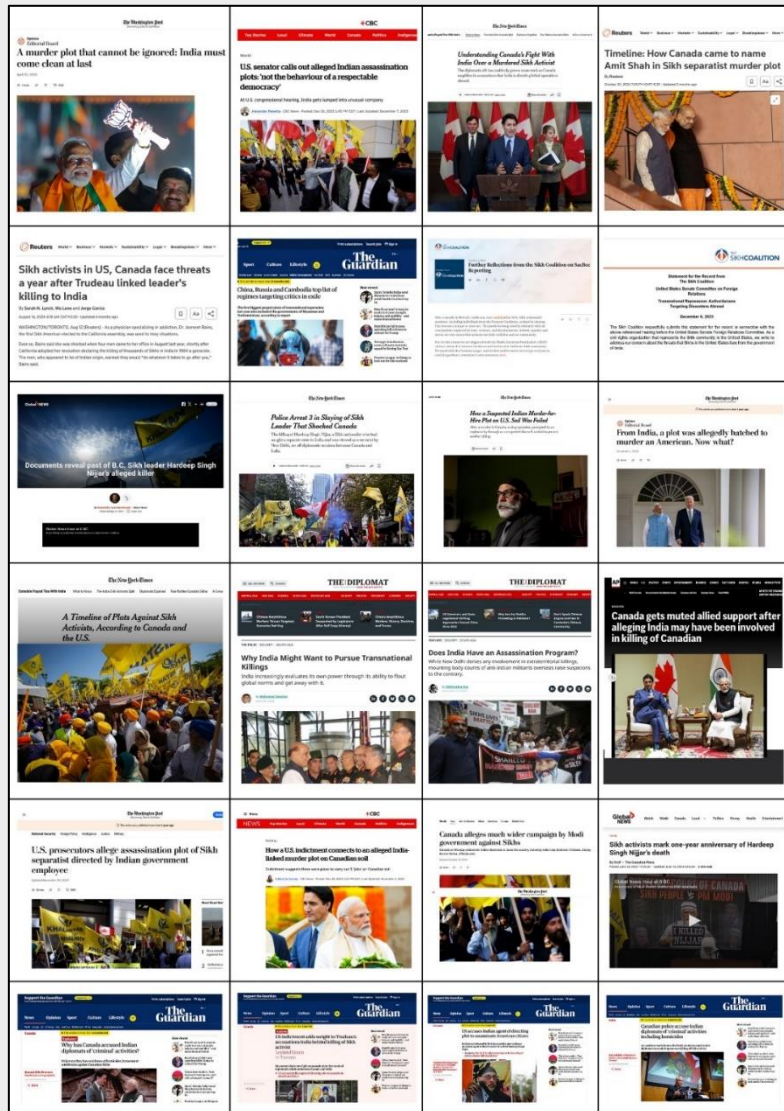
It goes on to show how the Western media portals (of the Five Eyes Alliance) made sure the narrative was twisted against India. To sum up how the Western media portrayed the Khalistani issue, the instances include:

- a. Portrayal of Khalistani extremists as Activists
- b. Propaganda reporting after Nijjar's killing
- c. Plethora of articles on the India-Canada diplomatic row over the Khalistani issue, biased against India.
- d. Articles on TNR accusation on India.

The consistent theme across these media reports appears to be a concentrated critique of India's governance and diplomatic strategies. The word cloud suggests that the

Chapter 5: Freedom House: A Central Reference Point

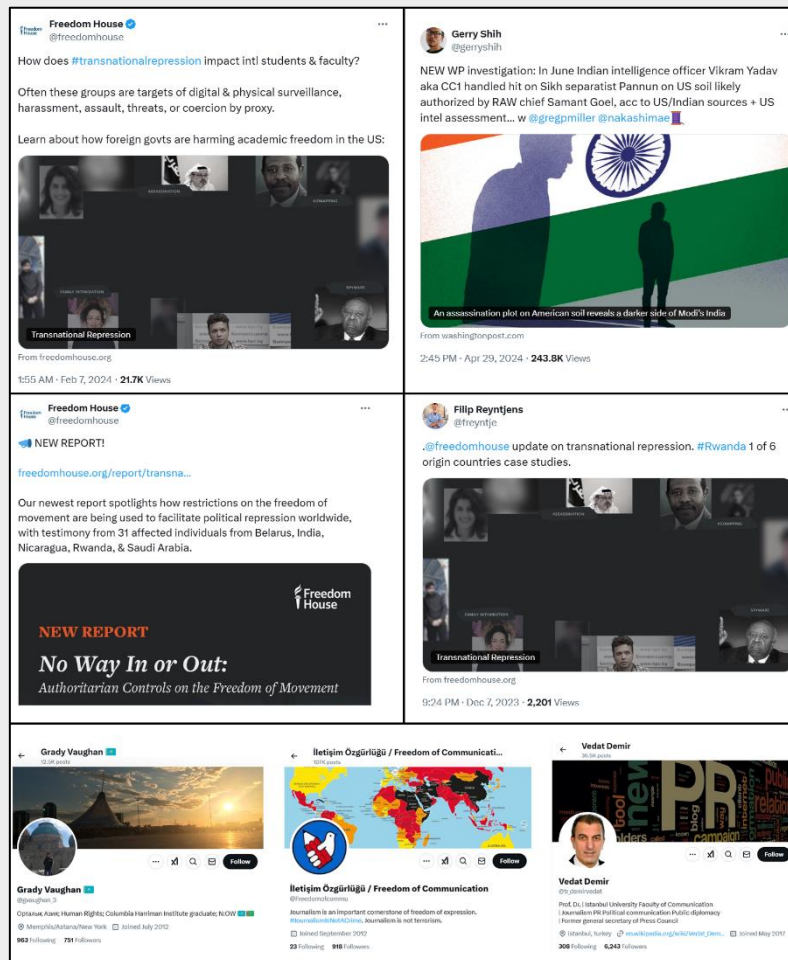
From the analysis, we found that **Freedom House** emerged as a pivotal reference in these discussions and reporting by prominent Western media portals. It provides statistical and qualitative assessments that form the backbone of most of the reports accusing India of transnational repression. The organization's annual reports and country assessments, as well as reports on Transnational Repression, have been extensively cited in articles about India's governance.



Our analysis showed that **Freedom House** played a key role in the mainstreaming of TNR as the buzzword in the last 2 years especially pertaining to India. While the impact of FH in making the TNR narrative against India was evident in the news cycle, we could observe a similar impact on social media as well.

We conducted a **network analysis** focusing on the accounts retweeting articles published by Freedom House. This analysis aimed to identify key accounts driving engagement and potential Sikh clusters within the retweet network

The network analysis of retweets for articles published by Freedom House revealed several accounts with the highest connectivity. These accounts play a pivotal role in amplifying the content and forming critical hubs in the network. Below are the accounts identified as having the maximum connections:



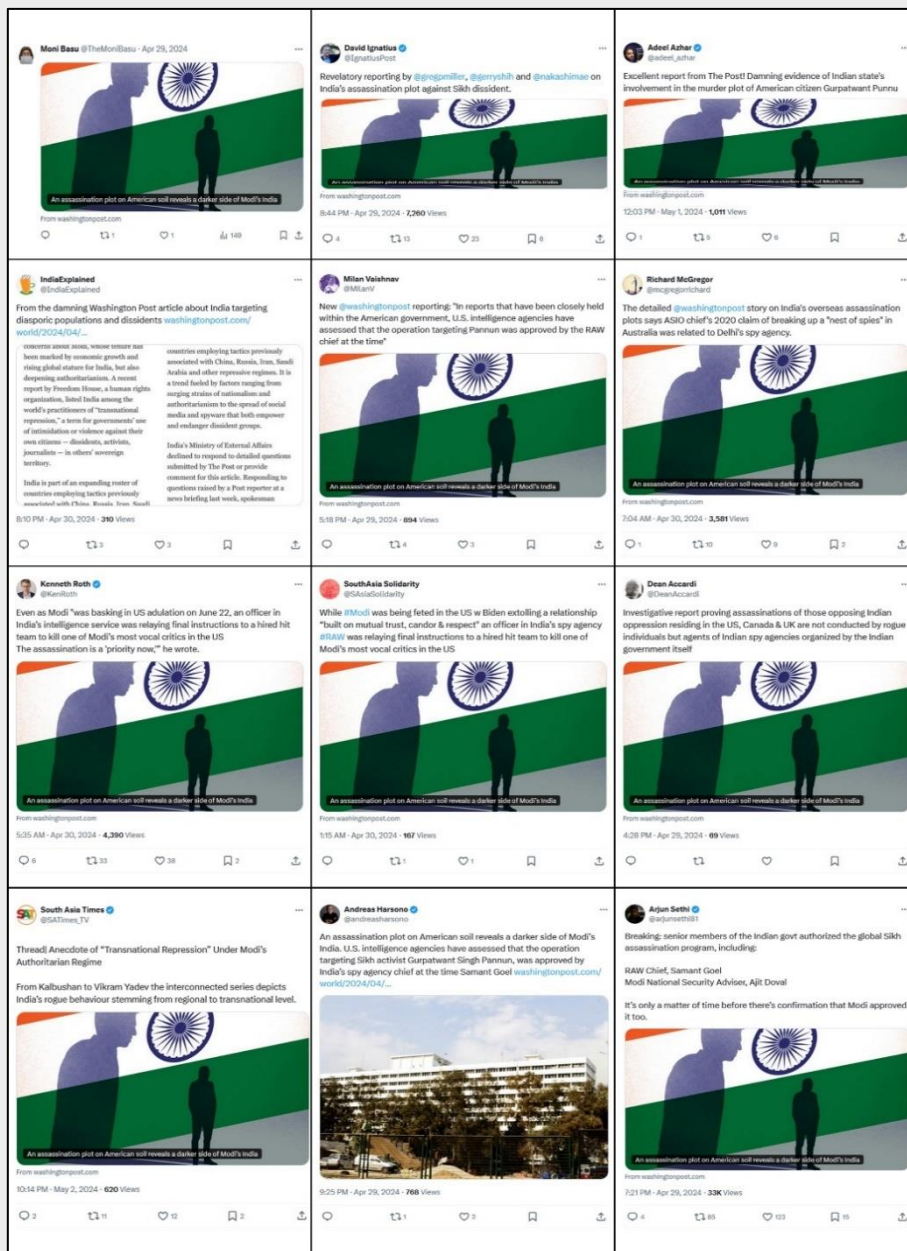
On social media, mainly X, the narrative of TNR against India was also spearheaded by articles covered by global media portals namely, Washington Post, CBC News, Associated Press, The Guardian, New York Times, The Diplomat, and Reuters.

For Articles shared on X		
Media House	Views	RTs
washingtonpost	1227236	1983
cbc.ca	278618	402
apnews	259501	74
theguardian	197719	658
reuters	171277	49
nytimes	172572	52
thediplomat	24373	93

Articles with both high retweet counts and view counts stand out as the most impactful. These represent content that resonated strongly with audiences and achieved significant dissemination.

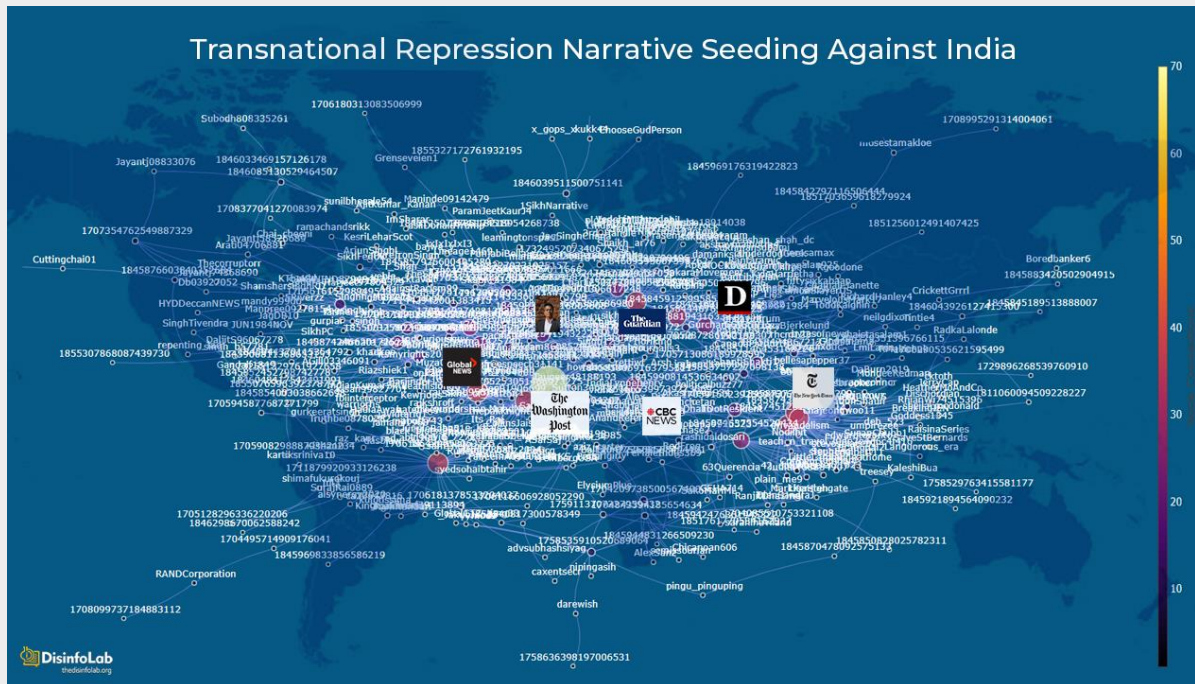
Washington Post was one of the leading portals which was found to be publishing articles on the murder-for-hire plot on Khalistani Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, who was made a star by the Western media when the news of an assassination plot was reported by the Financial Times on November 23, 2023.⁴⁹ Washington Post's articles had a collective gross view of over TNR 1.2 million views on X.

Washington Post's stories on TNR and India were reposted and shared on X by several social media users as illustrated below



⁴⁹ <https://www.ft.com/content/56f7d6d6-6a93-4172-a49e-d8a91991e29d>

Furthermore, we plotted a network graph of tweets sharing Freedom House articles to map connections between tweets, revealing clusters of accounts and key influencers driving discussions around these topics.



The Network graph of the Retweet network of the posts shared with links to articles (referring to Freedom House TNR report) from these media houses, had multiple overlapping connections, or in simple words, the same accounts were retweeting several of these tweets.

Part 2: TNR and Freedom House Dogma

Chapter 6: Freedom House- Not an NGO!

Founded in 1941, Freedom House defines itself as a US-based independent, non-governmental organization that advocates for democracy, political freedom, and human rights across the globe. Historically, the main objective of creating Freedom House was to promote American involvement in World War II and the fight against fascism. One of its early leaders was former First Lady of the US Eleanor Roosevelt and then-Republican presidential nominee Wendell Willkie when the organization was initially tasked with countering isolationism and fighting Nazi Germany.⁵⁰

Over the last 3-4 years, Freedom House which is prescribed to be the global commentator on Democracy and Human rights across the globe has been seen to publish slanted views in its reports on India.

It started in 2021 when Freedom House deemed India a 'Partially Free' democracy. Since then, Freedom House has labelled India with the same tag. However, Freedom House's methodology has also been scrutinized for potentially subjective interpretations, especially in how it scores India's political rights and civil liberties. The organization often cites incidents or policies without considering broader contextual nuances.

A report published (in November 2022) by the Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister (EAC-PM) of India headed by Dr. Sanjeev Sanyal, & Joint Director of EAC-PM, Akanksha Arora, dissects the evaluation methods of Freedom House in its ratings to the countries worldwide.⁵¹

They highlighted how there is a significant drop in India's scores. India's Civil Liberties score stayed at 42 until 2018 but fell to 33 by 2022, while its Political Rights score went from 35 to 33. This resulted in India's total score dropping to 66, categorizing it as "partially free," a status it last held during the Emergency in the 1970s and during the economic liberalization of the early 1990s.

This classification seems inconsistent because the Emergency involved clear suppression of freedoms, unlike the economic liberalization or the current situation. In comparison, Northern Cyprus, which is only recognized by Turkey, had a score of 77, making it "free" according to Freedom House. Meanwhile, Freedom House also evaluates Jammu and Kashmir separately and labels it "not free," exposing its ignorance towards geographical nuances and giving away bias in its evaluation.

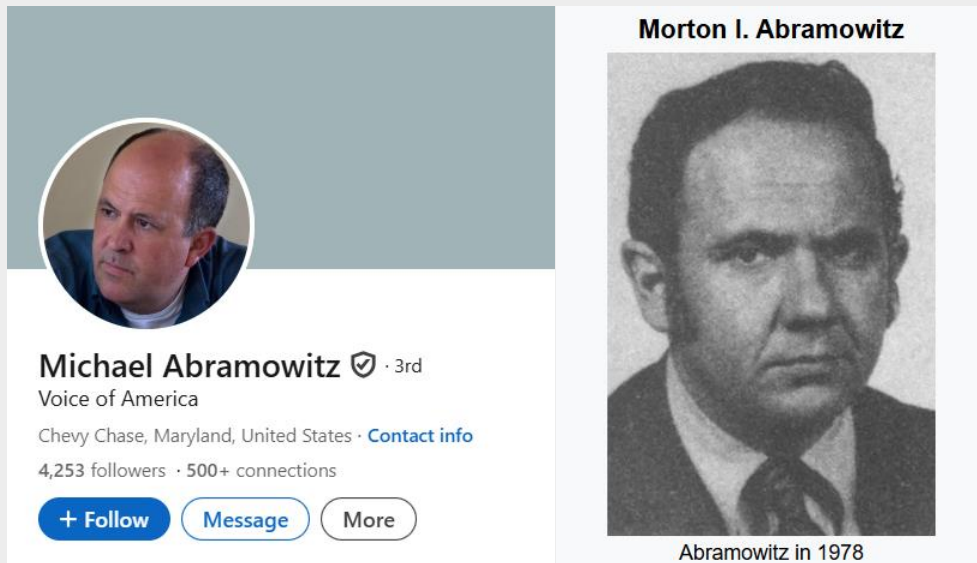
Freedom House's former President Michael J. Abramowitz (until May 2024) is a prime example of FH's charade of projecting itself as an independent NGO. Michael Abramowitz is a former Washington Post (WaPo) journalist, having served as National Editor and White House correspondent for the WaPo during his stint before joining the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Jan 2009- Feb 2017). He joined Freedom House in February 2017.

His father, Morton L. Abramowitz, was an American diplomat who focused heavily on intelligence during his career at the U.S. State Department. During his career in the

⁵⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/about-us>

⁵¹ https://eacpm.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Global-perception-indices_Final_22_Nov.pdf

foreign service, he was posted in Taiwan. He then served as U.S. Ambassador to Thailand and Turkey and as the Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research. He retired from the State Department with the rank of Career Ambassador.



Later on, he served as the president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, co-chairing the Bipartisan Policy Center's Turkey Initiative, and founding the International Crisis Group. His career was marked by a deep integration of intelligence work into diplomatic strategy.

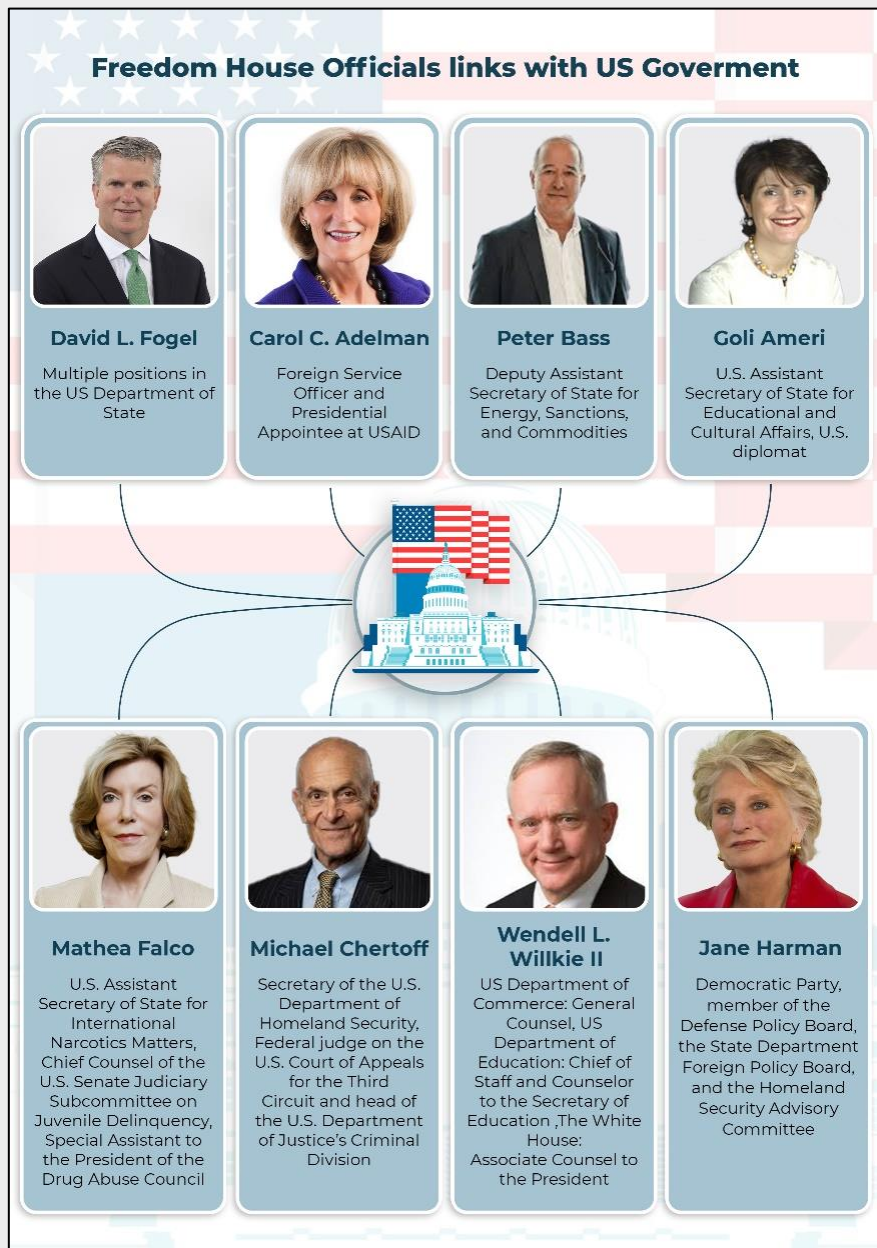
Michael Abramowitz joined **Voice of America (VOA)**, another federal government-funded US broadcast media in April 2024, as its new director.⁵² This is not just a one-off case.

This hardly seems to be an oversight for an organization replete with individuals who have directly/indirectly served the US government. While Freedom House operates as a non-governmental organization, several members of its board of trustees work for various bodies of the US State Department.

The names include: Jane Harman – (Democratic Party, member of the Defense Policy Board, the State Department Foreign Policy Board, and the Homeland Security Advisory Committee), Wendell L. Willkie II (US Department of Commerce: General Counsel, US Department of Education: Chief of Staff and Counsellor to the Secretary of Education ,The White House: Associate Counsel to the President), Goli Ameri (U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. diplomat), Peter Bass (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Energy, Sanctions, and Commodities), Carol C. Adelman (Foreign Service Officer and Presidential Appointee at USAID), Michael Chertoff (Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and head of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Criminal Division), Mathea Falco (U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics Matters, Chief Counsel of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Juvenile

⁵² <https://www.voanews.com/a/usagm-names-freedom-house-president-as-new-voa-director-/7577060.html>

Delinquency, Special Assistant to the President of the Drug Abuse Council), and David L. Fogel (Multiple positions in the US Department of State).



Not so Independent Freedom House

Financial trails of such reportage reveal a complex but worth-noting factor surrounding it. Funding sources behind these research organizations and media platforms reveal intricate networks of influence that extend far beyond simple journalistic reporting.

The Organization receives grants from federal agencies and international public agencies for various purposes. While Freedom House receives a large portion of its funding from private grantmaking institutions, about 90% of its funding comes from the **United States government**. In 2023 alone, the US Government gave grants to the tune of USD 93,979,673 to the organization.

Major Donors of Freedom House

Organisation	Funds	Year
Open Society Foundation	\$7,324,980	2019-2023
Mac Arthur Foundation	\$1,060,000	2008-2013
Ford Foundation	\$1,500,000	2013-2022
Hewlett Foundation	\$1,287,500	2004-2018
Rockefeller Brothers Fund	\$50,000	2021
National Endowment for Democracy	\$2,017,578	2016-2023
Rockefeller Brothers Fund	\$245,320,249	2015-2023
Achelis & Bodman Foundation	\$275,000	2019-2023



Notable private donors of Freedom House include the **Open Society Foundations, the Ford Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation** among others as shown in the graph above.

Freedom House, despite branding itself as an independent entity, appears to be deeply integrated with governmental structures. Its composition and operations suggest a complex interplay between seemingly autonomous organizations and official state mechanisms. The organization's leadership, funding sources, and collaborative relationships with government agencies like the US State Department blur the lines between independent analysis and state-sponsored narrative construction.

The term "non-governmental organization" has increasingly become a strategic façade, masking what is essentially an extension of governmental influence.⁵³ These organizations leverage the perception of independence to shape public discourse and international narratives, effectively serving as soft power instruments that operate with a veneer of objectivity while fundamentally advancing specific geopolitical interests.

This phenomenon represents a sophisticated form of information management, where the appearance of independence is carefully crafted to lend credibility to narratives that align with governmental strategic objectives. The boundaries between objective reporting and deliberate narrative engineering have become so porous that the very concept of an "independent" organization has been substantially compromised.

⁵³ <https://dodsoco.ogc.osd.mil/Conflicts-of-Interest/#:~:text=%C2%A7%202008%2C%20a%20Federal%20employee,matter%20in%20which%2C%20to%20his>

Chapter 7: Genesis of Transnational Repression

The contemporary prominence of Transnational Repression (TNR) as a geopolitical buzzword is a relatively recent phenomenon, with its current conceptual framing having emerged quite recently. TNR as it stands today resulted from strategic planning that began not very long ago. While the term ‘Transnational Repression’ was concocted by sociologist Dana Moss in 2016, its institutionalization started roughly in 2019 when Freedom House began documenting cases to contribute to the institutionalization of the term.⁵⁴

As per Freedom House’s website, the project on TNR originated with a workshop on transnational repression organized by Edward Lemon at the Harriman Institute at Columbia University in May 2018. It was followed by an 18-month-long research project on TNR, which was duly funded by the New York-based **Achelis & Bodman Foundation**. As per 2023 documents, Freedom House received **USD 50,000** from the **Achelis & Bodman Foundation** for ‘*Stopping Transnational Repression in the United States*’.⁵⁵

It is pertinent to note that during that time, the countries that were focused on the TNR project were Syria, Iran, Rwanda, Russia, China, Turkey, Vietnam, Equatorial Guinea, and Ethiopia. India was not on the list.

The **Achelis and Bodman Foundation** was formally established on November 25, 2015, from the merger of The Achelis Foundation (established in 1940) and The Bodman Foundation (established in 1945). The foundation’s activities and funding are concentrated in six main program areas: art and culture, education, employment, health, public policy, and youth and families.⁵⁶ Following months of research, in 2020 Freedom House published a four-part essay on TNR coauthored by Marcus Michaelsen,⁵⁷ Fiona B. Adamson & Gerasimos Tsourapas,⁵⁸ Dana M Moss,⁵⁹ and Saipira Furstenberg, Tena Prelec, & John Heathershaw.⁶⁰

To counter the misuse of INTERPOL?

Geopolitical analysts and experts believe that the Western countries like the US, UK, Canada, and the European Union have criticized the use of INTERPOL notices for the last few years. These countries believe that INTERPOL is misused by certain countries primarily due to concerns over the organization's Red Notice system being exploited for political purposes rather than solely for criminal justice.^{61,62}

⁵⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20210204095313/https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/about-acknowledgements>

⁵⁵ https://achelisbodman.org/wp-content/uploads/grants_23.1.pdf

⁵⁶ <https://achelisbodman.org/>

⁵⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/digital-transnational-repression-toolkit-and-its-silencing-effects>

⁵⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/home-and-abroad-coercion-proxy-tool-transnational-repression>

⁵⁹ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/importance-defending-diaspora-activism-democracy-and-human-rights>

⁶⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/internationalization-universities-and-repression-academic-freedom>

⁶¹ <https://amp.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/oct/17/has-interpol-become-the-long-arm-of-oppressive-regimes>

⁶² <https://hir.harvard.edu/weaponizing-the-police-authoritarian-abuse-of-interpol/>

INTERPOL, or the **International Criminal Police Organization**, is an international organization that facilitates police cooperation and crime control. INTERPOL issues notice as international alerts to communicate information between its member countries. There are different types of INTERPOL notices that serve various purposes, such as seeking fugitives, warning about threats, or providing information about missing persons. Each notice is color-coded and serves a specific function such as Red Notice, Blue Notice, Green Notice, Yellow Notice, Orange Notice, Purple Notice, and Black Notice.

The U.S. government has consistently criticized countries like Russia, China, and Turkey for what the US views as the misuse of INTERPOL. Similarly, the UK courts have refused extradition requests, citing human rights norms among various factors.⁶³

In order to have regulations for the control of the INTERPOL, the US government came up with various laws including the Transnational Repression Accountability and Prevention Act in 2021.

TRAP Act of 2021

On May 12, 2021, Senator Roger Wicker (R) introduced the **Transnational Repression Accountability and Prevention Act of 2021, or the TRAP Act of 2021**, in the US Senate. Senator Ben Cardin (D) co-sponsored the bill, which aimed to establish requirements related to U.S. cooperation with International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) communications.⁶⁴ TRAP ACT of 2021 was enacted as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022 in December after then-US President Joe Biden signed the NDAA into law on December 27, 2021.⁶⁵ The same was first introduced on September 13, 2019, in the House of Representatives as H.R. 4330 by Representative Joe Wilson.⁶⁶ The Act was in a bipartisan response to widespread concern about the *abuse of Interpol* by countries that the US views as authoritarian such as like Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela for political purposes

However, the TRAP Act did not advance to become law during that session of Congress until it was reintroduced in 2021.

The Bill also required for the following things:

- a. No U.S. agency or department can arrest someone just because of an INTERPOL notice unless: (1) they confirm the person can be extradited, (2) the requesting country submits a proper arrest request, and (3) there is a valid arrest warrant.
- b. U.S. agencies can also not rely solely on an INTERPOL notice to take actions like detaining someone or denying a visa unless there is additional reliable evidence to back up the notice.
- c. The bill also required reports on countries that misuse INTERPOL notices for political or illegal reasons.

⁶³ <https://cbi.gov.in/press-detail/NTMxNA==>

⁶⁴ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1591>

⁶⁵ https://us.transparency.org/news/new-law-protects-those-who-call-out-corruption/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁶⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4330/amendments>

Motive- To come up with a counter-strategy against the use of Interpol and its notice system. Countries like the US, UK, Canada, Germany, France, and the European Union (EU) have raised concerns about what they deem as misuse of Interpol & its Red Notice System globally.

In April 2023, the US Department of State published a biannual assessment mandated by the TRAP Act to examine the misuse of INTERPOL's tools by member countries. The report notes specific countries frequently cited for misuse, including China, Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and others. These countries have allegedly used INTERPOL notices to harass or persecute individuals outside their borders. The report called for increased transparency, better scrutiny of Red Notice requests, and more robust international cooperation to ensure INTERPOL's systems are not used for political repression.⁶⁷

India has been an active member since 1949, hosting significant INTERPOL events, contributing to databases like the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database, and participating in various international operations against crime, including drug smuggling, human trafficking, and cybercrime.

When the TRAP Act 2021 was passed, it didn't seem to directly affect India at that time. In the past, India has also not been named in the accusations of misusing INTERPOL or India's requests to issue Red Corner notices.⁶⁸ However, India's attempts to secure a Red Notice have been rejected in past several times. India's request for a Red Notice against Gurupatwant Singh Pannun (SFJ) was rejected by the INTERPOL, indicating some level of scrutiny or resistance to India's requests. In Pannun's case, INTERPOL cited "*insufficient evidence to prove his links with terror attacks or its funding*" and concerns about the political nature of the request.⁶⁹

Additionally, there was a case where a Red Notice against Indian-born fugitive and businessman Mehul Choksi was withdrawn after he challenged it, which some interpret as a critique of India's use of INTERPOL mechanisms.

⁶⁷ <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/April-2023-Transnational-Repression-Accountability-and-Prevention-Act-Report.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/20/world/europe/interpol-strongmen-abuse.html>

⁶⁹ <https://thewire.in/world/interpol-rejects-indias-red-corner-notice-against-khalistan-separatist-gurpatwant-singh-pannun>

Chapter 8: Making TNR a Global Narrative

We noted how the creation and eventual institutionalization of Transnational Repression (TNR) began roughly in 2019; however, it became part of a law in 2021. We also noted how the institutionalization of TNR began in 2018-19, however, it began to take shape in 2021.

It began with the introduction of the TRAP Act 2021 bill in May which was eventually passed into an Act in December 2021. During this time, when the US government was in the process of passing the TRAP Act of 2021, the US government organized the inaugural Summit for Democracy (S4D) on December 9-10, 2021 as part of a broader initiative by the Biden-Harris administration to put democracy and human rights at the center of U.S. foreign policy.⁷⁰ The virtual summit aimed to renew democracy both domestically and internationally while confronting autocracies. It focused on three main themes: defending against authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights.

Freedom House was one of the organizations that organized one of the events in the lead-up to the inaugural Summit for Democracy event. On December 7, 2021, Freedom House organized a virtual event “Responding to Transnational Repression” which was co-presented by Yana Gorokhovskaia (Senior Research Analyst, Freedom House), Isabel Linzer (Research Analyst, Freedom House), Siena Anstis (Senior Legal Advisor, Citizen Lab), Noura Al-Jizawi (Research Officer, Citizen Lab and one of the persons involved in conceiving the TNR project)⁷¹, and Marcus Michaelsen (Senior Postdoctoral Researcher, Vrije Universiteit Brussel).⁷²

And it was only after the 2021 report on TNR by Freedom House, and the Summit for Democracy (S4D), the US National Security Council announced a “whole-of-government” approach to counter the threat posed by authoritarian governments to activists and dissidents living beyond their borders.⁷³ The TNR terminology was also adopted by different government agencies including the FBI by at least 2022.⁷⁴

The FBI recognizes transnational repression (TNR) as a serious threat, describing it as actions by foreign governments to harass, intimidate, or target their citizens living in the United States or U.S. citizens with foreign connections. The FBI highlighted TNR tactics, such as stalking, cyber hacking, and coercion, aimed at silencing dissent, extracting information, or forcing individuals to return to their country of origin, emphasizing the violation of U.S. sovereignty and individual rights.⁷⁵

Cut to the present, Freedom House has a database on TNR as “TNR Watch” and started monthly issues on TNR around July-August 2023. Freedom House has policy

⁷⁰ <https://www.state.gov/summit-for-democracy-2021/#CS>

⁷¹ <https://marcusmichaelsen.eu/>

⁷² <https://summit4democracy.org/event/responding-to-transnational-repression/>

⁷³ <https://freedomhouse.org/article/tnr-watch-whats-name>

⁷⁴ <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/transnational-repression>

⁷⁵ <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/transnational-repression>

recommendations for governments, tech companies, and civil society organizations to counteract the TNR practices.⁷⁶

TNR Watch: What's in a Name?

The first step in addressing a problem is naming it. The second is defining it. Although awareness of transnational repression has increased among policymakers in recent years, there is still no single, official definition. The absence of a codified definition is preventing the development of a comprehensive policy agenda to combat the threat.

Filling a gap: Shortly after the release of Freedom House's report *Out of Sight, Not Out of Reach* in 2021, the US National Security Council announced a "whole-of-government" approach to counter the threat posed by authoritarian governments to activists and dissidents living beyond their borders. Taking their cue from the White House, many different government agencies adopted the term "transnational repression" to describe the problem. However, the varied responses to transnational repression skipped a critical step—no common definition of transnational repression was established in legislation.

However, there are other instances when TNR has been endorsed globally and the campaign for it was led by the US.

There are several instances when TNR has been endorsed to make it a globally accepted buzzword.

On **March 16, 2023** a bipartisan group of United States senators spearheaded by Oregon's U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley joined forces with U.S. Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Ben Cardin (D-MD), and Bill Hagerty (R-TN)—members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to introduce the Transnational Repression Policy Act (TRPA) which aimed "*to hold foreign governments and individuals accountable when they stalk, intimidate, or assault people across borders, including in the United States.*"⁷⁷

On **June 17, 2024**, Oregon's U.S. Senator & member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Jeff Merkeley along with Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Ron Wyden (D-OR) wrote a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken calling for a strong diplomatic response after alleged Indian govt involvement in a plot to assassinate a "US citizen on US soil" and seek briefing on Department of Justice's indictment of one Nikhil Gupta for alleged participation in transnational repression.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/policy-recommendations/transnational-repression>

⁷⁷ <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/merkley-rubio-cardin-hagerty-take-a-stand-against-foreign-governments-trampling-human-rights-within-the-united-states-and-beyond/>

⁷⁸ <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/merkley-colleagues-u-s-must-firmly-oppose-transnational-repression-no-matter-the-perpetrator/>

MERKLEY, COLLEAGUES: U.S. MUST FIRMLY OPPOSE TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION, NO MATTER THE PERPETRATOR

June 17, 2024

Washington, D.C. – Oregon's U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley—a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—today led Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Ron Wyden (D-OR) in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken calling for a strong diplomatic response following credible allegations of the Indian government's involvement in a foiled plot to assassinate an American citizen on U.S. soil, and asking for a briefing on this matter. Last year, the Department of Justice (DOJ) indicted Indian national Nikhil Gupta for his alleged participation in this act of transnational repression.

"While we fully support the DOJ's efforts to bring Gupta to justice and the Department of State's prior statements, the Administration must match words with actions to hold Indian officials involved in the plot accountable, and to send a clear message that there will be consequences for such behavior," the senators wrote. "It is imperative that we take an unequivocal stand against such a threat to the rights of a U.S. citizen and violation of U.S. sovereignty, which are examples of India's increasingly irresponsible efforts to silence critics of its government among its diaspora around the world."

Transnational repression occurs when a government reaches across national borders to intimidate, harass, or harm members of diaspora and exile communities to prevent their exercise of internationally recognized human rights. It can take both direct and indirect forms, from physical assaults and unlawful renditions and detentions, to targeted online surveillance and threats against family members back home.

Endorsement of TNR Spearheaded by the US

- On December 15, 2023, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)⁷⁹ released a statement accusing India of Transnational Repression (TNR) against religious minorities. Furthermore, USCIRF called for enlisting India as a *Country of Particular Concern (CPC)*. The issue raised was that of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar and separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.⁸⁰ A few months later, in its 2024 Annual Report, USCIRF reiterated accusations against India for transnational repression (TNR) and provided new recommendations for U.S. policy.⁸¹
- On September 12, 2024, Adam Schiff, a member of the American House of Representatives, early this week introduced the **Transnational Repression Reporting Act of 2024**, which would require the Attorney General, in coordination with other relevant federal agencies, to report cases of transnational repression against people in the US. It was also co-sponsored by representatives Daniel S. Goldman (D-NY), David Valadao (R-CA), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Barbara Lee (D-CA), James McGovern (D-MA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), and Eric Swalwell (D-CA).⁸²
- **Foreign Interference Commission, Canada:** On September 7, 2023, the Canadian government established the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions. Justice Marie-Josée Hogue of the Quebec Court of Appeal was appointed as the Commissioner. A report released on

⁷⁹ <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-deeply-concerned-indias-transnational-repression-against>

⁸⁰ <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-deeply-concerned-indias-transnational-repression-against>

⁸¹ <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-releases-2024-annual-report-new-recommendations-us-policy>

⁸² https://schiff.house.gov/imo/media/doc/tnr_final.pdf

April 6, 2024, accused India of engaging in foreign interference activities, including acts of Transnational Repression.

- The State Department's 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (HRRs), published on April 24, 2024, marked the first inclusion of the term "Transnational Repression" in India's section. This significant addition highlights allegations against the Indian government for engaging in transnational repression through tactics such as extraterritorial violence, threats, harassment, surveillance, and coercion. Noteworthy incidents include the alleged involvement in the killing of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a declared terrorist in India and the suppression of social media accounts such as Hindus for Human Rights (HFHR) and the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC). These groups were involved in activities aimed at tarnishing India's global image; with claims they were acting on behalf of philanthropist George Soros.⁸³
- The UK government began to take steps to address Transnational Repression (TNR), particularly through the National Security Act 2023, which introduced the offense of foreign interference and came into force in December 2023. The law targets actions such as coercion, surveillance, and interference with human rights on behalf of foreign states. Authorities, including police and intelligence agencies, have enhanced efforts to detect and counter threats such as physical attacks, online harassment, and unlawful rendition of dissidents. High-profile cases, like threats against journalists at **Iran International TV**, have underscored the urgency of these measures. Diplomatic actions have included public condemnations of foreign interference, such as the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada, alleged to involve Indian authorities, and threats from Russia, China, and Iran targeting individuals in the UK.⁸⁴ The UK collaborates with allies through organizations like **INTERPOL** and the **Five Eyes alliance** to strengthen international mechanisms against TNR.
- John Sifton, Asia Advocacy Director at Human Rights Watch, testified at the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing on Transnational Repression, highlighting how governments extend repressive tactics beyond their borders, targeting human rights defenders, journalists, and dissidents. In his testimony, Sifton sharply criticized India, highlighting the alarming deterioration of human rights under the BJP government.⁸⁵ It is pertinent to note that John Sifton has time to time frequented the platforms of the US and Canada-based anti-India fronts
- The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC) has been a forum for discussing human rights issues globally, including those related to India. On several occasions, the Commission has addressed sensitive topics like Kashmir and the state of human rights in India. In November 2019, following the Indian government's abrogation of Article 370, which revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, the TLHRC held a hearing focusing on the human rights situation in the region. Critics in India and

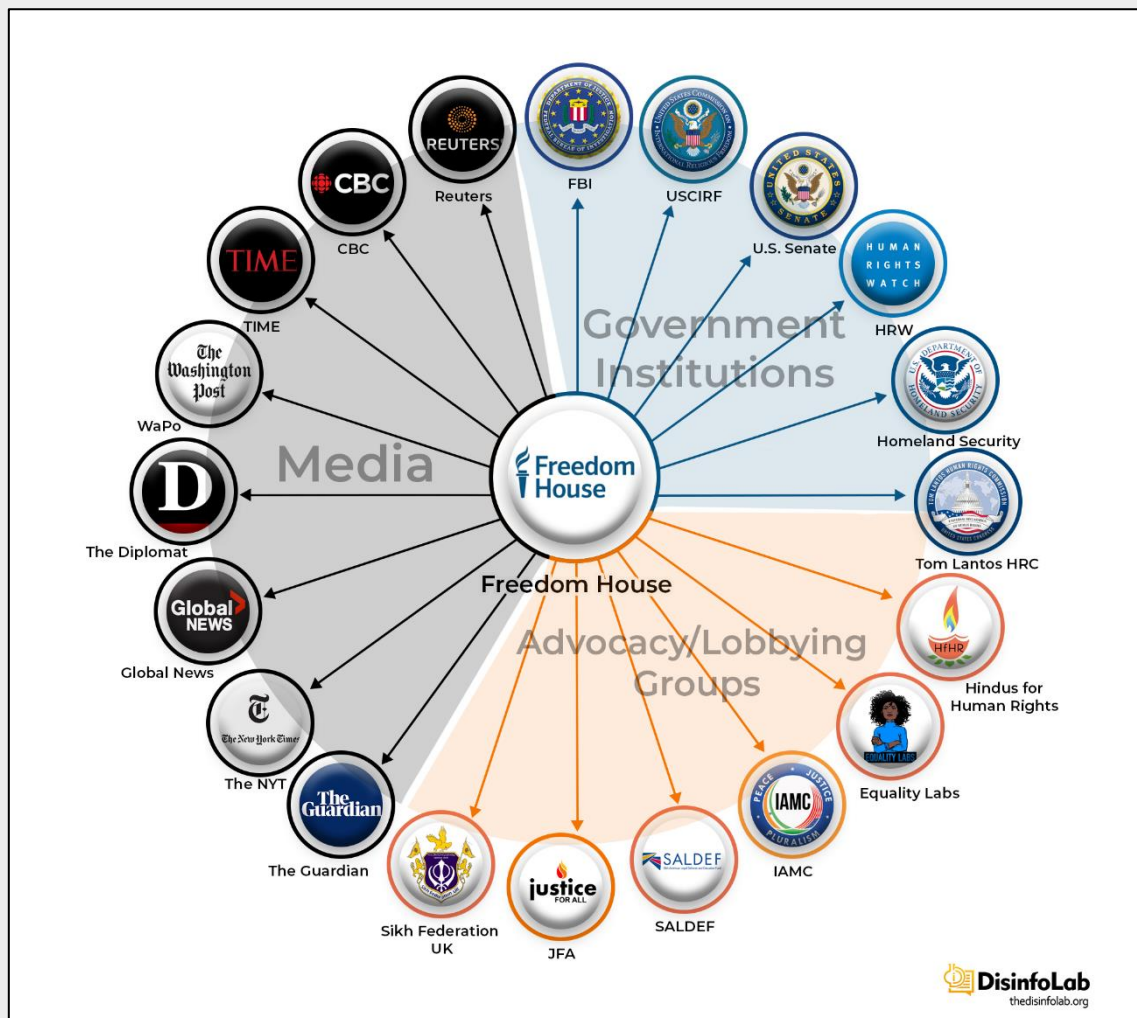
⁸³ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/india/>

⁸⁴ <https://terrorismlegislationreviewer.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/TNR-What-Planet.pdf>

⁸⁵ <https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/humanrightscommission.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/20240215%20HRW%20Testimony%20of%20John%20Sifton%20for%20Lantos%20TNR%20hearing.pdf>

elsewhere suggested that this focus stemmed partly from lobbying efforts by pro-Kashmir and Pakistan-backed organizations.

- At the **56th Session of the Human Rights Council**, U.S. Ambassador Michele Taylor delivered a joint statement on behalf of over 45 countries, condemning **transnational repression**, a growing global issue where states target dissidents, journalists, and diaspora communities across borders.⁸⁶ Similarly, Freedom House's **Declaration on Principles to Combat Transnational Repression** calls on democratic governments to strengthen legal frameworks, raise awareness, protect victims, and hold perpetrators accountable through sanctions, transparency measures, and restrictions on surveillance technologies.⁸⁷ Australia's **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade** has aligned with these initiatives, emphasizing international cooperation to counter authoritarian practices and safeguard democratic freedoms and human rights.



⁸⁶ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/human-rights/hrc-statements/56th-session-human-rights-council/joint-statement-transnational-repression>

⁸⁷ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/news/declaration-principles-combat-transnational-repression-freedom-house>

Chapter 9: Weaponizing Khalistan Issue to Target India

For years, the Indian government has been facing significant challenges due to the resurgence and growing support for Khalistan separatism abroad. The movement, advocating for an independent Sikh homeland, has found fertile ground in countries like Canada, the UK, Australia, and the US.

In order to tackle the Khalistani separatism and radicalization growing abroad and threatening India's sovereignty, the Indian government has sought help from the INTERPOL to extradite the Khalistani extremists from abroad via issuing the INTERPOL notices.

In October 2019, acting on India's request, the INTERPOL issued Red Notices against Harmeet Singh (alias PhD), Gurjinder Singh Pannun, Gurjit Singh Cheema, Gurpreet Singh, Jagdish Singh Bhura, and Gurmit Singh Bagga (alias Doctor) associated with various Khalistani militant groups like Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), Khalistan Commando Force (KCF), and Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF), with operations or affiliations in countries like Pakistan, Canada, Belgium, and Germany.⁸⁸

In May 2023, Blue Notice was issued against the US-based Khalistani Harjit Singh on the basis of a request by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to gather additional information about his identity, location, or activities related to crimes.⁸⁹

On September 25, 2023, INTERPOL issued a Red Notice to the Khalistani terrorist Karanvir Singh, a member of the banned terror group Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) on several charges including murder, involvement in explosives-related acts, terror funding, terrorist conspiracy, and violations of the Arms Act.⁹⁰

In the past, Canada has rejected extradition requests sought through Interpol. In 2022, Punjab Police in India approached the Canadian authorities seeking Nijjar's extradition to India. However, the extradition request was nullified after his death in June 2023. Interpol Red Notices were issued against other Khalistani gangsters in Canada including Gurbinder Singh alias Baba Dalla, Gurjit Singh Cheema, Landa, Dala, Satwinderjeet Singh alias Goldy Brar, and Malkit Singh Fauji, which was disregarded & rejected by the Canadian authorities.⁹¹

Several Western powers particularly Canada, the UK, and the US have on several instances been accused of providing a platform for Khalistani activism through the guise of free speech and democratic rights. These countries have also become a haven for Khalistani extremists who have waged terrorism against India. These Western intelligence agencies might have used the Khalistan issue to gather intelligence or create scenarios to keep India under surveillance or to manipulate Indian policy. We also noted

⁸⁸ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/red-notices-issued-against-top-8-khalistanis/story-PxRUMGm03GuDhEu8MLB9OM.html>

⁸⁹ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/interpol-issues-blue-notice-and-locs-against-gangsters-and-khalistani-outfits-operating-from-foreign-soil-in-india-probe-101683746721625.html>

⁹⁰ <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/interpol-issues-red-corner-notice-against-wanted-khalistani-leader-karanvir-singh-547716>

⁹¹ <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/canada-ignored-indias-extradition-requests-against-khalistan-terrorists-report-11695268383171.html>

how Western media amplified and legitimized the Khalistani narrative to target and portray India negatively.

Freedom House & Weaponization of the Khalistan Issue

The basis for the recent accusations of TNR against India was driven predominantly by the Khalistani issue. While the case of TNR was recognized by the FBI and based on the Justice Department press release from October 17, 2024, pertaining to Khalistani Gurpatwant Singh Pannun's murder-for-hire case.^{92 93}

Freedom House played a major role in cementing the TNR label on India, by weaponizing the Khalistan issue on numerous occasions in 2023-24. On October 10, 2023, Freedom House (via its TNR Watch portal) published an article, "**A Wake-Up Call for the Canadian Government**" explaining the implications of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's assertion that agents of the Indian government might have been involved in the assassination of a Sikh community leader in British Columbia. Through the article, FH implies that India was involved in Transnational Repression.⁹⁴

On December 6, 2023, during a congressional hearing "*Transnational Repression: A Global Threat to Rights and Security*" organized by the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the then-President of Freedom House, Michael Abramowitz submitted testimony on TNR and accused India of TNR, while whitewashing the Khalistani agenda at the same time.⁹⁵

On January 17, 2024, the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security posted a testimony "*Transnational Repression: a Threat to Rights and Security in the United States*" written by Annie Wilcox Boyajian (Vice President for Policy and Advocacy at Freedom House). The testimony referenced the same Nijjar and Pannun to accuse India of TNR. This was another attempt to weaponize and legitimize the Khalistan movement against India.⁹⁶

The same testimony was later presented before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security for a "Transnational Repression: The Global Threat to Rights and Security" hearing for making the same case against India.⁹⁷

Paramjeet Singh Pamma- Terrorist to an 'Activist'

Years 2023-24 was not the first time when Freedom House made a case of TNR against India by weaponizing the Khalistan issue. The basis of this TNR case-making against India had been the Khalistan issue since 2021 when the project kicked off in 2021 which was marked by the first comprehensive report published by Freedom House under the project.

⁹² <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/transnational-repression>

⁹³ <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-against-indian-government-employee-connection-foiled>

⁹⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/article/TNR-Update/-wake-call-canadian-government>

⁹⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/article/transnational-repression-global-threat-rights-and-security>

⁹⁶ <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-01-17-CTI-HRG-Testimony-1.pdf>

⁹⁷ <https://www.congress.gov/118/meeting/house/116737/witnesses/HHRG-118-HM05-Wstate-BoyajianA-20240117.pdf>

And for India, Freedom House used the same Khalistani trope to make its case for the TNR accusation. For that, Freedom House picked the case of terrorist Paramjeet Singh Pamma, a notorious Khalistani terrorist who has been associated with several Khalistani organizations, notably the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and previously with Babbar Khalsa International (BKI).

India is the only origin state rated Free in Freedom in the World that is known to engage in physical forms of transnational repression.

In the report, Freedom House accused India as the “only origin state rated ‘Free’ in Freedom in the World known to engage in physical forms of transnational repression.” Freedom House further selected Paramjeet Singh Pamma’s case; calling him an “activist” and a victim of TNR by India.

It is pertinent to note that Pamma had an INTERPOL’s Red Notice on his name, based on which he was arrested in Portugal by the Portugal Police on December 18, 2015.⁹⁸ However, Pamma was released by the Evora High Court in February 2016 on the orders of Portuguese justice minister Frances Van Dunem. Portugal's government also rejected India’s extradition request for Pamma as he returned to the UK after walking out free.⁹⁹

It is worth noting that Pamma’s case dates back to the 2010s and until 2016 and was made the basis of the TNR case against India in 2021. The timing of the report also coincides with a Khalistani terror module which was busted by the Punjab Police in February 2021.

In February 2021, Punjab Police in India busted a Khalistani terror module which was being masterminded by Paramjeet Singh Pamma from Birmingham, UK. The Punjab police's counterintelligence team travelled to Lucknow on February 8. They acted on information provided by Jagroop Singh, arrested the day before in Veroyal village, Amritsar. The team found five Chinese pistols and information about his associates. They located Jagdev Singh Jagga, traveling from Lakhimpur, Uttar Pradesh to Lucknow, and took him to Punjab. Another team from Punjab police detained Gurbinder Singh in Nanded, Maharashtra. According to police, they dismantled a Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) group planning assassinations in India, directed by Paramjit Singh Pamma from the UK.¹⁰⁰

A Khalistani Terrorist

Pamma was born in SAS Nagar district, Punjab, India, and was involved in petty crimes until 1992. He left India in 1994, spending time in Pakistan where he began fundraising for Babbar Khalsa International (BKI). He later joined the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and took on roles in organizing militant activities, particularly in Thailand. He was granted

⁹⁸ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/portugal-police-nab-khalistani-terrorist-paramjeet-singh-alias-pamma/story-QYPG3VKCSLnEqL7fBX1R1K.html>

⁹⁹ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/pamma-walks-free-as-portugal-rejects-india-s-extradition-plea/story-LNaBV7jiPKsC5pTz6NdPK.html>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20210315-the-ghost-of-khalistan-1775935-2021-03-06>

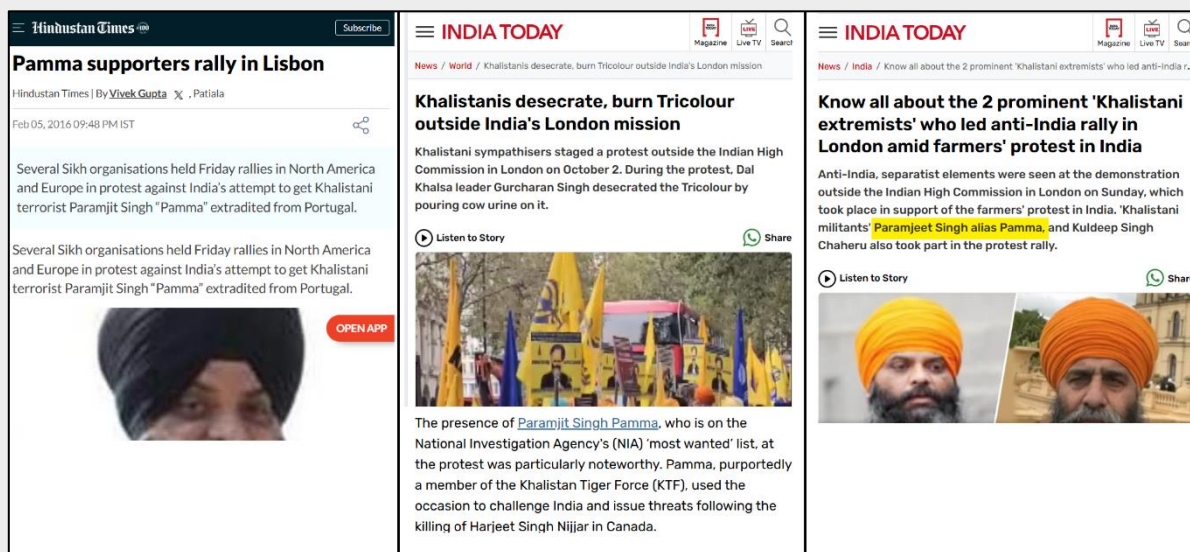
political asylum in the United Kingdom in 2000 and since then he has been living in the UK.

Initially, Pamma was close to Wadhawa Singh of the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI). Later, Pamma joined hands with Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief Jagtar Singh Tara, the dreaded Pakistan-based terrorist and one of the assassins of former Punjab chief minister Beant Singh.

In 2009, Pamma was accused of masterminding the murder of Rulda Singh, the head of Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, while Pamma was in the UK which led to his detention by UK authorities in 2010. In 2018, he was also listed as the most wanted man in India for twin bomb blasts in Patiala and Ambala in 2010.¹⁰¹

At that time (when 1st report on TNR was published), and until 2020, India was labeled as a 'Free' country by the Freedom House in their 'Freedom in The World' reports. FH published its first report on TNR in February 2021. Ever since India has been accused of TNR based on the weaponization of the Khalistani issue by FH, India started to be labeled as 'Partly Free' by Freedom House in their 'Freedom of the World' reports from 2021 onwards.

At present, Pamma remains an active ground operative for the Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), leading all anti-India protests in the UK including protests in front of the Indian High Commission in London and during a cricket match between India and England during 2019 Cricket World Cup.¹⁰²¹⁰³



Freedom House's attempt to make 'Activist' out of Pamma was not a one-off instance. In 2022, the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs commissioned a paper on how the European Union (EU) can safeguard the rights of its citizens against politically motivated misuse of Interpol's Red Notices. It examines the existing limitations, reforms within Interpol, and EU legal tools to address such abuses. The paper cited the example of Paramjit Singh "Pamma", calling

¹⁰¹ <https://www.mha.gov.in/en/page/individual-terrorists-under-uapa>

¹⁰² <https://x.com/sidhant/status/1335654401592029184>

¹⁰³ https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/khalistani-militant-paramjit-singh-pamma-spotted-during-india-england-match-associated-with-sfj-mha-sources-119071001160_1.html

him an ‘activist’ who per the report was ‘*tortured*’ by the Indian police for his support of self-determination for the Sikhs.¹⁰⁴

However, the legitimizing drill of Khalistani terrorists was also being carried out in Canada, the US, and the UK:

- On June 19, 2024, the Canadian Parliament observed a minute of silence to commemorate one year of the death of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.¹⁰⁵ A few months later, on December 15, 2023, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) in its 2023 public report named India as one of the perpetrators of foreign interference in Canada. The report downplayed the Khalistani aspect of Hardeep Singh Nijjar while accusing the Indian government of his killing.
- In September 2024, ahead of the Indian Prime Minister’s US visit, the Biden administration at the White House engaged with the American-Sikh organization **Sikh Coalition and Sikh American Legal Defence and Education Fund (SALDEF)**¹⁰⁶ which is known for supporting the Khalistan movement. The White House officials assured them of "protection from any transnational aggression on its soil." The meeting was held within the official White House complex. Pritpal Singh of the American Sikh Caucus Committee and representatives from the pro-Khalistan entity attended.
- On April 23, 2024, the U.S. Department of State published its annual 2023 Human Rights Report (HRR) on India wherein it mentioned various issues including the Manipur unrest as religious and ethnic conflict, among other incidents, and accused the Indian state of arbitrary killings, torture, and unlawful detentions as human rights violations. The report included a section for Transnational Repression accusations on India, citing allegations of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau against the Government of India behind the killing of the Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.¹⁰⁷ It was the first time the US State Department's Human Rights Report (HRR) was based on Justin Trudeau’s statement of September 18, 2023.¹⁰⁸ ¹⁰⁹ Subsequently, on April 24, 2024, the **Congressional Research Service (CRS)**, the public policy research arm of the United States Congress, published a report based on the US State Department’s HRR 2023 that towed the same TNR narrative about India.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/708135/IPOL_STU\(2022\)708135_EN.pdf#page=79](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/708135/IPOL_STU(2022)708135_EN.pdf#page=79)

¹⁰⁵<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/canada-parliament-honours-khalistani-separatist-nijjar-with-moment-of-silence/articleshow/111100598.cms>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/in-a-first-white-house-engages-with-pro-khalistan-groups-gives-assurance-6617134>

¹⁰⁷ https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/5282672_INDIA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf

¹⁰⁸ https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/5282672_INDIA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/significant-human-rights-abuses-in-india-says-us-state-dept-report/article68099086.ece>

¹¹⁰ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12198>

- On March 27, 2024, the Foreign Interference Commission of Canada published a report by **Sikh Coalition**, a pro-Khalistan organization that accused India of targeting Khalistanis in Canada and committing Transnational Repression.¹¹¹
- On December 15, 2023, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) issued its public report of 2023 and accused India of engaging in foreign interference activities in Canada. The report also raked the Khalistani agenda to accuse the Government of India.¹¹²

¹¹¹https://foreigninterferencecommission.ca/fileadmin/foreign_interference_commission/Documents/Submissions/Factual_Phase/Sikh_Coalition.pdf

¹¹² https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/isis-scrs/documents/publications/Public_Report_2023-eng-DIGITAL.pdf

Chapter 10: TNR Accusation Begins to Take Shapes

We noted in the previous section, the Khalistani issue was made the basis for accusing India of committing TNR in 2021. In case, FH whitewashed the terror angle of Paramjeet Singh Pamma citing lack of evidence. It was followed by a paper commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs in 2022 which towed the same narrative for Pamma and accused Indian authorities of committing Transnational Repression.

However, from 2022 onwards, the TNR narrative began to take different forms with Freedom House continuing to publish reports under the TNR series. In June 2022, FH published its 2nd major report on TNR titled, "Defending Democracy in Exile: Policy Responses to Transnational Repression".¹¹³

In its report, FH accused India of engaging in significant efforts to silence critics and activists living outside its borders.

The report highlighted that India's intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), has been engaged in orchestrating assassinations targeting dissidents, particularly those from the Khalistani and Kashmiri communities. More importantly, Freedom House accused India of engaging in digital harassment surveillance, and censorship. For that, FH cited the example of deploying sophisticated surveillance tools like Pegasus spyware for transnational repression. It becomes pertinent to note that despite the Government of India's clarifications on the Pegasus accusations which was backed by zero evidence and any substantial proof, a set of Indian media and global media portals continued to report about the Pegasus spyware to target the Indian government.¹¹⁴

The 2022 report on TNR by Freedom House was made possible with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The amount granted by NED is not known, but between 2016-23, NED granted USD 2,017,578 to Freedom House to support its works.

Towing Freedom House's narrative, in October 2024, Scholars at Risk Europe (SAR Europe) published a report on the issue of transnational repression (TNR) affecting scholars and researchers at risk. The report was part of a European Union-funded project Inspireeurope+.

The report identified China as a major perpetrator, but it also found that other countries, including Egypt, Rwanda, and Saudi Arabia. The report also mentioned India as one of the perpetrators of TNR against scholars and researchers.¹¹⁵ To support its claim, the report in turn referred to Freedom House's report "Addressing Transnational Repression on Campuses". The report highlighted a testimony of a Kashmiri academic in the US who accused the Indian authorities of targeting her for making a base of TNR against India.¹¹⁶

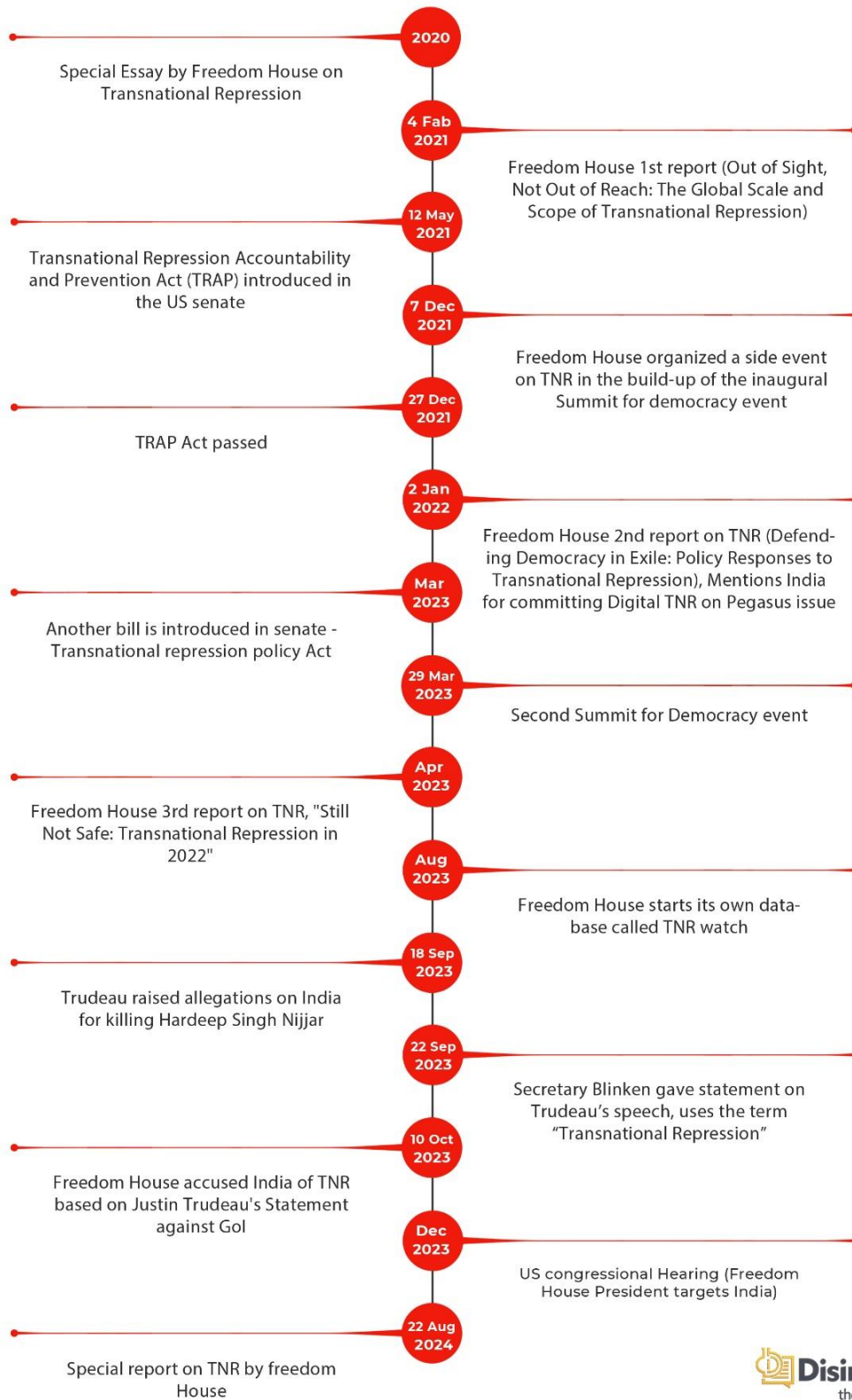
¹¹³ https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Complete_TransnationalRepressionReport2022_NEW_0.pdf

¹¹⁴ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/full-text-governments-full-response-on-pegasus-row/articleshow/84531197.cms>

¹¹⁵ <https://sareurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Inspireeurope-Briefing-Transnational-Repression.pdf>

¹¹⁶ https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/TNR_UniversityReport_2024F.pdf

Transnational Repression (TNR) Timeline



Part 3: The Real Motive

Chapter 11: Summit for Democracy 2023

The 2023 Summit for Democracy was an international event co-hosted by the United States along with Costa Rica, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Zambia. It took place on March 29-30, 2023, with an aim to advance the global democratic agenda by fostering collaboration between democratic governments, civil society, and other actors to address challenges faced by democracies worldwide.¹¹⁷ The summit focused on reinforcing democratic values and principles, promoting human rights, supporting accountability, and addressing common threats such as authoritarianism, disinformation, and corruption. Apart from these, a major highlight of the event was addressing transnational repression.

Freedom House was one of the entities which played a critical role in the summit. As a key partner in hosting and moderating various events, Freedom House hosted some of the key events including:

- **Declaration of Democratic Principles: Civil Society’s Critical Role in Achieving the Summit for Democracy Goals** (March 27, 2023) – This event focused on the role of civil society in advancing democratic goals. It discussed how civil society organizations can support democratic reforms, protect freedoms, and hold governments accountable.
- **Imprisoned Without Just Cause: #FreeThemAll** (March 27, 2023) – This event, held at the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania to the United States, highlighted the plight of imprisoned human rights defenders, journalists, and activists around the world. The aim was to advocate for the release of individuals which they believed were unjustly detained for exercising their democratic rights.
- **Legislative Track of the 2023 Summit for Democracy** (March 28-30, 2023) – This track focused on the role of legislatures in strengthening democracy, ensuring accountability, and addressing global democratic challenges.

Freedom House also co-led a cohort **Resisting Authoritarian Pressure** along with the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Alliance of Democracies. Its primary goal was to endorse “*Declaration of Principles to Combat Transnational Repression.*”

In addition to hosting these events, Freedom House promoted the **Civil Society Declaration of Democratic Principles**. This declaration outlined the core democratic values that should guide international cooperation among democratic nations, including the protection of fundamental freedoms, election integrity, media freedom, judicial independence, gender equality, and the fight against corruption. A total of 135 entities signed the declaration from various nations. Among them only two were from India- **Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)** and **Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF)**.

¹¹⁷ [2023 Summit For Democracy | Freedom House](#)

Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF)

Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) is a New Delhi-based advocacy group comprising of organisers, campaigners, designers, lawyers, and technologists who work on a broad range of digital rights issues.¹¹⁸ IFF has provided legal assistance to Raqib Hameed Naik after he challenged the blocking of the websites of his Pakistan-backed Islamist organizations Hindutva Watch and India Hate Lab in India.¹¹⁹

Two members of the legal team of IFF involved in the case, Vrinda Bhandari and Abhinav Sekhri, have been recipients of grants by the Thakur Family Foundation, which we exposed in our report [“The Propaganda Pill: Unmasking a Whistleblower and Anti-India Pharma Sophists”](#) for funding defamatory articles against the Indian pharma industry.

Form 990-PF (2022) Page 11				
Part XIV Supplementary Information (continued)				
3 Grants and Contributions Paid During the Year or Approved for Future Payment				
Recipient	If recipient is an individual, show any relationship to any foundation manager or substantial contributor	Foundation status of recipient	Purpose of grant or contribution	Amount
Name and address (home or business)				
ABHINAV SEKHRI C/O WALTER SHUFFAIN 1 INTERNATIONAL PL STE 1010 BOSTON, MA 02110		INDIVIDUAL	GRANT RECIPIENT - CIVIL LIBERTIES	1,234
VRINDA BHANDARI C/O WALTER SHUFFAIN 1 INTERNATIONAL PL STE 1010 BOSTON, MA 02110		INDIVIDUAL	GRANT RECIPIENT - CIVIL LIBERTIES	2,047
TOQUE CONTENT SOLUTIONS 54 JANPATH DELHI, NEW DELHI IN			GRANT RECIPIENT - PUBLIC HEALTH	11,188

Form 990-PF (2022) Page 11				
Part XIV Supplementary Information (continued)				
3 Grants and Contributions Paid During the Year or Approved for Future Payment				
Recipient	If recipient is an individual, show any relationship to any foundation manager or substantial contributor	Foundation status of recipient	Purpose of grant or contribution	Amount
Name and address (home or business)				
ABHINAV SEKHRI C/O WALTER SHUFFAIN 1 INTERNATIONAL PL STE 1010 BOSTON, MA 02110		INDIVIDUAL	GRANT RECIPIENT - CIVIL LIBERTIES	1,349
VRINDA BHANDARI C/O WALTER SHUFFAIN 1 INTERNATIONAL PL STE 1010 BOSTON, MA 02110		INDIVIDUAL	GRANT RECIPIENT - CIVIL LIBERTIES	2,024

Form 990-PF (2021) Page 11				
Part XIV Supplementary Information (continued)				
3 Grants and Contributions Paid During the Year or Approved for Future Payment				
Recipient	If recipient is an individual, show any relationship to any foundation manager or substantial contributor	Foundation status of recipient	Purpose of grant or contribution	Amount
Name and address (home or business)				
SAAMARASYA MEDIA LLP 82 REGENCY EAST END 6 HALL RD BENGALURU TN			GRANT RECIPIENT - CIVIL LIBERTIES	1,244

¹¹⁸ <https://internetfreedom.in/about/>

¹¹⁹ <https://internetfreedom.in/untitled-delhi-hc-issues-notice-on-hindutva-watch-and-india-hate-labs-petition/>

Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)

Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), established in Delhi in December 2002, is a non-profit organization founded by Osama Manzer and his wife Shaifali Chikermane with the stated mission of bridging the digital divide in India.¹²⁰ Osama Manzer is a Senior Ashoka Fellow, a columnist, and a global leader on the mission of eradicating information poverty from India and the global south.

In 2019, DEF India formed a key collaborative partnership with **USIPI**, a Washington DC-based think tank, to work on various projects across India. One of their notable initiatives is **Soochnapreneur**, launched by DEF India in 2016. This program focuses on training rural women in information technology to serve their communities' needs. Soochnapreneur has garnered support from major technology companies including Qualcomm, Nokia, Intel, as well as organizations like USAID, Equally Able, and USIPI.¹²¹

USIPI has been heavily involved in promoting both DEF India and Soochnapreneur through regular collaborations. The organization supports CIRC Digital Centres throughout India and Soochnapreneur centers, which are primarily concentrated in border areas.



USIPI

The relationship between these organizations is particularly noteworthy as USIPI, which was initially founded in 2007, underwent dissolution in October 2020 before being reincorporated in February 2023¹²² under the leadership of **Hyder Mohammed Khan (Board President & Trustee)**.

¹²⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=136850284900509&set=pcb.136850754900462>

¹²¹ <https://www.soochnapreneur.in/partners/>

¹²² https://opencorporates.com/companies/us_dc/EXTUID_4109645

US-INDIA POLICY INSTITUTE
 WASHINGTON, DC 20006-3951 | TAX-EXEMPT SINCE SEPT. 2012

Form 990-EZ for period ending December 2012 Download

4 of 12 Automatic Zoom

Mohammed Attaulla Khan Secretary	6.00	0		
Hyder Mohammed Khan Vice President	3.00	0		
Mohammed R Ahmed President	6.00	0		

Form 990-EZ (2012)

USIPI claims to provide "independent, community-funded policy research" to the public, though its leadership has connections to various other Islamist organizations including Indian American Muslim Council, IMEFNA, and Justice For All (JFA).

The leadership connections further illustrate this nexus. Hyder Khan has held various positions in these organisations. Founding Member of USIPI, Hyder Khan, served as a Trustee and the President of the Board of the organization **Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC)** earlier known as IMC-USA. He was the National Vice President and Spokesperson of IMC-USA in 2009.¹²³ In 2011, he was re-elected as the Vice President of the organization.¹²⁴

Exposed ad nauseum, IAMC, formerly known as IMC-USA, is a UAPA-slapped US-based lobbying group founded by Dr. Shaik Ubaid, who previously served as General Secretary of the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), the US branch of Jamaat-e-Islami.¹²⁵ IAMC has been actively involved in lobbying USCIRF to designate India as a Country of Particular Concern and has been involved of spreading disinformation and targeting India.

(Refer our report [USCIRF: An Organization Of Particular Concern](#) for details)

Additionally, Hyder Khan was the Managing Director and Chairman of another US-based group Supporters of Human Rights in India (SHRI) of **Coalition against Genocide (CAG)** where Khan was the spokesperson.¹²⁶ The coalition is a "spectrum of organizations and individuals in the United States and Canada" co-founded by Shaik Ubaid and Angana Chatterji, aide of convicted ISI agent Ghulam Nabi Fai.¹²⁷

Moreover, Hyder Khan is also associated with Indian Muslim Education Foundation of North America (IMEFNA) as its secretary.¹²⁸ IMEFNA, which claims to support economically disadvantaged minority students in India, is led by Dr. Khursheed Mallick, who simultaneously serves as Chairman and President of Justice for All (JFA).

JFA in turn is a front of ICNA 'powered' by its multimedia wing, Chicago-based company Sound Vision. JFA is an umbrella organization under which run several other Islamist

¹²³https://iamc.com/indian_american_muslim_group_demands_immediate_civil_and_criminal_action_against_all_accused_in_the_liberhan_report/

¹²⁴<https://twocircles.net/2011jan02/233520.html>

¹²⁵<https://thedisinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/USCIRF-An-Organization-Of-Particular-Concern.pdf#page=32>

¹²⁶<http://coalitionagainstgenocide.org/press/support/irpp.rice.php>

¹²⁷<http://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/about.php>

¹²⁸<https://imefna.org/about-us/>

organizations working on various fault lines of India on the US soil. Some of these organizations include Burma Task Force (which lobbied USCIRF against India in 2018-2020 to get it blacklisted), Save India, Faith Coalition, etc.

JFA emerges as a crucial link in this network, operating as a front organization of ICNA and powered by Sound Vision, a Chicago-based multimedia company. It functions as an umbrella organization overseeing various other groups working on Indian faultlines from U.S. soil, including Burma Task Force (which lobbied against India with USCIRF), Save India, and Faith Coalition.

The interconnectedness is further exemplified by individuals like **Rasheed Ahmed**, who has served on USIPI's Board of Directors while also holding positions as Executive Director of both IAMC and Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA) until 2017.¹²⁹ The way the leadership structure of these organizations and their shared organizational objectives overlap, it goes on to demonstrate how these seemingly separate entities operate as an interconnected network, with activities focused on influencing international perspectives on India.

Creating Victim Card Literature

The convergence is unmistakable: the same machinery orchestrating lobbying efforts and sanction campaigns against India has now positioned itself as the primary architect of the "transnational repression" narrative. The leadership of USIPI and the players being defended by the IFF, strategically fragmented across organizations in the Five Eyes nations, are deliberately cultivating and weaponizing this narrative. Despite the extensive exposes by DisinfoLab, these actors have pivoted to wielding "transnational repression" as a sophisticated defense mechanism - a calculated attempt to rehabilitate their damaged credibility. Their strategy required a compelling victimhood narrative, and over the past few months, select media outlets, whether unwittingly or complicitly, provided precisely the amplification platform they needed. And this happened one article at a time primarily by prominent US-based media portals.

It started with the Washington Post publishing a story in November 2023, expressing their utter discontent towards the Indian government at the censorship of the social media accounts of these so-called US-based "advocacy" groups Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR) and IAMC.¹³⁰ Despite the fact that the two organizations have been exposed of being the proxy organizations of the Jamaat-e-Islami and their Pakistani connections. Fun fact- For merely publishing reports and investigations, the DisinfoLab has been targeted by the Washington Post before.

The following month, Rest of World interviewed Hindutva Watch and India Hate Lab's founder Raqib Hameed Naik celebrating him as a hero fighting hate speech against Muslims in India. The whole purpose of the interview was to mainstream and legitimise his Naik and his "database" Hindutva Watch.¹³¹

On 12 February 2024, US-based media portal Wired defended and whitewashed Raqib Hameed Naik, while slamming the Indian government for blocking the websites of

¹²⁹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20210924080522/https://www.usipi.org/about-us/>

¹³⁰ [How India tamed Twitter and set a global standard for online censorship - The Washington Post](#)

¹³¹ [The man fighting against online hate speech in India - Rest of World](#)

Hindutva Watch and India Hate Lab.¹³² The article also accused the country of declining press freedom because the websites of Naik’s two orgs were blacked in India.¹³³

The same month, pro-Khalistani group Sikh American Legal Defence and Education Fund (SALDEF), along with Equality Labs, HfHR, and IAMC, published a report titled *Virtually Vulnerable: Exposing The Human Cost Of Digital Harassment*. The report was an attack on the Indian government for blocking the social media accounts of IAMC in India, calling it “transnational repression”. The report was also an attempt to whitewash Khalistani terrorists including Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Amritpal Singh, and Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. This report too targeted the DisinfoLab, terming it as a “covert foreign operation”. It is worthwhile to note that in September 2024, the group had met with White House officials, who assured them of “protection against transnational aggression”.¹³⁴

Index on Censorship, on April 16, 2024, also decried the blocking of the websites of Hindutva Watch and India Hate Lab. It was also a mirror work of the article by Wired.¹³⁵

The US-sponsored media Voice of America (VOA) also followed suit and took it upon itself to glamorise Raqib and his two Pakistan-backed projects. The articles peddled the fabricated narrative of Islamophobia in India, backing its reporting by the statements of IAMC’s advocacy director Ajit Sahi, known for giving clean chit to the terrorist organization SIMI and Raqib Hameed Naik.¹³⁶

By May 2024, the term transnational repression had started being used by media portals like VOX. The portal published an article titled *“Everyone is absolutely terrified”: Inside a US ally’s secret war on its American critics*. The article was about how the Indian government is trying to silence its critics abroad, particularly in the United States. The report quotes individuals like Raqib Hameed Naik, member of Congress Pramila Jayapal, John Sifton of Human Rights Watch, and Audrey Truchke among others, all of whom have been exposed of exploiting Indian faultlines like the Kashmir issue and the fabricated narrative of Islamophobia and an impending “genocide” in India. Notably enough, the DisinfoLab has again been targeted here.¹³⁷

And eventually these groups and their players made their way into the reports of Freedom House, playing as the victims of “transnational repression” by India.

¹³² [This Website Tracked Hate Crimes in India. Then the Government Took It Offline | WIRED](#)

¹³³ [This Website Tracked Hate Crimes in India. Then the Government Took It Offline | WIRED](#)

¹³⁴ [In A First, White House Engages With Pro-Khalistan Groups, Gives Assurance](#)

¹³⁵ [India’s hate speech trackers are being blocked - Index on Censorship](#)

¹³⁶ [US watchdog documents hundreds of India election rallies targeting Muslims](#)

¹³⁷ [“Everyone is absolutely terrified”: Inside a US ally’s secret war on its American critics | Vox](#)

Vox

Believe that journalism can make a difference

If you believe in the power of journalism, please support us by becoming a member. Our mission is to provide you with the most accurate, unbiased, and in-depth news, analysis, and commentary. Help us keep our journalism free and accessible to all.

Will you support our work and become a Vox Member today? [Support Us](#)

"Everyone is absolutely terrified": Inside a US ally's secret war on its American critics

A former government intelligence officer has exposed the real motives behind the US ally's secret war on its American critics.

THE REVEALING
[Read More](#)

I met Raajiv Naik, a journalist who had fled his native India, at a coffee shop in suburban Maryland. We sat at the same round table where he once discussed the prospect of his assassination with FBI agents.

Naik is a Muslim from Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state. In August 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi revoked the state's longstanding self-determination rights and temporarily imposed martial law. Indian officials subsequently detained thousands of Kashmiris, including many journalists. Through it all, Naik did his best to convey the reality in Kashmir to the outside world — a firsthand account of what was really going on in what's often termed "the world's largest democracy."

The Washington Post

How India tamed Twitter and set a global standard for online censorship

RAMS NAIK, PHOTICISM

VOA

SOUTH & CENTRAL ASIA

US watchdog documents hundreds of India election rallies targeting Muslims

May 16, 2024, 5:51 PM
 By Harwood Frazier

SALDEF **LIBERTY LABS** **Human Rights** **IAMC**

VIRTUALLY VULNERABLE:
 EXPOSING THE HUMAN COST OF DIGITAL HARASSMENT

rust of world

The man fighting against online hate speech in India

With general elections around the corner, Raajiv Hameed Naik's digital hate speech database Hindutva Watch has its work cut out.

3 DECEMBER 2023 • NEW DELHI, INDIA

Hindutva Watch is a digital database that documents hate crimes against Muslims, and other religious and caste minority groups in India. Run by a small group of volunteers spread across multiple continents, the group's recent findings reveal that anti-Muslim hate speech in India is heavily concentrated around elections. [Read More](#)

INDEX ON CENSORSHIP
 A VOICE FOR THE PERSECUTED

NEWS

India's hate speech trackers are being blocked

Even from exile in the USA, a Kashmiri journalist critical of India's ruling BJP is being silenced

By [Hemant Dutt](#)
 19 Apr 24
 Asia and Pacific | [India](#) | [News and Features](#)

CRIMINAL JUSTICE **NEWS** **IN** **US** **AND** **ABROAD**

This Website Tracked Hate Crimes in India. Then the Government Took It Offline

With weeks to go until the start of national elections, India's right-wing government has forced X and GitHub to block Hindutva Watch.

Chapter 12: Freedom House Special Report 2024

Freedom House's consistent criticism of India, particularly through its transnational repression framework, provided a ready-made platform that the whole nexus of the Islamist organizations working against India would soon exploit. Once the narrative of transnational repression was firmly established against India through Freedom House's reports, it became a powerful tool in the hands of certain US and Canada-based organizations that had long sought mechanisms to challenge India. Additionally, the 2023 Summit for Democracy paved the way for the machinery to hijack the narrative and, eventually, Freedom House's reports.

During our investigation, we observed that the entire narrative was hammered against India in quite a systematic manner, which becomes evident through a chronological examination of events. The self-proclaimed human rights advocacy groups based in the US and Canada have been found to have concocted this over a year back. Groups like the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, and even the 2023 Human Rights Report from the US State Department published reports accusing India of the growing trend of transnational repression.

Several US and Canada-based human rights fronts which have a history of targeting India on a range of issues played a key role in perpetuating this narrative and accusing India of TNR. This is the point where TNR accusations against India began to diversify.

The trajectory began notably in November 2023, when the US-based UAPA-slapped Islamist organization Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) began incorporating the term "transnational repression" in their communications, coinciding with the Pannun case.¹³⁸ This initial adoption soon evolved into more structured advocacy, culminating in their dedicated webpage on transnational repression targeting India by September 2024.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ [IAMC Facebook Search Result](#)

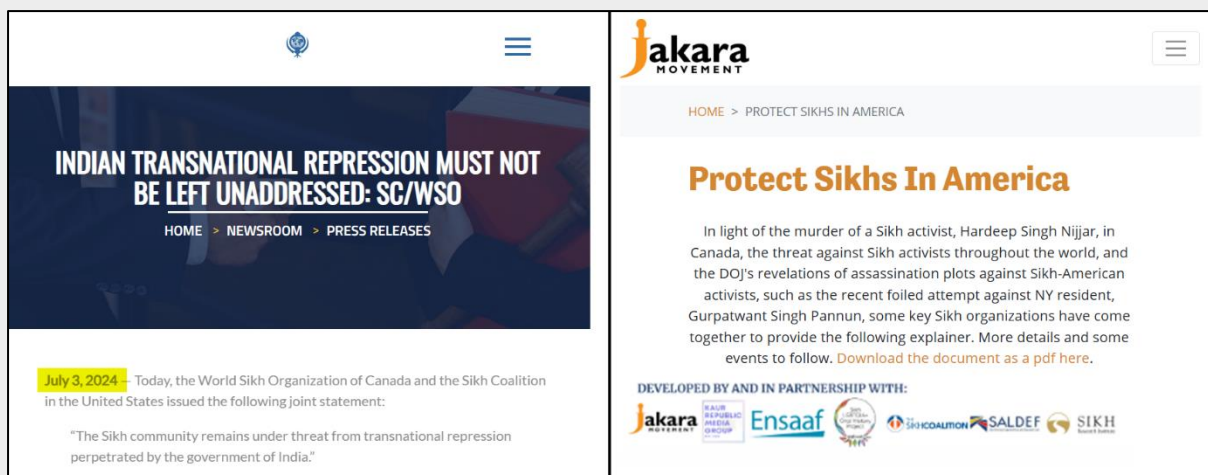
¹³⁹ <https://iamc.com/faqs-on-transnational-repression/>

Similar to IAMC, HfHR also made separate pages (FAQ & Guidebook) on Transnational Repression. Both organizations started picking up the narrative after the Nijjar incident and most of their activities were focused on pinning the narrative on India. This was also marked by a joint report by SALDEF, IAMC, Equality Labs, and, HfHR accusing India of TNR and how they were 'targeted' by DisinfoLab. The 34-page report had mention of DisinfoLab 18 times!¹⁴⁰

As a result, this lobby led to USCIRF using TNR in its report while it enlisted India as CPC in its annual report published in May 2024.¹⁴¹

The coordination among various organizations became increasingly apparent through joint actions. A significant demonstration of this coordinated approach emerged when HfHR, along with four other organizations including Americans for Kashmir, IAMC, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Sikh Coalition, presented a joint letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on transnational repression in December 2023.¹⁴²

The narrative gained further momentum in 2024, with pro-Khalistani organizations like SALDEF, Jakara Movement, Ensaaf, Sikh Research Institute, and the Sikh Coalition collaborating on initiatives like "Protect Sikhs in America."¹⁴³ It was also promoted by Equality Labs.¹⁴⁴ The World Sikh Organization's July 2024 statement demanding action against "Indian transnational repression" further reinforced this coordinated campaign.¹⁴⁵ In October, US and Canada-based Justice For All (JFA) further fuelled the narrative by releasing a statement demanding "Canada's Investigation into India's Transnational Repression and the Expulsion of Indian Diplomats".¹⁴⁶



¹⁴⁰ <https://saldef.org/wp-content/uploads/Tech-Censorship-Diasporic-Landscape-Report-v2.pdf>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/USCIRF%202024%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

¹⁴² [Hindus for Human Rights](https://www.hindusforhumanrights.org/)

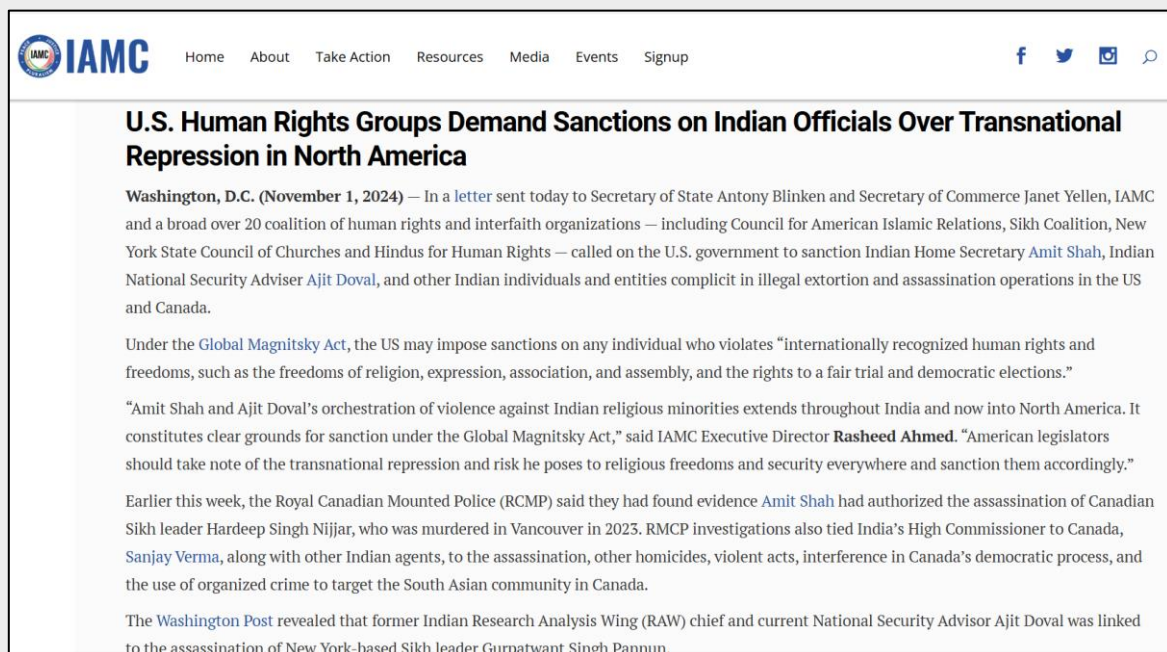
¹⁴³ <https://www.jakara.org/protectsikhs>

¹⁴⁴ <https://x.com/EqualityLabs/status/1791216421147390359>

¹⁴⁵ https://www.worldsikh.org/indian_transnational_repression_must_not_be_left_unaddressed_sc_wso

¹⁴⁶ [Justice for All](https://www.justiceforall.org/)

The culmination of these efforts was particularly evident in November 2024, when IAMC, along with 18 other organizations, escalated their advocacy by demanding sanctions against senior Indian officials including India’s Home Minister Amit Shah, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and other Indian diplomats over Canada and US’ allegations over the assassination of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar and attempted assassination of Sikhs for Justice leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. This letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Commerce Janet Yellen represented a significant escalation in the deployment of the transnational repression narrative.¹⁴⁷ Signatories of the letter include American Muslim Institution, Asian Children’s Education Fellowship, Council for Social Justice New Jersey, Council on American-Islamic Relations, Dalit Solidarity Forum, Ensaaf, Federation of Indian American Christian Organization (FIACONA), Genocide Watch, Hindus for Human Rights, Indian American Muslim Council, Islamic Circle of North America NY, Jakara Movement, Justice For All, Muslims for Progressive Values-NY, New York State Council of Churches, Sikh Assembly of America, Sikh Coalition, The National Council for Minorities in Yemen, and World Without Genocide.



What makes this pattern particularly noteworthy is the strategic amplification through media platforms. IAMC's Executive Director Rasheed Ahmed’s articles in *The Diplomat* (“*US Congress Should Support the Transnational Repression Reporting Act*”¹⁴⁸) and *Just Security* (“*Congress Should Protect Americans from Transnational Repression.*”¹⁴⁹), advocating for the Transnational Repression Reporting Act, demonstrate how these organizations effectively leveraged media platforms to mainstream their narrative.

¹⁴⁷ <https://iamc.com/u-s-human-rights-groups-demand-sanctions-on-indian-officials-over-transnational-repression-in-north-america/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://thediplomat.com/2024/10/us-congress-should-support-the-transnational-repression-reporting-act/>

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.justsecurity.org/104416/congress-protect-americans-transnational-repression/>

THE DIPLOMAT JUST SECURITY

US Congress Should Support the Transnational Repression Reporting Act

The bill is poised to help a wide range of U.S. citizens contending with threats from the governments of India, Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, and other regimes.

By Rasheed Ahmed
October 31, 2024

Congress Should Protect Americans from Transnational Repression

by Rasheed Ahmed
October 31, 2024

The Canadian government's recent [allegations](#) of Indian government involvement in the assassinations of Canadian Sikhs have the sordid quality of a Hollywood B-movie. The Canadian Royal Mounted Police [allege](#) that corrupt Indian diplomats worked with imprisoned Indian mob boss

The timeline of these events makes it evident that this was all. The reports by Freedom House presented the perfect anchor for this. This calculated progression from adopting Freedom House's framework to orchestrating coordinated advocacy campaigns reveals a sophisticated strategy of narrative deployment. All this is a well-orchestrated effort to transform academic research into political leverage, culminating in Freedom House's 2024 special report that featured many of the same voices who had been instrumental in propagating these narratives, the narrative of TNR, against India is evident from the timing and coordination of these activities.

The Special Report 2024

The 21-pager report “*No Way In or Out*” by Freedom House uses the keyword "India" 47 times, highlighting it as one of the six countries identified as a source of efforts to suppress movements across borders. In this report, Freedom House clubbed India with nations like Belarus, Rwanda, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, with India being of major focus.¹⁵⁰

Freedom House focused on freedom of movement and condemned the governments of several countries, including India, for imposing travel bans on certain journalists and activists and/or canceling their OCI. Discussing India, Freedom House has cited several “anonymous” Indian journalists, who are victims of these bans by the Indian governments, providing no transparency into the questions, or any legal actions taken against them or providing any evidence for whether the interviews with them even took place or not.

For the individuals it does name, the report seems to be an attempt to lend credibility to those individuals whose reputations have been previously discredited multiple times. Neither are they new nor surprising.

TNR Becomes a Defense Mechanism

As discussed, the special report by Freedom House aligns with the discredited individuals without addressing their backgrounds or delving into the factors that led to the revocation of their OCIs and the government's actions. Furthermore, the report

¹⁵⁰ [No-Way-In-or-Out_TNR-PPI.pdf](#)

overlooks these individuals' stances and activities, providing an incomplete and biased perspective, almost like a deliberate effort to hammer the narrative of TNR on India by picking up old instances.

For India, the report produced by Freedom House was shaped by a singular perspective, overlooking the full context of the issues they address. For instance, when the authors question or condemn governments for actions such as restricting Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) privileges or regulating social media accounts, they do not explore the underlying reasons for these measures or the broader context surrounding the background of the individuals or entities involved.

Case in point, Freedom House mentions some interesting names in the report including the likes of **Nitasha Kaul, Raqib Hameed Naik of India Hate Lab (IHL), and Ria Chakrabarty, Senior Policy Director of Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR).**

<p>Section 7D of India's Citizenship Act allows OCIs to be canceled,³⁵ but a journalist who reviewed a series of show-cause notices sent by the government informing OCI holders that their status would be withdrawn, and inviting them to provide evidence against cancellation, found that the notices generally use formulaic language to make broad accusations.³⁶ Nitasha Kaul, a British-Indian academic of Kashmiri origin and a professor at the University of Westminster, was denied entry to India in February 2024 after landing in the Bangalore airport to attend a conference on the Indian constitution, on the invitation of the Karnataka State government. Upon</p>	<p>Recent cases have also shined a light on India's unofficial travel bans against journalists and government critics. In October 2022, authorities prevented Sanna Irshad Mattoo, a Kashmiri photojournalist, from traveling to the United States to receive a Pulitzer Prize for her work.³⁷ Journalists who have been harassed by Indian security services, especially those covering or based in Kashmir, suspect that their names are on an unofficial no-fly list that prevents them from leaving the country. One journalist who is still in India and claims to have seen the list told Freedom House, "I had to call my colleagues and say 'Be careful. Your name is on that list.'"³⁸ Raqib Hameed Naik, a US-based Kashmiri journalist and founder of the Washington, DC-based India Hate Lab, which analyzes religious hate speech in India, explained how he learned that</p>	<p>outsoken, but now they reduce their actions because they have their family inside, because they do not want to continue facing [asset] confiscations...they have already lost enough."³⁹ Members of the Indian diaspora are also reconsidering their activities amid the recent wave of OCI revocations: "Once you hear that [academic] Nitasha Kaul has been blacklisted, all the other academics who do things that are adjacent to her work are now worried," said Ria Chakrabarty, senior policy director for Hindus for Human Rights. "Am I going to get blacklisted? Do I need to scale back? Do I need to be less prominent in my India work?"⁴⁰</p>
--	--	--

Mention of Nitasha Kaul, Raqib Hameed Naik, and Ria Chakrabarty in the Freedom House Report 2024

Raqib Hameed Naik, founder of Hindutva Watch and India Hate Lab (IHL). Both these platforms are digitally banned in India. Most recently, in August 2024, Raqib Hameed Naik founded yet another venture under his name based in Washington DC- **Centre for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH).**¹⁵¹ As per its website, CSOH is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank based in Washington, D.C. Its mission is focused on understanding, preventing, and combating various forms of organized hate. It collaborates with universities, government bodies, and human rights organizations to translate rigorous research into actionable policy solutions. CSOH also aims to raise awareness and educate the public on issues related to organized hate, and it operates projects like the India Hate Lab (IHL) which was banned on social media in India in January 2024. With two of his projects (Hindutva Watch & India Hate Lab) continuing to remain banned despite several attempts at re-legitimizing them, CSOH was founded in August 2024 with Raqib as its founder and Executive Director.

However, this time, the organization has several faces in public which had not been the case with Hindutva Watch and IHL. CSOH has a number of staff and advisory board members including Yash Sharma (lead researcher), Hamad Zaffar (Digital Research Analyst), Arshi Qureshi (Research Fellow), Deeksha Udupa (Digital Research Analyst), Afshan Khan (Associate Research Fellow), Abhyudaya Tyagi (Associate Research Fellow), and Pravin Prakash (Head of Strategic initiatives).

¹⁵¹ <https://who.is/whois/csohate.org>

The advisory board includes Dr. Sulafa Zidani (Assistant Professor at Northwestern University), Agather Atuhaire (Human Rights Lawyer & Journalist), Rohit Chopra (Professor at Santa Clara University).

One of the advisory board members of CSOH, Susan Benesch is the founding Director of Dangerous Speech Project, Washington DC-based organization which was found to be promoting the India Hate Lab's report which rated India as a 'violent Islamophobic' country ahead of the general elections in India in 2024. As per its website. As per its website, receives its operational funding solely from private foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Open Society Foundations.¹⁵²

Another key testimony of Freedom House's 2024 Special Report was that of Ria Chakrabarty, the Senior Policy Director at Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR). FH quoted Ria Chakrabarty who in her testimony oversimplified complex issues in Kashmir by making unsubstantiated claims of automatic imprisonment for returning individuals, reinforcing anti-India narratives without providing evidence or context.

The ban on Nitasha Kaul from entering India, implemented to safeguard national security and prevent potential disruptions, has been reframed to serve a different narrative. This case has been portrayed as a criticism of India's stance on dissent, freedom of speech, and its policies in Jammu and Kashmir. Her detention, deportation, and the revocation of her Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) status are being depicted as excessive actions by the Indian government, further fuelling a narrative of transnational repression.

A key basis for the accusation of transnational repression against India in the Freedom House's special report 2024 was an article by **Article 14** titled "*How The Modi Govt Is Trying To Silence Critics In The Diaspora By Banning Them From India*".¹⁵³ The article dated February 12, 2024, is authored by **Vijayta Lalwani**. For this particular article, Lalwani won the **Human Rights Religious Freedom (HRRF) Journalism Award** in 2024, receiving INR 25000 for this article.¹⁵⁴ This HRRF award is organized by none other than IAMC, which has been doing so since 2022.

Note: In our report "The Propaganda Pill", we exposed how Article 14 had received thousands of dollars from the Thakur Family Foundation to write articles criticising the Indian pharma industry and made in India COVID-19 vaccines. The entire machinery is one and the same.

The article has accused the Indian Government of Transnational Repression for their decision to revoke the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards of individuals like Amrit Wilson and issuing show cause notice to Ashok Swain for hate speeches and peddling propaganda against India. It also quotes Raqib Hameed Naik, founder of Pakistan-backed Islamist projects India Hate Lab and Hindutva Watch. The article has also

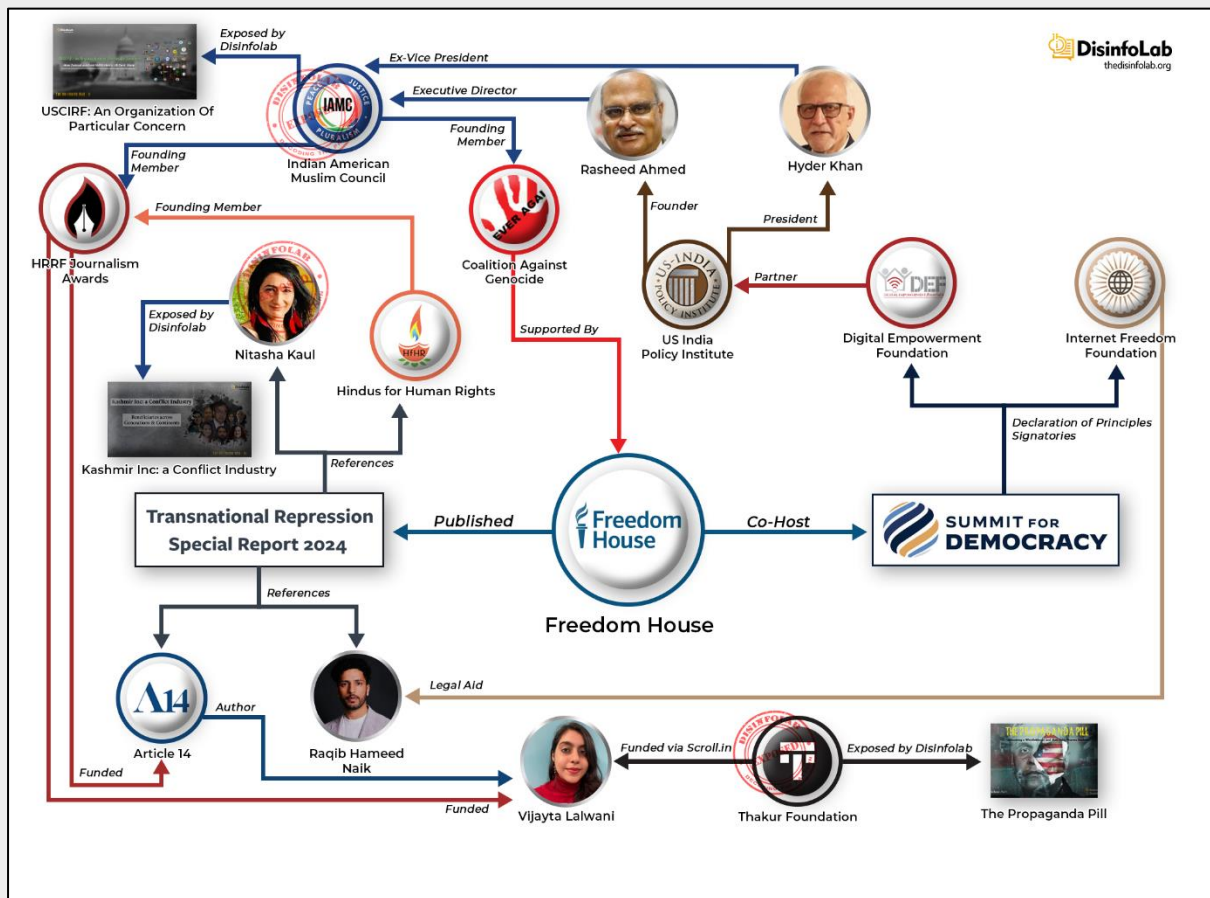
¹⁵² <https://dangerousspeech.org/funding/>

¹⁵³ <https://article-14.com/post/how-the-modi-govt-is-trying-to-silence-critics-in-the-diaspora-by-banning-them-from-india-65c98c934673f>

¹⁵⁴ <https://hrrfjwards.com/winners-2024/>

targeted the DisinfoLab for engaging in TNR and also whitewashed terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar!

By defending them in the report, the Freedom House aligns itself with those promoting misinformation and propaganda, more like providing them a platform to cry foul. There is a clear distinction between advocating for legitimate freedom and endorsing unchecked freedom that undermines national interests. Unfortunately, Freedom House tends to overlook this in their analysis conveniently. The methodology behind these reports is often opaque and relies heavily on opinion rather than objective facts, and as we saw in this report, on paid articles. Another striking example of this bias is the fact that Freedom House considers Jammu & Kashmir as a separate territory from India, which speaks volumes about the organization's stance on the country.



Chapter 13: Transnational Network of Anti-India Orgs

These anti-India HR advocacy groups, initially based in the US, have now extended their influence and activities to other Five Eyes countries, including Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. These groups have been exposed for relentlessly targeting India, and their operations are evident through various incidents. In Canada, there have been protests against Indian missions and attempts to disrupt Indo-Canadian events. The UK has seen protests supporting Khalistani separatism, including a rally in London and vandalism outside the Indian High Commission. In Australia, there have been attacks on Hindu temples, protests near Indian consulates, and glorification of anti-India terrorism. These actions illustrate the groups' strategic expansion to influence public opinion and policy against India across these allied nations.

These US and Canada-based organizations including the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC), Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR), and Sikh Coalition have contributed to the TNR narrative as a shielding mechanism to legitimise their anti-India tirade and campaigns.

These groups published resource guides and FAQs on transnational repression by India a year ago when TNR was still in the process of picking the trend against India.

Now, the key groups of this transnational network of organizations, such as IAMC, HfHR, and Sikh Coalition, have mirror fronts/ branches/ chapters in the USA, Canada, Australia, and the UK. This in itself deserves a report of its own.

IAMC has a mirror front in the UK & Canada as well as well which goes by the name Indian Muslim Council (UK-IMC) and the International Council of Indian Muslims (ICIM) in Canada are one such example.

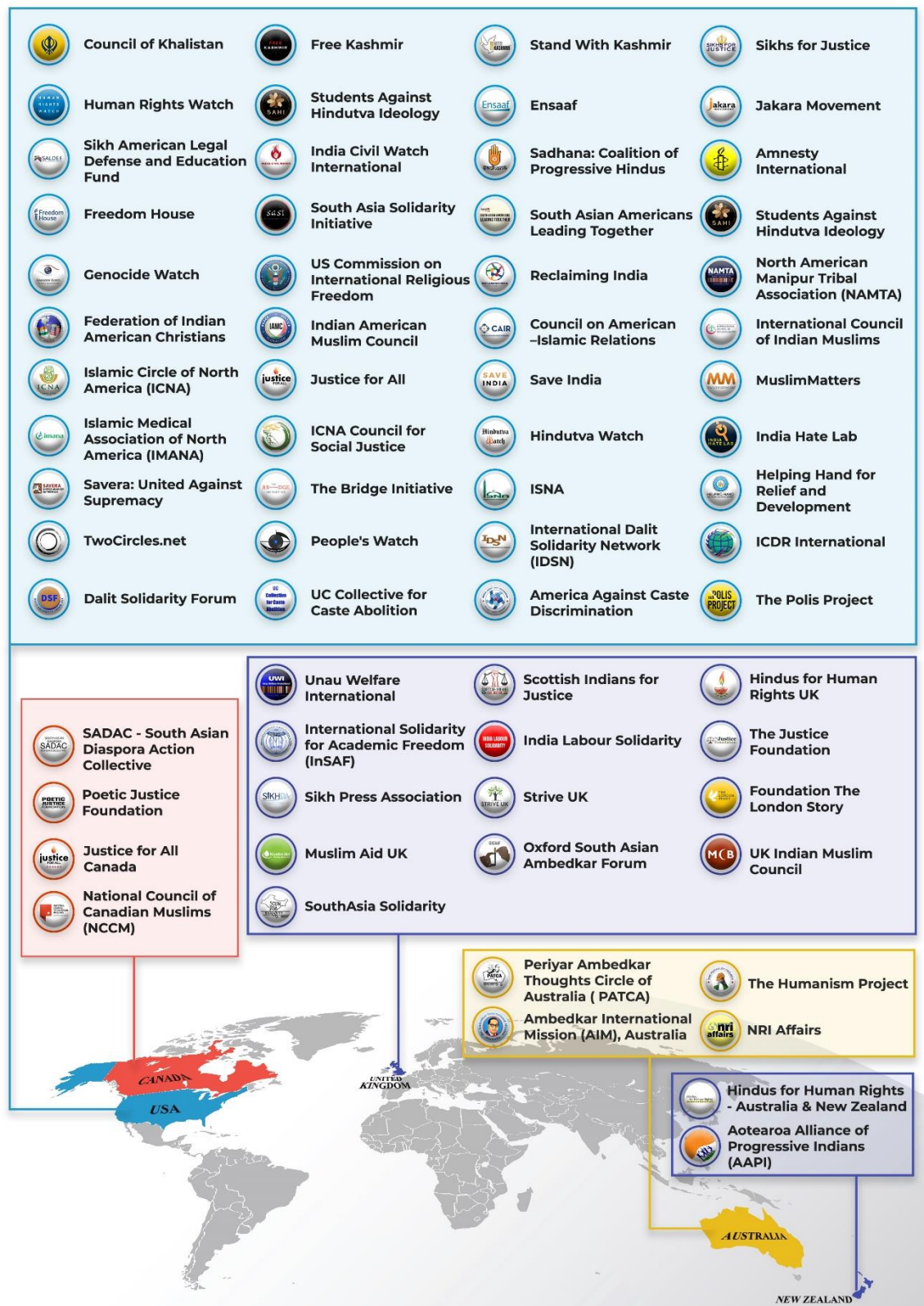
Similarly, HfHR has its branches in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. There are similar examples of mirrored organizations in these Five Eyes countries which are also in investigation; and how these organizations work in sync, following the same modus operandi to influence the Western policymakers against India.

The Manipur conflict which began in May 2023 is one example of how an event/ Faultline/ conflict is used by these anti-India groups to further build upon them and create a loop of anti-India narrative, news cycle in the name of their purported advocacy and organization building.

Taking the Manipur conflict into consideration to understand their module, a new organization **North America Manipur Tribal Association (NAMTA)** was created right after the conflict in Manipur started in May 2023. What followed was the appearance of the same organizations coming together to carry out on-ground protests, publishing of slanted narratives (Hindutva, Fascism, Islamophobia) by their friendly media outlets like The Wire, etc., Subsequently the same set of groups began to engage with the US policymakers to pass laws and pressure the Indian government.

Another key feature is how these organizations are linked (e.g., shared board members, similar funding sources, or overlapping partnerships).

DisinfoLab has covered their interconnectedness in past reports as to how the same set of people and organizations end up behind all the new organizations and coalitions which have been formed in the last five years. This itself deserves a separate report as to how these organizations form and how they have established themselves in these Five Eyes Countries as shown below.



Conclusion

And just like this, the narrative of ‘transnational repression’ has been set against India, with Freedom House been the main tool for achieving so. All what is happening with the Freedom house and its negative reporting on India isn’t a phenomenon we have not seen before. The striking parallels between Freedom House's current trajectory and USCIRF's established pattern reveal more than just institutional similarities - they expose a deliberate playbook executed by US and UK-based organizations namely the IAMC, HfHR, Foundation the London Story, etc., working systematically against Indian interests by exploiting the Indian faultlines. As our investigation have revealed, the same network of foreign-based actors who successfully lobbied USCIRF (refer to our report [USCIRF : An Organization Of Particular Concern](#)) to blacklist India as a “country of particular concern” for four consecutive years has now pivoted their attention to Freedom House, demonstrating a calculated strategy of institutional manipulation.

What we observe is not merely coincidental, but rather a calculated shift in tactical approach by the same nexus. The timing of the transition is quite striking and evident: as USCIRF's credibility began to wane and its reports lost their punch, these organizations seamlessly shifted their engagement to Freedom House, effectively establishing it as “the new USCIRF.” The tactical similarity is unmistakable - where USCIRF was used to amplify narratives of fascism and islamophobia, Freedom House has been weaponized to promote the broader accusation of 'transnational repression' against India. The orchestration becomes even more apparent when we observe how the same actors who were instrumental in shaping USCIRF's negative reports are now not only influencing Freedom House's assessments but are also being defended in their narratives, as detailed in the previous sections of this report.

Most revealing is the synchronized shift in narrative focus. While for the blacklisting by the USCIRF, the anti-India players including JFA & IAMC chose the Kashmir narrative and Islamophobia, (marked by the revocation of the Article 370 from J&K by the Indian government), Freedom House was mobilised when the Khalistan narrative - one of the primary faultlines these organizations had been exploiting - began to lose traction, we observed a coordinated pivot to broader accusations of ‘transnational repression.’ This adaptability in narrative-crafting, combined with the consistent involvement of the same US/UK-based actors, goes on to demonstrate a sophisticated long-term strategy to target India through seemingly credible international institutions.

What makes this situation particularly noteworthy is the institutional architecture at play. USCIRF, operating as a federal commission, and Freedom House, presenting itself as an independent NGO, might appear to be distinct entities, but their operational framework paints a different story. While USCIRF operates as a bipartisan federal commission created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, Freedom House presents itself as an independent NGO advocating for democracy and human rights. However, this veneer of independence becomes questionable when we consider that Freedom House receives over 90% of its funding from the U.S. State Department, with its board of trustees heavily populated by State Department personnel. And as already noted, USCIRF’s officials are chosen by the President and Congressional leaders of both political parties.

This deja vu moment in India's relationship with international monitoring organizations underscores a broader pattern: the systematic deployment of seemingly independent institutions to maintain consistent pressure on India's governance narrative. The shift from USCIRF to Freedom House as the primary vehicle for criticism demonstrates not just the adaptability of these efforts, but also their persistent nature.

In essence, what we're witnessing is not random criticism or the emergence of new criticism but rather the repackaging of existing narratives through fresh institutional channels- from USCIRF to Freedom House – by the same actors while maintaining their core agenda of targeting India. The predictability of their pattern, the consistency of the involved organizations, and the strategic shift in narratives when one loses effectiveness, all point to a well-orchestrated effort to influence global perceptions of India through the facade of independent institutional assessment.

