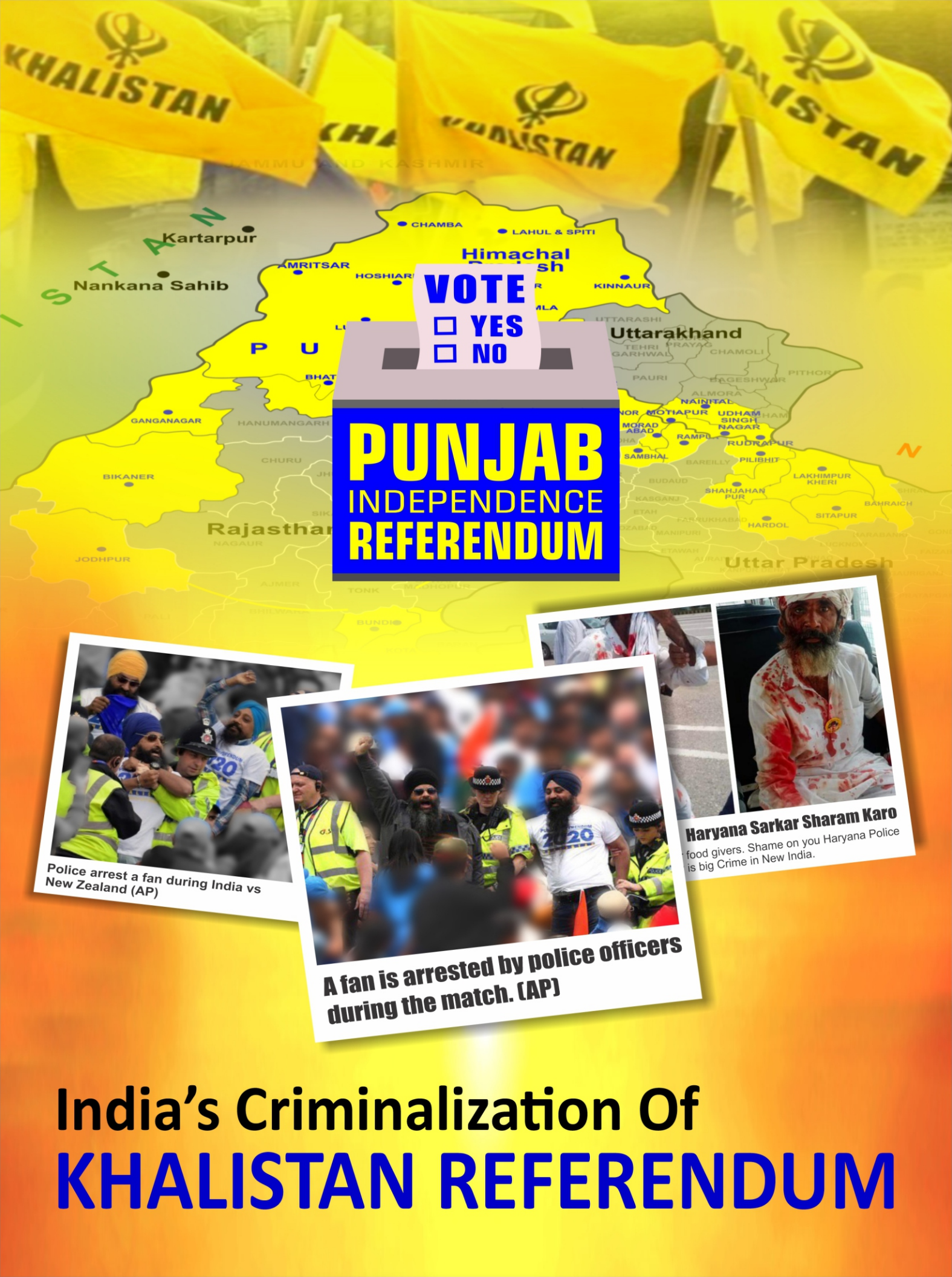




VOTE

☐ **YES**
☐ **NO**

PUNJAB
INDEPENDENCE
REFERENDUM



Police arrest a fan during India vs New Zealand (AP)



A fan is arrested by police officers during the match. (AP)



Haryana Sarkar Sharam Karo
food givers. Shame on you Haryana Police is big Crime in New India.

India's Criminalization Of **KHALISTAN REFERENDUM**

India's Criminalization of Khalistan Referendum

*Modi Government's Use and Abuse of Laws
For Violent Crackdown on Supporters of Khalistan Referendum*

Executive Summary

In the backdrop of the ongoing severe crackdown by the Modi Government on Indian Punjab, the only majority Sikh state in the Union of India, this report addresses and unravels the deep underlying question of a purely political nature – the ongoing global Khalistan Referendum.

Khalistan Referendum (also called Punjab Independence Referendum) is the root cause of the current situation involving repression, persecution, econocide, and genocide of Sikhs in Punjab, and the rest of the world. Thus, it deserves the attention of the world at large particularly Western democracies, the UN bodies, civil societies, and human rights organizations.

The current violent crackdown is closely trailed by and overlaps with the ongoing policy of demonizing and vilifying the Khalistan Referendum by employing various means and methods from custodial torture to illegal detentions and criminal intimidation of Sikhs.

Punjab Independence Referendum is about voting, yes or no, on the question, “Should India Governed Punjab be an Independent Country?”

To repress the fundamental right to self-determination of the people of Punjab, India is labeling and equating this peaceful, legal, and democratic campaign as “terrorism”.

Methods And Means of Oppression³

Use and abuse of the law⁴ to employ repressive methods against the Sikh population on account of activism, support, and advocacy of political opinion – Khalistan - include:

¹ Khalistan Referendum is the global initiative of international advocacy group “Sikhs For Justice” (SFJ). For more details on Khalistan Referendum and SFJ, see section ... below.

² For Repression of Khalistan as a policy, see The Indian Police Journal, Volume 67, Number 2, April-June, 2020, pp 61-62 et al available at: <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/202012010233348955746April-June-2020ipj.pdf>

³ For Specific instances of each method of the violent repression employed, see section... below.

⁴ For detailed background on Khalistan movement and India’s repression of Khalistan movement, see Amnesty International report “INDIA: Human Rights Violations In Punjab: Use And Abuse of the Law.” <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/06/asa200111991ar.pdf>

- **Banning/Outlawing/Criminalizing** the US-based group “Sikhs For Justice” (SFJ)⁵ for questioning the association of Punjab with the Union of India, and for giving a call for the “Khalistan Referendum” to determine the will of the people of Punjab on establishing Khalistan through the means of Referendum⁶, and rendering any association with or support to SFJ and Khalistan Referendum, a criminal act.
- **Illegal detention** of Sikh individuals and/or their relatives who support or associate with the Khalistan Referendum by India’s security forces.
- **Custodial Torture** of the Sikhs detained for supporting/advocating or being associated with the Khalistan Referendum. The prevalence of Custodial Torture is well documented⁷ common practice in India and particularly of Sikh detainees in Punjab who are associated with Khalistan.
- **Operation Round-Ups** in which Police and security forces raid the houses and businesses of Sikh individuals or their relatives who support or are associated with the Khalistan Referendum.
- **Criminal charges** and prosecution of Sikhs for supporting or associating with the Khalistan Referendum under the colonial era “Sedition Laws” and the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

⁵ US Based group SFJ has been banned and outlawed in India vide notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs number S.O. 2469 (E), dated the 10th of July, 2019, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii).

See also: <https://www.news18.com/news/india/pro-khalistani-group-sikhs-for-justice-banned-over-anti-national-activities-2225183.html>

See also copy of GOI Notification at Annexure 2 to “Report on Criminalization of Sikh Political Opinion page 6 at: <https://referendum2020.org/downloads/34>

See also: <https://countercurrents.org/2019/07/sikhs-in-india-to-be-under-surveillanceall-over-again-after-the-tumultuous-1980s/>

See also, “The State of Shrinking Civic Space In India -2021” by Asian Centre For Human Rights ACHR, pp 35-36 available at: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/documents-and-publications/documents/publications-pdfs/english-publications/611-achr-state-of-shrinking-civil-space-india-report-2022-eng/file.html>

⁶ See SFJ’s response to July 19, 2019 ban on SFJ at: <https://referendum2020.org/uploads/sfj-response-to-uapa-ban.pdf>

⁷ see Page 1 of Amnesty International report “*INDIA: Human Rights Violations In Punjab: Use And Abuse of the Law*” “There is a clear pattern to the arrests, detentions, torture, and “disappearances” described in this report. Often, people have been arrested on mere suspicion.” “Those tortured are young people and the elderly, and some are women: the torture testimonies of a 17-year-old girl and a 60-year-old man are included in this report.” P.1. available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/06/asa200111991ar.pdf>

- **Harassment & Intimidation** by the security forces in the name of “deradicalization” of Sikhs who support or associate with the Khalistan Referendum.
- **Vilification and Dehumanization by Labelling** the call for “Khalistan Referendum” as “terrorism” to justify illegal detentions, and to desensitize the public to avoid outrage over state violence perpetrated against the Khalistan Referendum supporters.
- **Information Blackout** is imposed by shutting down cellular internet services throughout Punjab to cover up human rights abuses.

Reasons And Causes⁸:

From the widespread incidents of state-sponsored oppression against Sikhs in Punjab, it becomes clear that Sikh individuals and their family members are targeted for the following reasons and causes:

- Liking/sharing posters on social media urging people to register votes for the Khalistan Referendum and/or support Khalistan Referendum by other democratic means, such as participation in email campaigns.
- Expressing support for Khalistan Referendum by wearing T-Shirts with the Referendum logo, raising Khalistan Flag, and writing the Khalistan slogan.
- Printing and/or distributing flyers/posters of the Khalistan Referendum in which people of Punjab are urged to register their votes for the Khalistan Referendum
- Wearing T-Shirts, depicting Khalistan Referendum, and/or Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale⁹.
- Association of family members in India with someone in India or abroad who supports the Khalistan Referendum

From the ongoing actions and policies of the Modi government against the Sikh people of Punjab in general and supporters of the Khalistan Referendum in particular, it becomes abundantly clear that the real intent and motive behind the “Siege of Punjab” and taking the Sikh population as

⁸ For specific instances of each cause, see the section ... below:

⁹ Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale is considered the iconic figure in the Khalistan movement ever since he was slayed, along with his hundreds of his compatriots and thousands of Sikh pilgrims, by the Indian forces while defending the Golden Temple being invaded and desecrated in June 1984 Operation Blue Star. The highest temporal seat of Sikhs Sri Akal Takht Sahib and statutory body governing Sikh religious affairs the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has recognized Bhindranwale as “Quami Shaheed” (National Martyr).

“hostage” is to punish and penalize the Sikh people of Punjab for supporting the political opinion on Khalistan and its democratic expression the “Khalistan Referendum”.

INTRODUCTION

Since March 2023, the state of Punjab with its 27 million population has been under siege in which the population has been cut off from India and the rest of the world by an internet shutdown, and houses and businesses of the people of Sikh faith are being raided; several hundred Sikhs have been detained and scores being sent off to far off states and areas of India for detention and prosecution; thousands being investigated and harassed by the security agencies; and India's efforts at domestic and international level labeling peaceful political advocacy by

Sikhs as terrorism.

The currently ongoing “Siege of Punjab” started in March 2023, with the operation CASO (Cordon and Search Operations), against the Khalistan Referendum in Punjab under which homes of thousands of Khalistan Referendum campaigners have been raided, hundreds have been illegally detained, subjected to custodial tortures, their mobile phones confiscated, and threats of rape, violence, and death given to their family members.

Most Recent Brazen Cases of Human Rights Abuses

Detentions, Arrests, Prosecutions, and Torture of Khalistan Referendum Activists

In all the cases cited below, for conducting pro-Khalistan Referendum activities, the detainees have been subjected to custodial torture. The prevalence of custodial torture is well documented common practice in India particularly on Sikh detainees who are known or even suspected to be associated with Khalistan.

Use and abuse of law is also a common practice and policy of successive Indian regimes to crush

and suppress the activism for Khalistan. In the recent cases cited below, the Sikh detainees have been booked and prosecuted on various criminal charges under the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act “UAPA”, including the charge of “sedition”. India's sedition law codified in Indian Penal Code (IPC) is a colonial-era law that is frequently used to penalize the expression of dissenting political opinion and peaceful

¹⁰ Defendant Purohit, the Governor of Punjab, asking the state police to crush the movement for Khalistan and supporters of Khalistan Referendum. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/thwart-efforts-to-revive-khalistan-movement-in-punjab-guv-to-cops-101675362297995-amp.html>

¹¹ see Page 1 of Amnesty International report “INDIA: Human Rights Violations In Punjab: Use And Abuse of the Law” “There is a clear pattern to the arrests, detentions, torture, and “disappearances” described in this report. Often, people have been arrested on mere suspicion.” “Those tortured are young people and the elderly, and some are women: the torture testimonies of a 17-year-old girl and a 60-year-old man are included in this report.” P.1. available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/06/asa200111991ar.pdf>

activism of political opinion, such as the Khalistan Referendum. Similarly, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), especially after the most recent 2019 amendments has been widely criticized by human rights bodies and the United Nations as violating human rights and freedom of expression.

India's sedition law from the colonial era is codified in section 124A of the IPC, which has been used by successive regimes to penalize political opinion and its expression. However, the use of sedition law has become even more draconian under the Modi regime. According to Human Rights Watch:

“Sedition cases have increased by 28% under the Modi government, according to a database compiled by news website *Article-14*. Since 2014, Indian authorities have filed more than 500 sedition cases involving more than 7,000 people. According to *Article-14*, 149 people have faced sedition charges simply for making remarks about Modi that were considered critical or derogatory.” See the July 18, 2022 report of HRW, “*Sedition Law: Why India Should Break From Britain’s Abusive Legacy*.”

In its May 2022 report, while addressing India's UAPA with its 2019 amendments which make it more lethal and crushing, the UN Special

Rapporteur on Promotion of Rights and Fundamental Freedoms held that:

“We are arising concerns with relations to their compatibility with India’s obligations under international human rights laws”

and found India's UAPA law to be violating the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, specifically, Article 15(1), 19, 21, and of ICCPR and Articles 19 and 20 of the UDHR guaranteeing freedom of opinion, peaceful assembly and association. See:

Communications from the Special procedures: [UA IND 7/2016](#); [UA IND 9/2016](#); [AL IND 20/2020](#) and [OL 7/2020](#), also see the report by UN Special Rapporteur on Protection of Human Rights available at:

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=25219>

¹² On history, use and abuse of India’s sedition law, see Human Rights Watch’s Report “Sedition Law: Why India Should Break From Britain’s Abusive Legacy” available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/18/sedition-law-why-india-should-break-britains-abusive-legacy>

In all the cases cited below, it has been learned that detainees have been abused, beaten, and tortured in custody and have been booked and prosecuted on various criminal charges under

the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act “UAPA”, including the charge of “sedition”.

- ***January 2023 - Case of Vikram Singh & Balram Singh:***

On January 29, 2023, Delhi Police Special Cell arrested Vikram Singh (29) and Balram Singh for pasting Khalistan Referendum posters and graffiti in West Delhi ahead of January 26, 2023 – India’s Republic Day. The posters and graffiti depicted Khalistan Referendum’s message and mission to “Liberate Punjab from Indian Occupation”.

Custodial torture is a common practice in India and particularly on Sikh detainees in Punjab who are associated with Khalistan. In the instant case, it has been learned that detainees have been abused, beaten, and tortured in custody and have been booked and are being prosecuted on various criminal charges under the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act “UAPA”, including the charge of “sedition”.

See: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/two-held-for-pro-khalistan-graffiti-in-delhi/article66447824.ece>

- ***December 2022 - Case of Talwinder Singh***

On December 8, 2022, Talwinder Singh was arrested in Amritsar, Punjab for writing pro-Khalistan slogans on the walls of his own house. See: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ludhiana/man-scribblespro-khalistanslogan-arrested/articleshowprint/96072613.cms>

Custodial torture is a common practice in India and particularly on Sikh detainees in Punjab who are associated with Khalistan. In the instant case, it has been learned that the detainee has been abused, beaten, and tortured in custody and has been booked and is being prosecuted on various criminal charges under several provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), including the charge of “sedition”.

- ***October 2022 – Case of Ram alias Soni***

On October 2, 2022, an individual named Ram alias Soni of Amritsar City was arrested and booked on criminal charges for writing the “Khalistan Zindabad” (Long Live Khalistan) slogan on the walls. See: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/amritsar-man-held-for-writing-khalistan-slogans-101664725097405.html>

Custodial torture is a common practice in India and particularly on Sikh detainees in Punjab who are associated with Khalistan. In the instant case, it has been learned that the detainee has been abused, beaten, and tortured in custody and

has been booked and is being prosecuted on various criminal charges under several provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), including the charge of “sedition”.

- ***September 2022 - December 2021 – Case of Mother, Son & his Friend, and Family***

In September 2022, after languishing in custody and suffering abuse for eight months, Jasvir Kaur (50) mother of Jagmeet Singh was finally released. On December 30, 2021, in one of the most brazen cases, Indian police detained Jagmeet Singh, his 50-year-old mother Jasvir Kaur, and his friend Ravinder Singh, all for supporting SFJ’s Khalistan Referendum campaign by sharing posts on social media calling for the liberation of Punjab from India through the means of voting and ballots.

See: <https://www.sikhpa.com/mother-of-sikh-activist-finally-released-after-eight-months-imprisoned/>

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jalandhar/jalandhar-1-more-accused-held-for-writing-khalistan-slogans-430880>



Jasvir Kaur mother of Jagmeet Singh detained by police for sharing posts on social media calling for the liberation of Khalistan from India

- ***September 2022 – Case of Lakhwinder Singh***

On September 11, 2022, Lakhwinder Singh of Amritsar was arrested for writing a pro-Khalistan slogan. See: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jalandhar/jalandhar-1-more-accused-held-for-writing-khalistan-slogans-430880>

- ***July 2022 – Case of Harwinder Singh alias Prince Prem Singh alias Prem***

On July 19, 2022, police arrested Harwinder Singh, alias Prince, a native of Salempur Sekhan village in Shambu, and Prem Singh, alias Prem, of the same village for putting up the “Khalistan Referendum” posters on the walls. During the arrest, Police also recovered 13 posters of the Khalistan Referendum from the possession of the accused. Harwinder and Prem have been booked under IPC and UAPA law.

See: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/two-people-linked-with-sfj-held-for-pasting-pro-khalistan-poster-outside-temple-in-patiala-413859>

- ***July 2022 – Case of Manjeet of Duladi:***

On July 05, 2022, Majeet of Duladi was detained by the Punjab Police for being involved in writing pro-Khalistan slogans on the walls. Manjeet was booked and prosecuted under various provisions of the IPC and the UAPA.

See: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/patiala-man-held-for-writing-pro-khalistan-slogans-in-karnal-101656977278457.html>

- ***July 2022 - Case of Resham Singh, Kulwinder Singh & Manpreet Singh***

On July 02, 2022, Punjab Police arrested Resham Singh, Kulwinder Singh, and Manpreet Singh for writing pro-Khalistan slogans on the walls. The slogans depicted the Khalistan Referendum’s message, “Punjab Hul Khalistan” (the solution for Punjab is the establishment of Khalistan through a referendum). In a brazen inhumane act, black bags were put on the faces of the detainees while they were presented before the public and media.

Custodial torture is a common practice in India and particularly on Sikh detainees in Punjab who are associated with Khalistan. In the instant case, it has been learned that the detainees have been abused, beaten, and tortured in police custody and have been booked and are being prosecuted on various criminal charges under several provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), including the charge of “sedition”.

See: <https://www.etvbharat.com/english/state/punjab/punjab-police-arrest-three-for-writing-pro-khalistan-slogans-in-sangrur/na20220702092144134134147>



Detainees Resham Singh, Kulwinder Singh, and Manpreet Singh in police custody with black bags on their faces and heads

- ***May 2022 – Case of Harbir Singh***

In May 2022, Harbir Singh of Haryana was detained by the Indian Police for putting up Khalistan posters outside Haryana Vidhan Sabha (Assembly) building. See: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/punjab-resident-arrested-for-pro-khalistan-flags-hoisted-at-entrance-of-himachal-assembly-at-dharamsala-393840>

- ***September 2021 – Case of Printing Khalistan Referendum Posters***

On September 17th, 2021, the Indian police arrested Gurwinder Singh, Jagwinder Singh, and Sukhdev Singh, three activists who were promoting the Punjab referendum in India. According to the Indian authorities, “the individuals were found with pamphlets explaining the legal right of Punjab to secede from India, along with a Canon printer, spray bottles, laptop, mobile phones, and a vehicle. None of the individuals were found to be in possession of any weapons, nor had they threatened any violence. Three individuals now face a slew of criminal charges simply because they aspire for the independence of Punjab and were printing and distributing Punjab Referendum information pamphlets.

See: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/punjab-police-busts-sikhs-for-justice-s-secessionist-module-in-ludhiana-district-1854128-2021-09-18>

See also: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/punjab-police-busts-sikhs-for-justice-s-secessionist-module-in-ludhiana-district-1854128-2021-09-17>

Round Ups and Raids on Sikhs in Punjab Ongoing Since February-March 2023

Operation Round Ups and large-scale police raids are being employed as part of the repressive methods used by the Modi Government to crush the Khalistan Referendum Campaign. The ongoing “Siege of Punjab” started in February/March 2023 with Operation CASO (Cordon and Search Operations)¹³ ordered by Bhagwant Mann, Chief Minister of Punjab, and Banwarilal Purohit¹⁴, Governor of Punjab, and executed by Gaurav Yadav, Director General of Police, against Khalistan Referendum in Punjab under which homes of thousands of Khalistan Referendum campaigners have been raided, hundreds have been illegally detained, subjected to custodial tortures, their mobile phones confiscated, and threats of rape, violence, and death given to their family members. The launch of CASO against SFJ and Khalistan Referendum is verified by the police officials as reported in Tribune India, dated March 02, 2023, saying:

“Acting on a tip-off, the district police today conducted a cordon and search operation to nab sympathizers of the Sikh For Justice (SFJ) and its legal counsel, Gurpatwant Singh Panmu, at Jassran village adjoining the industrial town of Mandi Gobindgarh. The police searched the houses of two erstwhile supporters of the SFJ. Nothing incriminating was found.

While addressing the media, Amlah DSP Jangeet Singh said the Punjab Police launched a CASO (Cordon and Search Operation) campaign to nab anti-nationals, drug peddlers, gangsters, and criminals. The campaign also aims at making the state drug-free. He said through the campaign, thorough search operations were conducted at suspicious places”.¹⁵

In the ongoing severe and violent “Siege of Punjab”, thousands of Sikh families have been illegally detained, and subjected to custodial torture while the whole state of Punjab has been cut and isolated from the rest of the world with shut down of internet¹⁶ to blackout the information

¹³ <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/patiala/police-campaign-to-nab-sfj-supporters-drug-peddlers-484764>

¹⁴ Purohit, the Governor of Punjab, asking the state police to crush the movement for Khalistan and supporters of Khalistan Referendum. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/thwart-efforts-to-revive-khalistan-movement-in-punjab-guv-to-cops-101675362297995-amp.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/patiala/police-campaign-to-nab-sfj-supporters-drug-peddlers-484764>

¹⁶ <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3214481/anger-mounts-among-sikh-diaspora-indian-police-cut-internet-search-fugitive-separatist-preacher>

about ongoing human rights abuses and to carry on the persecution¹⁷ of the Sikh population with impunity on account of their subscription to and support of the political opinion “Khalistan Referendum” which is being organized by the plaintiff Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) on the question, “Should Indian Governed Punjab Be An Independent Country?”.

The ongoing “Siege of Punjab” started in March 2023, with Operation CASO (Cordon and Search Operations)¹⁸, against the Khalistan Referendum in Punjab under which homes of thousands of Khalistan Referendum campaigners have been raided, hundreds have been illegally detained, subjected to custodial tortures, their mobile phones confiscated, and threats of rape, violence, and death given to their family members.

Khalistan Referendum¹⁹ is the campaign of SFJ under which the first-ever global unofficial referendum is being organized among the Sikh people living outside India and people of all faiths living in Punjab on the question of secession of Punjab from India and establishment of a sovereign country Khalistan. Since Indian Army’s Operation Bluestar against the Golden Temple in June 1984, the aspiration for the liberation of Punjab from India has become central and existential among the Sikh people globally, popularly known as the Khalistan movement²⁰. The movement which during the 80s and 90s was violently crushed by the Indian government by extra judicially killing more than 150,000 Sikhs with complete impunity, has now morphed into and taken the shape of the “Khalistan Referendum”. Unofficial voting is being conducted under the supervision of a panel of international experts on elections and democracy – The Punjab Referendum Commission – www.PunajbReferendumCommission.org to ensure transparency and compliance with international standards.

Overseas Khalistan Referendum Activists Facing India’s Wrath

India’s crackdown against Khalistan Referendum supporters is not limited to Sikhs living in India, rather Sikhs living abroad who support Khalistan Referendum are also facing India’s wrath in the form of “criminal charges” for peaceful advocacy of the Khalistan Referendum and or raising their voice over atrocities perpetrated against Sikhs in India.

In addition to physical abuse and persecution of Khalistan Referendum campaigners, India has also launched a full-scale propaganda war against the Khalistan Referendum with stories based on a preposterous predicate. The ostensible purpose of India’s propaganda campaign is to spread fear among the civilian population and to build a negative opinion against Khalistan Referendum among the audience at home and abroad.

¹⁷ <https://time.com/6265630/india-amritpal-singh-sikh-punjab-khalistan/>

¹⁸ Purohit, the Governor of Punjab, asking the state police to crush the movement for Khalistan and supporters of Khalistan Referendum. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/thwart-efforts-to-revive-khalistan-movement-in-punjab-guv-to-cops-101675362297995-amp.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/canada-khalistan-referendum-india-sikhs-b2173723.html>

²⁰ <https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2023/03/22/india/india-separatist-khalistan-movement-explainer-intl-hnk/index.html>

As is evident from India's so-called counter-insurgency operations of the 1990s, building such an ill-founded negative opinion before unleashing violence upon a section of the civilian population serves to desensitize the readership and facilitates India in taking brutal and violent action against Sikhs without much of an outcry from the international community.

The Indian efforts to undermine and smear the campaign has also spread overseas. When SFJ organized a Khalistan Referendum event in London on August 12, 2018, India issued a *demarche*²¹, urging the UK to ban the event. India falsely claimed and shamelessly lied in its stance against the SFJ's London event claiming that the purpose of the event was to spread hatred and communal disharmony. The UK did not act on the *demarche* and the SFJ's event "London Declaration on Punjab Independence Referendum" took place at Trafalgar Square, attended by thousands, in peace and without incident.

Ever since India launched a concerted campaign against overseas supporters of the Khalistan Referendum, the following techniques and actions are employed to suppress the pro-Khalistan political opinion of foreign-based Sikhs:

- a. **Spreading the propaganda and the narrative** labeling and equating the Khalistan Referendum as "terrorism", using state-owned channels and private Indian media.
- b. **Filing criminal charges** in India against pro-Khalistan Referendum and pro-human rights activities carried out in the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, and other Western countries.
- c. **Detaining, intimidating, and harassing** the Punjab-based relatives and family members of overseas supporters of the Khalistan Referendum
- d. **Attaching and Confiscating** the property located in Punjab of the foreign-based supporters and activists of the Khalistan Referendum.
- e. **Indian Consulates Spreading Fear** among foreign-based Sikhs and threatening them with consequences they and their relatives in India could face if they support Khalistan Referendum in any manner.

Specific Cases of Abuse Against Foreign-Based Sikhs

Canadian Citizen and supporter of the Khalistan Referendum Hardeep Singh Nijjar, UK-based Sikh human rights activist and coordinator of Khalistan Referendum Paramjeet Singh Pamma, and New York-based human rights lawyer and General Counsel of SFJ Gurpatwant Singh Pannun have been the prime target of Indian government's campaign and have been charged

²¹ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-issues-demarche-to-britain-over-proposed-pro-khalistan-event/story-QcfHYEfQGTH1CSsM3za9JL.html>

with sedition for organizing protest rallies outside Indian Embassies in the USA, Canada, the UK, and Germany to highlight the Indian government's use of violence against protesting farmers.

- **Case of Gurpatwant Singh Pannun – US-Based Lawyer**

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun is a New York-based licensed attorney and General Counsel to the Sikh advocacy group SFJ who has given the call for Khalistan Referendum. For his human rights advocacy and activism for Khalistan Referendum, the Indian government has filed more than 22 cases²² in India against Pannun under sedition and UAPA. The underlying activities in all the criminal cases include highlighting the human rights abuses, giving a call for Khalistan Referendum, urging people to support Khalistan Referendum by registering votes, raising Khalistan flags, organizing, and leading demonstrations in the USA, Canada, the UK, and other Western nations against India's abuses against Sikhs.

In September 2022, through unilateral proceedings, the Indian government also confiscated and attached²³ the ancestral property of Pannun and other active supporters of the Khalistan Referendum located in Punjab, India.

https://twitter.com/NIA_India/status/1303268909236260864?s=20

²² For brief overview of cases against Pannun, See: "Gurpatwant Singh Pannun wanted in 22 Cases" Indian Express, October 12, 2022 <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/pannu-wanted-in-22-cases-but-interpol-wont-act-440702>

²³ For details about attachment of properties of Khalistan Referendum supporters, see September 08, 2022 news article in Tribune India, "Govt attaches Properties of Pannun, Nijjar under UAPA" at: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/govt-attaches-properties-of-pannu-nijjar-in-amritsar-jalandhar-under-uapa-138221>



Govt. Orders Attachment of Immovable Properties of Designated Terrorists Gurpatwant Singh Pannu and Hardeep Singh Nijjar

PRESS RELEASE Dtd.08/09/2020

Govt. Orders Attachment of Immovable Properties of Designated Terrorists Gurpatwant Singh Pannu and Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Government of India in exercise of powers conferred under Section 51A of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967, has ordered for attachment of the immovable properties of designated terrorists - Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in District Amritsar, Punjab and Hardeep Singh Nijjar in District Jalandhar, Punjab.

2. National Investigation Agency (NIA) is investigating case RC-02/2019/NIA/DLI relating to a concerted campaign launched by secessionist organisation 'Sikhs for Justice' under the banner of 'Sikh Referendum 2020' for creation of so called 'Khalistan'. NIA during the course of investigation had identified immovable properties belonging to Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in District Amritsar, and Hardeep Singh Nijjar in District Jalandhar, and moved Government for attachment of these properties under the provisions of the UA(P)Act, 1967.

3. The details of properties attached by the Government of India are;

Sr. No	Name	Area of Land	Address
1.	Gurpatwant Singh Pannu	46 Kanal	Village-Khankot, Amritsar, Punjab
		11 Kanal 13.5 Marlas	Sultanwind Suburban Bhainiwal, Amritsar, Punjab
2.	Hardeep Singh Nijjar	11 Kanal 13 Marlas	Village-Bhar, Singhpura, Pillaur, Jalandhar (Punjab)

4. Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), headed by USA based terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, is presently making efforts to propagate 'Sikh Referendum-2020' on social media. This outfit is also trying to hold meetings at certain places in the U.S. and other countries to instigate and mobilize diaspora for their illegal activities. Government of India has already declared Sikhs for Justice as an 'Unlawful Association' under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 vide its notification dated 10.07.2019. Significantly, Government of India, as per the notification dated 01/07/2020, has designated Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, and Hardeep Singh Nijjar as 'terrorist' in the Fourth Schedule to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

5:48 AM · Sep 8, 2020

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/govt-attaches-properties-of-pannu-nijjar-in-amritsar-jalandhar-under-uapa-138221>

- **Sedition Charges in India for Organizing Demonstration In USA/Canada/UK**

On December 15, 2020²⁴, the Indian government charged US-based lawyer and General Counsel to SFJ Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, UK-based Paramjeet Singh Pamma, and Canada-based activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar under the sedition law for organizing demonstrations in front of the Indian Missions in New York, London, and Vancouver in support of the then ongoing farmers' protest in Delhi and Punjab.

²⁴ See the News Report about sedition case filed against Khalistan Referendum activists for organizing demonstrations in USA/UK/Canada and Germany at: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nia-probing-khalistani-funding-for-protests-against-india-overseas/story-jWvN7ynH1iUBg6C9JEBQYI.html>



**NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY
FIRST INFORMATION REPORT
(Under Sec. 154 Cr. P.C)**

Book No. 01

Serial No. 218

1. **District:** New Delhi

PS: NIA Hqrs New Delhi

Year: 2020

FIR No. RC-40/2020/NIA/DLI

Date: 15.12.2020

2.

	Act	Sections
(i)	Act: The Indian Penal Code	120 B , 124 A, 153 A, 153B
(ii)	Act: Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act	13, 17, 18 , 18 B , 20

3. (a) **Suspected Offence:**

'Sikhs For Justice', an 'Unlawful Association' under the Unlawful Activities(Prevention)Act,1967, and other Khalistani terrorist outfits including but not limited to Babbar Khalsa International, Khalistan Tiger Force and Khalistan Zindabad Force along with their frontal organisations, have entered into a conspiracy to create an atmosphere of fear and lawlessness and to cause disaffection in people and to incite them towards rising in rebellion against the Government of India.

In furtherance of above conspiracy, huge funds are being collected abroad for on-ground campaign and propaganda against Government of India including staging demonstrations outside Indian missions in countries like the USA, UK, Canada, Germany and so forth. These campaigns are being spearheaded by designated terrorists Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, Paramjit Singh Pamma, Hardeep Singh Nijjar and others.

It has also been learnt that large amounts of funds so collected are being sent through Non-Governmental Organisations to pro-Khalistani elements based in India, to undertake terrorist acts and to strike terror in the people of India. SFJ leadership has planned large scale disruptive activities intended to damage government and private property and also disrupt supplies and services essential to the life of the community of India.

SFJ and other pro-Khalistani elements involved in this conspiracy, through their incessant social media campaign and otherwise, are radicalizing and recruiting impressionable youth to agitate and undertake terrorist acts for creation of separate nation of Khalistan after secession from Indian Territory.

- **Attempt To Extradite Pannun– Abusing the Interpol & Extradition Laws**

In October 2022, Interpol rejected²⁵ India's request to issue Red Corner Notice (RCN) against SFJ's General Counsel and US-based lawyer Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. The RCN request was filed by India in December 2018²⁶. RCN was requested based on a case registered in 2017 against Pannun and four others, including US-based Sikh activists Jagdeep Singh and Jagjeet Singh, at the Sohana police station in Mohali "for carrying out seditious activities to disturb public tranquility in Punjab" i.e., Khalistan Referendum campaign by putting up posters and banners. (See December 19, 2018, News Report of Hindustan Times at: [https://www.pressreader.com/india/hindustan-times Bathinda/20181219/281505047322548](https://www.pressreader.com/india/hindustan-times-Bathinda/20181219/281505047322548))

CONCLUSION

The global civil society and Western governments have extensively documented the long history of human rights abuses committed by Indian authorities against pro-Khalistan Sikh activists during the 1990s, premised on false labeling, spread through the media, encouraged by politicians, and perpetrated by prosecutors and police. Unfortunately, the culture continues to this day.

Unlike the ongoing global Khalistan Referendum, the Sikh freedom movement of the 1980s and 1990s had a militant edge. However, the brutal counter-insurgency operations were, in the words of Human Rights Watch, "the most extreme example of a policy in which the end appeared to justify all means, including torture and murder."²⁷

During the 1990s India's state violence against Sikhs was accompanied by the misuse of the criminal justice system by prosecutors and police. The US Department of State described the Punjab police practice of faked encounter killings in 1993:

"In the typical scenario, police take into custody a suspected militant or militant supporter without filing an arrest report. If the detainee dies during interrogation or is executed, officials deny he was ever in custody and claim he died during an armed encounter with police or security forces. Alternatively, police may claim to have been ambushed by militants while escorting a suspect. Although the detainee invariably dies in "crossfire," police casualties in these "incidents" are rare."²⁸

Although the militancy associated with Khalistan evaporated in the 1990s, the Indian authorities still employ the illegal, violent, and abusive methods associated with that period.

²⁵ See October 12, 2022 news report of The Indian Express "India's Request for Action Against Pannun Rejected" at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/gurpatwant-singh-pannun-interpol-red-corner-notice-explained-8204197/>.

²⁶ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/referendum-2020-hoardings-police-plan-interpol-move-on-us-based-sfj-men-fail-to-get-printer-s-custody/story-cypYnohJRyvOzXOKezMPYP.html>

²⁷ *Protecting the Killers – A Policy of Impunity In Punjab, India*, Human Rights Watch, Volume 19, No. 14(C), p. 2. available at: <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/india1007/>

²⁸ US State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices—1993: India," January 31, 1994

India's tyrannical treatment of Khalistan Referendum supporters, at home and abroad, is not merely based on falsehood but also stems out of India's understanding, perception, and lack of commitment to the democratic value of freedom of speech and expression i.e., labeling a peaceful political dissent as "crime", "terrorism" and "hate".

India's recent terrain of persecution of Khalistan Referendum campaigners and labeling the campaign as an illegal and violent insurgency is also a repetition of its broader and well-established practice of forcefully silencing such peaceful political opinions that are seeking justice for victims of state violence, exposing the hollowness of India's claim of equality towards religious minorities, and highlighting India's crushing opposition to the right of self-determination of Sikh people as guaranteed by ICCPR.

The purpose of this report is to inform the global community and world powers that there is a strong and growing apprehension that India's persecution of Khalistan Referendum Campaigners and unfounded negative propaganda against the Khalistan Referendum based on concocted predicates; illegal detention/torture of Referendum activists and charging them with sedition/terrorism is a prelude to India's preparation for unleashing full-scale genocidal violence against Sikh people on account of their aspiration for independence from Indian occupation of their ancestral homeland Khalistan.
