



Written by [D. Michael DeRidder](#) on October 18, 2024

FBI Charges Indian Government Employee for Sikh Separatist Leader Assassination Plot

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray announced that Indian government employee Vikash Yadav has been charged for his role in directing a murder-for-hire plot to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist movement leader who holds dual U.S.-Canadian citizenship.

Yadav allegedly conspired to assassinate Pannun for promoting the Khalistan movement objective of establishing a sovereign Sikh ethno-religious state in the Punjab region of India and Pakistan. Wray stated [in an FBI press release](#):



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The defendant, an Indian government employee, allegedly conspired with a criminal associate and attempted to assassinate a U.S. citizen on American soil for exercising their First Amendment rights. The FBI will not tolerate acts of violence or other efforts to retaliate against those residing in the U.S. for exercising their constitutionally protected rights. We are committed to working with our partners to detect, disrupt, and hold accountable foreign nationals or others who seek to engage in such acts of transnational repression.

Pannun has been declared a terrorist by the Indian government and is one of India's National Investigation Agency's (NIA) [most wanted fugitives](#). However, the FBI asserted his activity is protected by his First Amendment rights as a naturalized U.S. citizen.

In November 2023, Pannun [warned Sikh people](#) to not travel on Air India aircraft. He claimed that their lives would "be in danger," stating in a video:

We are asking the Sikh people not to fly via Air India on November 19. There will be a global blockade. On November 19, don't travel by Air India or your life will be in danger.

The FBI statement follows Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's announcement on Tuesday that [six Indian diplomats had been deported](#) for alleged involvement in the murder of a Canadian Sikh separatist leader in June 2023. Moninder Singh, a spokesman for the Sikh advocacy group British Columbia Gurdwara Council, [spoke to Reuters about multiple](#) reports from Canadian law enforcement warning him of assassination plots. He accused Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government of acting with impunity, stating:

India has gotten away with so much over the years and under Modi's regime, its impunity.



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They feel like they're just so powerful that no one's really going to hold them in check. And they probably have been correct over the past decade or so.



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