



CANADA
250 University Ave.
Suite 200, Toronto,
ON M5H 3E5
www.khalistanreferendum.org
support@sikhsforjustice.org

DELIVERED VIA E-MAIL

September 27, 2023

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2
Email: pm@pm.gc.ca;

Honourable Pierre Poilievre, MP
Leader of the Conservative Party of
Canada
pierre.poilievre@parl.gc.ca;

Yves-François Blanchet, MP
Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Yves-Francois.Blanchet@parl.gc.ca;

Jagmeet Singh, MP
Leader of the New Democratic Party
Jagmeet.Singh@parl.gc.ca;

Ms. Elizabeth May, M.P.
Leader of the Green Party of Canada
Elizabeth.May@parl.gc.ca

Re: “Duty To Warn” Served By Surrey Police & RCMP (INSET) About Death Threat To Gurmeet Singh Toor, A Close Associate of Shaheed Nijjar.

Sub: Expel Indian High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Leaders of the Parties in the Parliament:

We write on behalf of Sikhs For Justice (“SFJ”), a human rights advocacy organization registered in Canada. Among other things, we are dedicated to the peaceful advocacy for realization of rights of self-determination, through Khalistan Referendum, for Sikhs in the region of Punjab currently governed by India where Sikhs are in the majority.

We are writing to request the immediate expulsion of India’s High Commissioner in Canada, Sanjay Kumar Verma.

Our request is based on:

- (a) the mounting evidence that the “agents of the Indian government” were involved in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, British Columbia, on June 18, 2023¹;

¹ See: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-indian-government-nijjar-1.6970498>;
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/sikh-nijjar-india-canada-trudeau-modi-1.6974607>.

(b) continued threat to the Khalistan Referendum campaigners in Canada at the hands of Indian agents. On August 24, 2023 “Duty To Warn”² was served by Surrey Police and RCMP’s INSET on Gurmeet Singh Toor, a close associate of Shaheed Nijjar alerting him about imminent threat to his life.

Tragically, on June 18, 2023, Hardeep Singh Nijjar was murdered outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara, Surrey, BC. Shaheed Nijjar was elected President of the Gurdwara since 2019 and since 2014 was the Chief Coordinator of Khalistan referendum campaign in Canada. Nijjar was an upright, law abiding and peace-loving Canadian citizen who was gunned down outside his place of worship by the agents of the Indian Government solely because Nijjar was effectively mobilizing the Canadian Sikhs to participate and vote in the Khalistan Referendum.

Mr. Prime Minister, the record in your office should reflect that in May 2016, when Shaheed Nijjar was falsely accused by India of running a “terror camp” in Mission, BC, Nijjar wrote you a letter³ in which he unequivocally stated:

“Mr. Prime Minister, I want to bring it to your attention that the Indian government’s campaign to label me a terrorist started when I actively participated in a campaign to collect signatures on a complaint to the United Nations Human Rights Council,”

“I am a Sikh nationalist who believes in and supports Sikhs’ right to self-determination and independence of Indian-occupied Punjab through a future referendum.”

Following Nijjar’s murder, we publicly raised alarm about our belief that the Indian government was involved in, and responsible for, his killing. Finally, on September 18, 2023, Prime Minister Trudeau publicly at the floor of the House what had long been known by the Sikh community – that the Indian government was behind the assassination of Shaheed Nijjar.

Shaheed Nijjar was a Canadian citizen, a leader within his community, and a vocal advocate for human rights and a dedicated campaigner for realization of the right to self-determination through Khalistan Referendum, both in Canada and Punjab. His brazen assassination on Canadian soil is a multi faceted tragedy. The fact that agents of the Indian government were involved in the extra judicial killing on Canadian soil is a gross affront to Canadian sovereignty. It raises understandable concerns regarding the safety and security of all Canadians who advocate for human rights around the world.

We agree with Prime Minister’s statement in the House of Commons that: “Any involvement of a foreign government in the killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is an unacceptable violation of our sovereignty. It is contrary to the fundamental rules by which free, open and democratic societies conduct themselves.”

² See attached, Statement of Gurmeet Singh Toor and copy of “Duty To Warn” dated August 24, 2023 served upon Gurmeet Singh Toor by Surrey Police & RCMP

³ See: “Hardeep Singh Nijjar told Trudeau he was innocent in a 2016 letter. Here’s what it said:” National Post, September 26, 2023 available at: <https://nationalpost.com/news/hardeep-singh-nijjar-letter-to-trudeau>

Such a flagrant violation of Canadian sovereignty demands swift and decisive action on the part of our government. Only the expelling of India's High Commissioner in Canada, Sanjay Kumar Verma, will adequately convey Canada's forceful disapprobation of India's blatant violation of our sovereignty and attack upon the Canadian peoples' life and liberty.

We understand that the expelling of a diplomat at High Commissioner Verma's level is a serious step. For that reason, we assure you that we are not raising this issue and forwarding this demand lightly. Nevertheless, we believe that it is a step that is both proportionate and reasonable in the light of India's egregious conduct in this matter. It is a step that is necessary to protect Canadian sovereignty and safeguard Canadian citizens' life and liberty from foreign attackers.

High Commissioner Verma, as the head of India's mission in Canada, must be held accountable for Nijjar's assassination, which in every sense is act of state terrorism by India. The assassination of a Canadian citizen by India on Canadian soil is an unprecedented and unconscionable attack on Canada's sovereignty and on the lives and liberties of all Canadians. Merely expelling a low-level diplomatic agent, as Canada has done, falls far short of effectively responding to this violation. Failing to take further action sends the message to the rest of the world that Canada takes such criminal activity lightly.

We urge your government to respond in the only appropriate manner by expelling High Commissioner Verma pursuant to appropriate diplomatic and consular protocol.

High Commissioner Verma's History of Inflammatory Statements

High Commissioner Verma has a history of inflammatory rhetoric regarding the pro Khalistan activism of Sikhs in Canada and elsewhere.

High Commissioner Verma has been the head of India's mission in Canada since June 2022.

Shortly after taking up his post, in November 2022, High Commissioner Verma called on Canada to "crack down" on those peacefully advocating for Sikh human rights.⁴ High Commissioner Verma made his request of the Canadian government after SFJ organized a referendum in Brampton and Mississauga, as part of a global vote that asked the Sikh diaspora "Should Indian Punjab Be An Independent Country?"

High Commissioner Verma's request amounted to a demand that Canada condemn and punish its Sikh citizens for exercising their right to free speech on Canadian soil by peacefully voicing their support for the rights of Sikhs. It was inconsistent with the constitutional rights of all Canadians, including the Sikh citizens living in this country.

In a previous letter that we sent to you, **dated December 7, 2022**, we urged you to take High Commissioner Verma's comments seriously. We stated that his words "put Canadian Sikhs at risk" and were "a matter public safety for Sikh Canadians, who are already a vulnerable minority group at risk of hate crimes".

⁴ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-indias-envoy-calls-on-canada-to-crack-down-on-canadian-funding-of/>

In our December 2022, letter⁵ to you, we:

- Provided extensive background about the decades-long history of state persecution of Sikhs in India, which is the context for these events. Many of the 800,000 Sikhs in Canada – more than 2% of the population of the country – escaped persecution in India based on their religious and political beliefs. We cited to Canadian sources, including the Immigration and Refugee Board, documenting the ongoing persecution of Sikhs who support an independent state of Khalistan.
- Described the background and history the current global referendum campaign, which is being organized by SFJ. While the Indian government labels referendum campaigners as terrorists, these assertions are baseless. The campaign is peaceful expression supported by thousands of Canadian Sikhs.
- Noted that Verma’s outrageous demands on the Canadian government to “crack down” on the political expression of its own citizens constituted unlawful state interference in the internal affairs of this country; and
- Finally, expressed our apprehension that Verma’s conduct and demands put the lives of Canadian Sikhs at risk. We informed you of anti-Sikh hate crimes that had already taken place in Canada. We said: **“SFJ remains deeply concerned that the Indian government’s anti-Sikh rhetoric will only lead to attacks on Sikh Canadians.”**

As it turns out, our warning was both prescient and an underestimation of the threat faced by Sikh Canadians.

Mr. Prime Minister, not only has the feared violence materialized, it has been carried out with by the Indian government itself and the threat to the life and security of Khalistan Referendum campaigners in Canada continues unabated.

High Commissioner Verma bears some of the responsibility for the fear that many Canadian Sikhs are experiencing today that they are not safe here.

High Commissioner Verma Has Violated International Law

High Commissioner Verma either knew or ought to have known of the planned assassination of Shaheed Nijjar.

A coordinated assassination of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil by agents of the Indian government could not have been carried out without the knowledge of India’s most senior diplomatic representative in Canada.

The *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961* governs the conduct of diplomats and foreign officials. Article 41(1) of the Vienna Convention provides that it is the duty of all foreign diplomats and consular officials to “respect the laws and regulations of the receiving States.”⁶ In addition, “[t]hey also have a duty not to interfere in the internal affairs of that State.”

⁵ See Letter from SFJ to PM Trudeau dated December 2022.

⁶ *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations* (18 April 1961), Article 41(1).

It is difficult to conceive of any actions more blatantly inconsistent with these principles than knowingly permitted agents of the Indian government to carry out an assassination of a Canadian citizen. Only expelling High Commissioner Verma is a proportionate response to such a violation.

If High Commissioner Verma was completely in the dark regarding the planned assassination – a proposition that frankly strains credulity – then he has lost the ability to carry out his role effectively as he has proven himself unaware of the actions that his own government is undertaking in Canada. In such circumstances, expelling High Commissioner Verma is still appropriate.

Article 9 of the *Vienna Convention* entitles Canada to expel any member of the diplomatic staff of a foreign nation “at any time and without having to explain its decision”. The unprecedented circumstances of this matter warrant the immediate expulsion of High Commissioner Verma.

There is a Serious Risk of Further Violence

This government’s current inaction against High Commissioner Verma has already cost the life of a campaigner, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, involved in the Khalistan Referendum. If High Commissioner Verma is not immediately expelled, we fear that many more Khalistan Referendum campaigners may suffer harm at the hands of Indian agents active in Canada, with the knowledge and complicity of High Commissioner Verma.

Specifically, a little over a month after Nijjar’s assassination and just few weeks before PM’s statement in the Parliament, on August 24, 2023, Shaheed Nijjar’s close associate and active campaigner of Khalistan Referendum, Surrey based **Gurmeet Singh Toor**, who is also member of the management committee of the same Gurdwara as Nijjar, has been served with “**Duty To Warn**” (See attached) from the Surrey Police Service and RCMP alerting him that his life is similarly in danger.

We fear that the danger to pro Khalistan Sikhs in general and Khalistan Referendum campaigners in particular, at the hands of Indian agents acting under the supervision of IHC Verma still exists and persists in Canada.

Since 2022, Shaheed Nijjar was being warned by the Canadian law enforcement and intelligence officials that his life might be in danger. However, Canadian officials, despite knowing that the life of a Canadian Citizen was at risk by the Indian agents operating on Canadian soil, did nothing to protect Nijjar, other than merely alerting him to a threat.

Even after Nijjar’s murder and the Prime Minister's acknowledgement of India’s involvement, the government is still not taking sufficient precautions to protect the lives and safety of Canadians who advocate for Khalistan Referendum. Nor has the government addressed one of the main sources of these threats, the Indian High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma.

We also take this opportunity to urge the leaders of Conservative Party, NDP, Bloc Québécois and the Green Party of Canada to raise above the partisanship on this national issue which pertains to the core of existence shared by all Canadians – protecting of our country’s sovereignty from any foreign aggression and securing the life and liberty of all Canadians against any foreign invasion and threats.

We are calling on the Canadian government to decisively and unequivocally assert its sovereignty and protect the safety and security of all citizens. It must send the clear message that the involvement of a foreign government in the planned and deliberate murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is completely and utterly unacceptable. The only action that will send that message is immediately expelling High Commissioner Verma.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely yours,



Attorney at Law (New York)

General Counsel to SFJ

Email: gurpatwant.pannun@gmail.com

Gurpatwant.pannun@sikhsforjustice.org

Mobile: +1-917-7892914

Encl:

- Copy of “Duty To Warn” served on Gurmeet Singh Toor by Surrey Police & RCMP (INSET) on August 24, 2023.
- Copy of Gurmeet Singh Toor’s Statement Verifying “Duty To Warn”.
- Copy of December 2022 letter from SFJ to PM Trudeau (***Appended Below***)