

Eight Indian States Are Getting Ready to Crack Down on the Sikh Community

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Indian media reported that New Delhi has given eight states the authority to utilize the so-called “Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act” in order to counteract the influence that the Sikhs For Justice’s Referendum 2020 campaign is having on their Sikh communities, which sets the stage for a massive crackdown against this minority religious group ahead of next year’s planned plebiscite on Punjabi independence.

Storm clouds are gathering all across India over the Sikhs For Justice’s (SFJ) [Referendum 2020 campaign](#) to hold a peaceful plebiscite on Punjab’s independence next year, something that [scares New Delhi to no end](#) because of the fear that it instills within the so-called “powers that be” that the Sikhs’ revolutionary 1973 [Anandpur Sahib Resolution](#) will become more popular as a result and therefore [possibly inspire the most viable alternative vision](#) yet for [challenging the ruling Hindutva fascists](#). The state has thus far tried to smear the organization and its legal advisor Gurpatwant Singh Pannun as “[Pakistani-backed terrorists](#)”, but that hasn’t succeeded in reversing the groundswell of grassroots support that they have within Punjab and beyond. Nor, for that matter, has [Big Tech’s social media censorship](#) of the Khalistani movement been successful either, ergo why the Chief Minister of Indian Punjab recently requested the deployment of five companies of central security forces in what ominously appears to be a precursor to the [probable imposition of the feared “Armed Forces \(Special Powers\) Act” \(AFSPA\) in part or all of his region](#) ahead of next year’s vote.

New Delhi is so nervous about the strategic consequences of losing the battle for the Sikhs’ hearts and minds that it now empowered eight states to utilize the so-called “[Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act](#)” (UAPA) in order to counteract the influence that the SFJ’s Referendum 2020 campaign is having on their Sikh communities. India’s “[Economic Times](#)” media outlet quoted an unnamed senior Home Ministry official as saying that “This notification deals with only those states which have a sizeable Sikh population and where the organisations like SFJ can play foul and try to brainwash Sikh community in favor of the Khalistan movement, through various means”, which hints that much more muscular “legal”, informational (i.e. propagandistic), and possibly even forceful means will be pursued as part of the government’s desperate struggle to contain the surging popularity of the Khalistani cause. Seeing as how many supportive social media accounts are already censored or will likely be soon enough, there’s a risk that the rest of the world won’t easily find out about the state’s abuses against this religious minority, which could embolden the government to use excessive means.

Even worse, the singling out of the entire Sikh community as the target of this latest

crackdown confirms that the state is now openly practicing a policy of prejudiced profiling against them after having secretly done as much since India's inception, something that has also long been applied against the country's hundreds of millions of Muslims and the ethnic minorities of the perennially restive Northeast too. This newfound approach unquestionably contradicts India's claims of being the self-professed "world's largest democracy" and proves that it's becoming more of a "prison" of nations instead a "patchwork" of them like it publicly presents itself. The greatest difference between the state's targeting of the Sikhs as opposed to the many Muslims across India and the ethnic minorities of the Northeast is that the first-mentioned have formed prominent diaspora communities in the West and are therefore better positioned to raise global awareness of their people's plight back home in some of the most influential countries on the planet. In fact, it's partially because the SFJ are based in the US that India is so viciously targeting them out of fear that they'll influence American policy.

It'll remain to be seen to what extent India will go in its seemingly impending crackdown against its Sikh religious minority, but it can be expected that any and all forthcoming abuses will eventually be made known. Political problems cannot be resolved through military solutions unlike what the Indian state might falsely believe, and its menacing hints of a forthcoming forceful response to the SFJ's Referendum 2020 campaign will inevitably backfire by galvanizing the Sikh community even more than they already are in their support of the Khalistani cause. India is literally doing the exact opposite of what it should do to de-escalate the situation, which is to allow the referendum to peacefully proceed and then discuss the outcome with all of the relevant stakeholders. Instead of taking responsibility for its own policy shortcomings that inspired the quest for Khalistan in the first place, India is doubling down and only making everything worse by getting Sikhs scared that they might soon witness a 21st-century repeat of the infamous state-backed genocidal riots that were carried out against them in late-1984, which only leads to New Delhi losing even more hearts and minds.

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