



India's Disinformation Campaign Against Canada's Sikhs

2026 REPORT: PATTERNS, PROPAGATION & IMPACT
BY THE WORLD SIKH ORGANIZATION OF CANADA



Introduction

This report continues the work we began in our 2021 report, *India's Disinformation Campaign Against Canada's Sikhs*, which was later filed as an exhibit with Canada's Foreign Interference Commission.¹ It also builds on the Centre for Information Resilience's analysis of the #RealSikh influence operation, which exposed a coordinated network of fake accounts posing as members of the Sikh community.²

In 2021, WSO's report set out how there is a standard methodology for influencing the image of Sikhs in Canada: Indian outlets manufacture stories about "Sikh extremism" in Canada, pro-India media and fake news sites amplify them, and the sheer volume of coverage is then used to draw Canadian media and politicians into repeating the narrative. Five years later, that methodology has intensified. The cases documented in this report show the same machinery operating at a greater scale, with new tools, including automated bot networks, and with sharper consequences for individual Sikh Canadians who now find themselves falsely branded as terrorists in the press of a foreign state.

Our purpose here is to identify the patterns. Each incident described below can look on its own, like an isolated error by a careless newsroom. Read together, they reveal a repeatable production cycle: fabrication, syndication, artificial amplification, laundering into Canadian discourse, how they create real-world risk for Sikhs, Canadians, Canadian institutions, and democratic trust. Understanding this cycle is the first step toward disrupting it.

Importantly, this report does not seek to determine responsibility for every instance of false or misleading reporting. Attribution in information operations is inherently complex and frequently requires access to classified intelligence, platform data, or investigative authorities beyond the scope of public research. Instead, this assessment examines observable patterns documented through publicly available evidence. Where multiple independent investigations identify similar methods of dissemination, recurring narratives, or repeated targets, those similarities merit analytical attention regardless of whether individual incidents can be conclusively attributed to a specific actor.

¹ *World Sikh Organization of Canada, India's Disinformation Campaign Against Canada's Sikhs, 2021; filed as exhibit TSC0000002 with the Foreign Interference Commission.*
https://foreigninterferencecommission.ca/fileadmin/foreign_interference_commission/Document_s/Exhibits_and_Presentations/Exhibits/TSC0000002.pdf

² *Centre for Information Resilience, Analysis of the #RealSikh Influence Operation, by Benjamin Strick, 2021.*

Executive Summary

Rather than presenting a chronological catalogue of individual news stories, this report examines how apparently separate incidents collectively reveal consistent methods of information manipulation. Particular attention is given to the interaction between traditional media, social media platforms, political commentary, and coordinated amplification networks.

Specifically, this report seeks to answer the following questions:

- What narratives consistently appear across documented incidents?
- How do misleading claims circulate between social media, television, digital news outlets, and political commentary?
- Which individuals, communities, and institutions are most frequently targeted?
- How have documented information operations evolved since earlier assessments?
- What implications do these recurring patterns have for Canadian democratic institutions, public trust, and community safety?

Since the previous reports, the core pattern has intensified rather than changed. The same narrative architecture continues to appear: Sikh advocacy is framed as extremism; Khalistan is treated as a catch-all label for criminality, terrorism, disloyalty, or foreign manipulation; and Canada is presented as a permissive or compromised state.

The most important development is the movement from social-media manipulation into mainstream media laundering. False or misleading claims now often begin with a social media post, anonymous website, commentary channel, or poorly sourced Indian outlet, then get repeated by larger Indian broadcasters and newspapers, and finally re-enter Canadian discourse through screenshots, clips, diaspora influencers, and opinion columns.

The evidence points to a hybrid model: not all accounts are bots and not all amplifiers are fake. A small number of highly active accounts ideologically aligned influencers, suspected bots, Indian television channels, and mainstream outlets together create volume, speed, and perceived legitimacy.

The practical harm is immediate. Sikh Canadians have been falsely linked to terrorism, public servants have faced reputational damage, police and courts have had to correct false claims, and Canadian leaders and institutions have been targeted with conspiratorial narratives intended to undermine trust.



This should be treated as a Canadian democratic issue, not only a Sikh community issue. The Foreign Interference Commission has warned that foreign interference harms diaspora communities in distinct ways and undermines trust in democratic institutions. Its findings provide the policy frame for understanding these incidents as part of a broader foreign interference problem.

The Foreign Interference Commission: An Existential Threat

On January 28, 2025, Justice Marie-Josée Hogue released the final report of the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions. Her conclusion was stark: information manipulation, whether foreign or domestic, poses one of the biggest risks to Canadian democracy.³ The Commission treated disinformation as an existential threat to Canada's democratic institutions, and it identified India as one of the most active perpetrators.

"Disinformation is difficult to detect and, above all, to counter since the technological means available evolve at breakneck speed. It is noxious, and it is powerful, it poses a major risk to Canadian democracy. If we do not find ways of addressing it, misinformation and disinformation have the ability to distort our discourse, change our views, and shape our society. In my view it is no exaggeration to say that at this juncture, information manipulation (whether foreign or not) poses the single biggest risk to our democracy. It is an existential threat."

Justice Marie-Josée Hogue, Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference, Final Report, Volume 1

The Commission found that India uses disinformation as a key form of foreign interference against Canada, and that its activities "primarily target the approximately 800,000 members of the Sikh diaspora" in this country, with the aim of promoting a pro-India and anti-Khalistan narrative.⁴ Volume 1 of the report also noted that disinformation is used "as a retaliatory tactic, to punish decisions that run contrary to a state's interests," and pointed to the campaign that followed the Prime Minister's September 2023 announcement regarding suspected Indian involvement in the killing of Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar.⁵

³ Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions, Final Report, January 28, 2025. <https://foreigninterferencecommission.ca/>

⁴ Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions; see also World Sikh Organization of Canada, *Understanding Anti-Sikh Hate* (2025).

⁵ Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference, Final Report, Volume 1, Report Summary, p. 6. https://foreigninterferencecommission.ca/fileadmin/report_volume_1.pdf

Canada's intelligence agencies have reached the same conclusion. The Communications Security Establishment has stated that India uses disinformation to project a positive image globally while targeting adversaries, including what it labels "anti-India" activity like the Khalistan movement.⁶ A February 2023 CSIS assessment identified India as a foreign interference threat actor that seeks to influence the Government of Canada toward pro-India policies, to counter perceived threats to its domestic stability, and to propagate pro-India narratives across Canadian media, social media and political discussion. The Rapid Response Mechanism at Global Affairs Canada reported in September 2023 that India was spreading large-scale, internationally coordinated disinformation, including claims that Canada "safeguards" terrorists, recommendations that Canada use violence against Khalistan supporters, attempts to dishonour Bhai Nijjar's memory, and racialized attacks on the Prime Minister and the Leader of the NDP. Days after the Nijjar announcement, the United States Department of State publicly warned that the Canada-India dispute would be a likely target for disinformation efforts.⁷

What was once dismissed as a community grievance is now the documented finding of a federal commission, three intelligence bodies, and an allied government. The question is no longer whether this campaign exists. The question is how it works, and what it costs.

⁶ Panth Punjab Project, "India using disinformation to target adversaries: Canadian intelligence," September 27, 2024. <https://www.panthpunjab.com/p/india-using-disinformation-to-target>

⁷ CTV News, "Canada-India dispute likely target for disinformation efforts, U.S. State Department warns," October 6, 2023. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/article/canada-india-dispute-likely-target-for-disinformation-efforts-us-state-department-warns/>

How the Disinformation Cycle Operates:

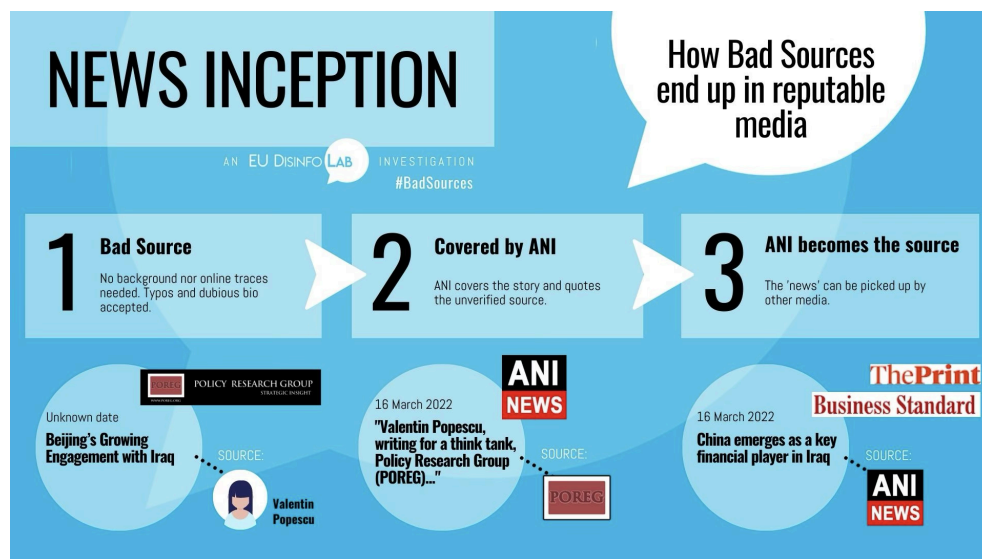


Image 1: EU DisinfoLab's visualization of the "Indian Chronicles" network illustrating the interconnected ecosystem of fake media outlets, NGOs, and organizations documented in the investigation. Source: EU DisinfoLab (2020)

(<https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/bad-sources-how-indian-news-agency-ani-quoted-sources-that-do-not-exist/>)

Across every case we have examined since 2021, the same five-stage cycle appears. The structure it follows remains the same and only details are changed for the record.

Stage One: Fabrication at Arm's Length

False claims rarely begin with an official statement. They begin at points that give the Indian state deniability: anonymous "intelligence sources," unverifiable social media posts, fake think tanks, and websites that pose as independent media. The EU DisinfoLab's investigations documented a network of hundreds of fake outlets and NGOs tied to the Srivastava Group, including sixteen sites designed to look like local Canadian news websites, and later showed that the wire agency ANI had published hundreds of articles quoting experts and organizations that did not exist.⁸ In December 2024, the Toronto Star asked why major Indian outlets had treated a little-known website's fabricated claims about Canada as news; the

⁸ EU DisinfoLab, *Indian Chronicles* (2020) and *#BadSources: How Indian News Agency ANI Quoted Sources That Do Not Exist* (2023).

<https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/indian-chronicles-deep-dive-into-a-15-year-operation-targeting-the-eu-and-un-to-serve-indian-interests/>

answer is that the fabrication stage is designed to produce exactly that raw material.⁹

The false claims about the men charged in Bhai Nijjar's killing followed the same route. CBC News traced the wave of Indian coverage back to Canadian social media accounts that had misread publicly available court records, mistaking an administrative transfer of the file from provincial court to the B.C. Supreme Court for a release of the accused. No Indian outlet contacted the B.C. Prosecution Service, which confirmed within hours that all four accused remained in custody. A misreading became a source; the source became a headline.

A website spread disinformation about Canada. Why did major Indian outlets treat it as news?

A report about a conference in Toronto on Sikh terrorism was posted last May, but the Star could find no evidence the event ever took place or that the listed speakers even exist.

July 4, 2023 | 5 min read     118

Image 2: Toronto Star investigation examining how fabricated claims originating from an obscure website were reproduced by major Indian news organizations without independent verification. The article illustrates the initial fabrication stage of the information ecosystem described in this report.

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⁹ Toronto Star, "A website spread disinformation about Canada. Why did major Indian outlets treat it as news?"

https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/a-website-spread-disinformation-about-canada-why-did-major-indian-outlets-treat-it-as-news/article_2b951a05-5c8c-5856-a753-ecebe000b7f6.html

¹⁰ CBC News, "Indians deluged with false reports about release of Nijjar murder suspects," January 9, 2025. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/india-canada-nijjar-accused-1.7427130>

Stage Two: Syndication and Volume

Once fabricated, a claim is repeated across dozens of outlets within hours. On January 9, 2025, millions of Indians woke to reports that the four men accused of murdering Bhai Nijjar had been released because the case had collapsed. The Times of India, the world's largest-circulation English-language newspaper, headlined its report "Four Indians Accused in Nijjar Murder Case Released from Custody in Canada."¹¹ India Today told its 11.2 YouTube subscribers the supposed release was hugely embarrassing for Canada, and the Hindustan Times tied the fictional release to the Prime Minister's resignation announcement.¹² The Pointer identified the Hindu Post, First Post, Business Today, Business Standard, The New Indian Express, Mint and News18 among the outlets repeating the claim, while also sowing doubt about the integrity of Canada's justice system.¹³ Volume is the strategy. When a false claim appears in twenty mastheads at once, repetition performs the function of corroboration, and most of the articles remain online after the claim is debunked.



Image 3: CBC's Nijjar False-release article (Contains the IndiaTVNews Screenshot)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/india-canada-nijjar-accused-1.7427130>

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Global News, "Indian press falsely reports release of Nijjar murder suspects," January 9, 2025.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10950773/indian-press-disinformation-nijjar-murder-suspects/>

¹³The Pointer, "India's ongoing disinformation campaign: False news claiming dropped charges in Nijjar case spread by country's media," January 14, 2025.

<https://thepointer.com/article/2025-01-14/india-s-ongoing-disinformation-campaign-false-news-claiming-dropped-charges-in-nijjar-case-spread-by-country-s-media>

Stage Three: Artificial Amplification

Where organic reach falls short, automation fills the gap. After the November 2024 clashes outside Hindu temples in Brampton and Surrey, CBC News reviewed hundreds of posts on X and found misleading, inflammatory content about the Khalistan movement being recirculated by suspected bot networks and then repeated on pro-Modi television channels in India.¹⁴ The asymmetry was striking. Three prominent critics of the Khalistan movement were retweeted by hundreds to more than a thousand suspected bots each; the account of a leading Khalistan advocate was amplified by thirteen. Toronto commentator Daniel Bordman received nearly 6,000 retweets from roughly 1,800 suspicious accounts over the month of November.



Image 4: National Media running a sensational headline

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/bots-temple-clashes-hindu-sikh-canada-1.7411094>

Image 5: Social media post reproduced from the CBC investigation, showing publicly visible engagement metrics (views, likes, and reposts). The figure demonstrates the level of online amplification observed during the dissemination of content related to the November protests.

Two Bordman posts illustrate how amplification launders falsehood into fact. In one, he attached slogans taken from an entirely different video to footage of a peaceful Khalistan gathering in Surrey; the post drew nearly 1.5 million views, 16,000 likes and more than 5,000 reposts, 469 of them from suspected bots. In

¹⁴ CBC News, "Bots and Indian TV push fake news about Canada in wake of Hindu temple clashes," December 18, 2024.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/bots-temple-clashes-hindu-sikh-canada-1.7411094>

another, he described two Surrey police officers performing Gatka, a Sikh martial art, at a religious festival as “Khalistani cops” preparing to attack a Hindu temple; more than 370 suspected bot accounts boosted the post, and a day later the Delhi-based channel NewsXLive ran a segment asking whether the officers could be trusted as impartial enforcers of justice.¹⁵ Researchers at McGill University’s Media Ecosystem Observatory had already detected the remnants of a bot farm issuing identical anti-Canada messages in mid-October 2024, immediately after the RCMP linked agents of the Indian government to homicides and extortion in Canada.¹⁶

This is the same technique the Centre for Information Resilience documented in the #RealSikh operation: a small core of coordinated accounts, in that case eighty fake personas with more than 84,000 followers on Twitter alone, generating content that authentic nationalist accounts and now automated networks push into the mainstream. One fake account’s tweet attacking the UK and Canada as homes of the Khalistan movement drew more than 16,000 likes and 3,000 retweets.¹⁷

Stage Four: Laundering into Canadian Discourse

The cycle succeeds when the narrative sheds its Indian origin and reappears wearing Canadian credentials. In 2020 the vehicle was the Macdonald-Laurier Institute report; in 2021 it was a Canadian senator tweeting a Zee News smear. In June 2025 it was the National Post, which published an opinion piece by Ujjal Dosanjh and Joe Adam George titled “Canada has put up with Khalistani terrorists for long enough.”¹⁸

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ RCMP statement, October 14, 2024, on criminal activity in Canada linked to agents of the Government of India, followed by the expulsion of six Indian diplomats including the High Commissioner.

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Baaz News, “The National Post Gave A Platform To Indian Disinfo,” by Balpreet Singh, June 26, 2025. <https://www.baaznews.org/p/national-post-ujjal-dosanjh-indian-disinfo-sikhs>



Toronto

Bots and Indian TV push fake news about Canada in wake of Hindu temple clashes

CBC News discovered hundreds of suspicious accounts boosting misleading information from Canadian influencers

Jonathan Montpetit, Saloni Bhugra, Ivan Angelovski · CBC News ·

Posted: Dec 18, 2024 4:00 AM EST | Last Updated: December 18, 2024

Image 6:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/bots-temple-clashes-hindu-sikh-canada-1.7411094>

The piece claimed that Peel Regional Police had dismantled a “narco-terrorism” network in the Greater Toronto Area linked to Khalistan sympathizers, with drug proceeds allegedly funding protests, referendums and weapons. Peel Regional Police confirmed, in direct response to an inquiry, that there is no evidence linking any aspect of the Project Pelican investigation to anti-India activity or the Khalistan movement, and that “narco-terrorism” would be an inaccurate description of a drug case with no ideological dimension. The article also asserted that CSIS had testified about ISI support for Khalistani elements; the cited hearing of September 27, 2024, contains no mention of the ISI at all. These narratives appear in Indian state-aligned media, and nowhere else. The World Sikh Organization wrote to the National Post to request a correction; the paper did not respond.¹⁹

Baaz



The National Post Gave A Platform To Indian Disinfo

“Ujjal Dosanjh has become a consistent and prominent conduit for Indian state disinformation.”

Image 7: The National Post opinion piece of June 21, 2025, which repeated the false “narco-terrorism” claim refuted by Peel Regional Police

(<https://www.baaznews.org/p/national-post-ujjal-dosanjh-indian-disinfo-sikhs>)

¹⁹ Ibid



Domestic conduits matter because they close the loop. Bordman, whose posts fed Indian television, has given multiple interviews to Indian outlets including ANI over the past year and acknowledged to CBC that some of those media appearances were paid, while denying he would take money from the Indian government.²⁰ When a Canadian byline or a Canadian broadcast repeats a narrative manufactured in Delhi, Indian outlets then cite the Canadian coverage as independent confirmation. The 2018 Trudeau visit, which the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians found involved “strategically released” media articles, remains the template.²¹

The documented cases reviewed in this report suggest that misleading narratives frequently move through a series of identifiable stages before reaching wider audiences.

Although individual cases differ, the available evidence indicates a recurring pathway that can be summarized as follows:

The Information Dissemination Cycle Observed Across Documented Cases

Stage	Description	Illustrative Examples
1. Trigger Event	A politically or socially significant event attracts heightened public attention and creates demand for immediate information.	Hardeep Singh Nijjar investigation; demonstrations outside Hindu temples; criminal court proceedings.
2. Initial Narrative Formation	Misleading interpretations, unsupported allegations, or selectively framed content begin circulating through social media, digital commentary, or online networks.	Misleading videos of temple demonstrations; inaccurate interpretations of Nijjar court proceedings.

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, Special Report into the Allegations Associated with Prime Minister Trudeau’s Official Visit to India, 2018.*

3. Amplification	High engagement, coordinated sharing, and, where documented, suspected automated activity increase the visibility of the narrative.	CBC documented suspected bot amplification of misleading narratives following the temple demonstrations.
4. Cross-Platform Dissemination	Narratives migrate beyond their original source and are repeated by television broadcasters, digital news outlets, commentators, or other media platforms, increasing their apparent credibility.	CBC documented Indian television channels repeating misleading narratives that originated on social media.
5. Narrative Consolidation	Repetition across multiple platforms creates the appearance of independent confirmation, despite reliance on the same underlying claims or interpretations.	Multiple Indian news outlets repeated inaccurate reporting regarding procedural developments in the Nijjar criminal proceedings.
6. Institutional Response	Public institutions, law enforcement agencies, courts, or investigative journalists issue clarifications, corrections, or verified information.	Canada Border Services Agency review of Sunny Sidhu; Ottawa Police statements; investigative reporting by CBC News and Global News.
7. Residual Circulation	Original narratives continue to circulate after corrections have been issued, allowing misinformation to persist within the information environment.	Continued circulation of allegations concerning Sunny Sidhu; persistent misinformation regarding Nijjar court proceedings.



Information laundering presents a particular challenge for democratic societies because it exploits the ordinary functioning of modern media ecosystems.

Journalists routinely report on developments that have already attracted public attention. Social media platforms prioritize highly engaging content regardless of its accuracy. Television broadcasters frequently reference widely circulating online discussions. Individuals often share information based upon perceived credibility rather than direct verification.

Within this environment, repeated circulation may become a substitute for factual validation.

The Foreign Interference Commission emphasized that foreign information manipulation seeks not only to persuade audiences but also to undermine confidence in democratic institutions and distort public understanding. Information laundering contributes directly to this objective by making unsupported narratives appear widely accepted before institutional verification can occur. (Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference, Vol. 1)

Viewed collectively, the documented cases examined in this report suggest that information laundering has become one of the principal mechanisms through which misleading narratives concerning Sikh Canadians, Canadian institutions, and Canada–India relations acquire visibility and apparent legitimacy.

Stage five: Harm to real people

The cycle ends where propaganda always ends with people. The cases of Sundeep Singh Sidhu and Amarjot Singh, described below, show how a fabricated headline in India translates into lost employment, police-confirmed safety threats, family raids and forced relocation in Canada. The November 2024 temple clashes show how a saturated information environment translates into confrontation on Canadian streets. And the survey data presented later in this report shows how the constant portrayal of Sikhs as extremists translates into everyday hate experienced by ordinary Sikh Canadians.

Constructing Sikh Political Advocacy as a Security Threat:

Perhaps the most persistent narrative identified throughout the available reporting is the repeated association of Sikh political expression with extremism or terrorism. While individual stories vary considerably in their immediate subject matter, the underlying narrative remains remarkably consistent: Sikh advocacy that is critical of the Indian government, particularly concerning Punjab or

Khalistan, is frequently presented not as legitimate political expression but as evidence of extremism, criminality, or foreign manipulation.

Importantly, this narrative does not depend upon proving that specific individuals have engaged in criminal conduct. Rather, it functions by repeatedly placing Sikh organizations, community leaders, elected officials, or ordinary individuals within a security framework through suggestive language, unsupported allegations, or repeated associations with terrorism. Over time, these repeated associations normalize the perception that Sikh political activism itself should be viewed with suspicion.

Earlier reporting documented this phenomenon during the controversy surrounding Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2018 visit to India. Indian media coverage repeatedly framed Canada as accommodating "Khalistani extremists," despite repeated efforts by Canadian officials to explain that advocacy concerning Khalistan, while politically controversial, remains lawful within Canada provided it does not involve criminal conduct. The subsequent review conducted by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians concluded that aspects of the controversy surrounding Jaspal Atwal's invitation appeared consistent with an orchestrated effort to embarrass the Canadian government by strategically amplifying concerns regarding Sikh extremism. (NSICOP Special Report (2018); WSO Report (2021))

Although the political circumstances have changed since 2018, similar framing continues to appear throughout more recent reporting.

The Manufacturing of Sikh Identity:

Running underneath every stage of the cycle is a deeper project: the attempt to manufacture, from the outside, a definition of who a Sikh is and what a Sikh is permitted to believe.

The #RealSikh operation made this project unusually visible. The Centre for Information Resilience identified a core network of eighty fake accounts across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram that adopted common Sikh names, most often the surname Kaur, stole profile photos from Punjabi actresses, and posted almost exclusively in English. The personas presented themselves as both "Real Sikhs" and "proud Indians," and their central activity was policing the boundary between a "#RealSikh" and a "#FakeSikh." A real Sikh, in this manufactured identity, supports the Indian government, celebrates the army, and stands for *sewa*; a fake Sikh supports Khalistan, is directed by Pakistan's ISI, and stands for violence.²²

²² *Ibid*

This is identity manufacture in the most literal sense: fabricated people, wearing stolen faces and borrowed names, telling actual Sikhs what authentic Sikhi looks like, and telling everyone else that visible, politically active Sikhs are dangerous. The CIR warned in 2021 that the network's insistence that supporters of Sikh independence are terrorists, and that nationalists must act against them, could create an environment in which some actors consider intimidation of, or violence toward, the Sikh community legitimate. The temple clashes of November 2024 and the wave of extortion and violence the RCMP has attributed to agents of the Indian government suggest that warning was well founded.²³

The manufactured identity keeps evolving. The framing of the 1980s and 1990s cast the Khalistan supporter as a terrorist. The current framing adds a criminal layer, fusing Khalistan, organized crime and Pakistani intelligence into a single "gangster nexus." Headlines like "Cracks emerge in ISI-backed Khalistan gangster nexus amid global crackdown" circulate this composite identity through Indian media,²⁴ and the National Post op-ed's false "narco-terrorism" claim shows the same composite being imported into Canada. The technique is consistent: attach an unrelated criminal story, a drug bust, a gang investigation, a border file, to the word Khalistan, and let repetition do the rest. Once the association is established, every Sikh who advocates for human rights in Punjab, attends a protest, or supports a referendum inherits the criminal label by default.

The purpose of manufacturing identity is control. If India can define the "real Sikh" as loyal and apolitical, then every act of Sikh political expression in Canada, a protest, a Nagar Kirtan float, a vote in a non-binding referendum, becomes evidence of inauthenticity and extremism. The target is the community's right to define itself.

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ Lokmat Times, "Cracks emerge in ISI-backed Khalistan gangster nexus amid global crackdown," an example of the criminalizing narrative discussed in this section.
<https://www.lokmatimes.com/international/cracks-emerge-in-isi-backed-khalistan-gangster-nexus-amid-global-crackdown-1/amp/>

Cracks emerge in ISI-backed Khalistan-gangster nexus amid global crackdown

By IANS | Updated: July 2, 2026 13:10 IST

New Delhi, July 2 Pakistan's spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence, had set up the terrorist-gangster network with the ...



Image 8: Indian media coverage fusing Khalistan, organized crime and Pakistani intelligence into a single criminal identity.

(<https://www.lokmatimes.com/international/cracks-emerge-in-isi-backed-khalistan-gangster-nexus-amid-global-crackdown-1/amp/>)

Case Studies since our Last Report:

The following incidents, presented in chronological order, are the raw material for the patterns described above. Each has been documented by Canadian journalists, courts or investigators.

October 2023: The Campaign against Canada's Leadership

After the Prime Minister told the House of Commons that security agencies were investigating credible allegations linking Indian agents to Bhai Nijjar's killing, a wave of fabricated stories swept Indian media and social platforms. They included claims that the Prime Minister's plane carried cocaine at the G20 summit and crude insinuations about his personal life, alongside stories accusing MP Sukh Dhaliwal of collaborating with a Pakistani spy agency that was, in turn, falsely blamed for the murder.²⁵ Justice Hogue later observed that India may have launched a disinformation campaign against the Prime Minister.²⁶ That same week, the U.S. State Department's James Rubin warned that the Canada-India dispute

²⁵ *Toronto Star*, "Cocaine, romance and murder: Justin Trudeau and his government targeted by disinformation campaign in wake of India allegation," October 5, 2023.

https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/cocaine-romance-and-murder-justin-trudeau-and-his-government-targeted-by-disinformation-campaign-in-wake/article_d8f3b625-7a36-5750-a47f-0057d35c5643.html

²⁶ *Ibid*

was a likely target for disinformation designed to deepen divisions and confuse the public about the origins of information circulating about Sikhs, Canada and India.

November 2024: A Border Officer Branded a Terrorist

A series of false reports in Indian media linked Canada Border Services Agency superintendent Sundeep “Sunny” Singh Sidhu to organizations he has never belonged to. The Hindustan Times claimed he had ties to a Pakistan-based militant and had played a role in a



2020 assassination in Punjab. The CBSA investigated and cleared him.²⁷ The story did not end there. In December 2025, Sidhu filed a lawsuit in Ottawa against the Indian and Canadian governments, describing how India used him as “a convenient patsy” in a disinformation scheme built to retaliate against Canada, and how his own employer, after CSIS concluded the allegations were fake, offered him neither protection nor help clearing his name while police treated threats against him as credible.²⁸ His case shows the personal arithmetic of state disinformation: a foreign government invents a terrorist, and a Canadian public servant absorbs the harassment, the fear and the professional damage.

Image 9: Indian media reports falsely linking CBSA superintendent Sundeep Singh Sidhu to terrorism, later confirmed fake and now the subject of his December 2025 lawsuit.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-names-canada-border-police-official-in-terror-case-amid-diplomatic-row-over-hardeep-nijjar-killing-101729296167038.html>

²⁷ CBC News, “Border agency clears employee after Indian media reports link him with terrorism,” November 12, 2024. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-border-india-sikh-modi-1.7380804>

²⁸ Global News, “Minister responds to case of border officer targeted by Indian ‘disinformation,’” December 2025. <https://globalnews.ca/news/11556460/minister-responds-indian-disinformation-border-officer/>

December 2024: Bots, Temple Clashes and Indian Television

CBC's investigation into the aftermath of the Brampton and Surrey temple clashes, detailed in stage three above, documented the full amplification apparatus: misleading posts by Canadian commentators, concentrated bot reposting, and same-day pickup by pro-Modi channels in Delhi. It also recorded the asymmetry that gives the game away: pro-Khalistan content in the same sample received almost no bot amplification, while anti-Sikh content received thousands of automated boosts.

December 2024: A Website Treated as News

The Toronto Star examined how a previously obscure website's fabricated claims about Canada were picked up and treated as news by major Indian outlets. The episode repeats the mechanism the EU DisinfoLab exposed years earlier, when ANI laundered content from fake outlets and non-existent experts into mainstream Indian coverage, including a fake think tank that listed Canadian professors as participants in a conference they never attended.²⁹

January 2025: The Fictional Release of the Nijjar Accused

Dozens of Indian outlets reported that the four men charged with murdering Bhai Nijjar had been released and that the Canadian case had collapsed. The B.C. Prosecution Service, the B.C. Supreme Court and the RCMP's homicide team all confirmed the accused remained in custody. CBC traced the false claim to misinterpreted court records; Global News and The Pointer documented its spread through India Today, the Hindustan Times, the Times of India and many others.³⁰ The narrative served two goals at once: it told Indian audiences that the allegations against their government were baseless, and it told Canadian audiences, particularly the Sikh community, that Canadian justice cannot protect them.

February 2025: The Interference File Reaches the Immigration System

Global News revealed that Canadian officials had opposed the immigration application of Ankit Srivastava, chief editor of the New Delhi Times and an executive of the Srivastava Group, the conglomerate at the centre of the fake

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Ibid*

news network exposed by the EU DisinfoLab and CBC.³¹ According to public records, CSIS reported in 2015 that Indian intelligence had tasked the group's vice chair in 2009 with influencing Canadian politicians, and immigration officials later described Srivastava as a serious threat to Canada, citing the group's fake outlets, including sixteen websites designed to look like local Canadian news sources.³² Courts have twice found the government's inferences unreasonable and returned the file for review, and Srivastava maintains his innocence; the records nonetheless show that Canada now treats disinformation capability as a national security consideration at the border.

June 2025: The National Post Platforms the Narrative

The Dosanjh and George op-ed, examined in stage four above, imported the false Project Pelican "narco-terrorism" claim, an invented CSIS testimony about the ISI, and a discredited section of the UK's Bloom Review into a national Canadian newspaper without scrutiny. Peel Regional Police refuted the central claim directly. The paper published no correction.³³

November 2025: A Terror Attack that Never Happened

The Walrus told the story of Amarjot Singh, a Montreal truck driver whom India's National Investigation Agency accused in June 2023 of leading a mob that threw two grenades into the Indian High Commission in Ottawa during a protest three months earlier.³⁴ The Ottawa protest was so quiet it received virtually no immediate media coverage; the Ottawa Police Service, present at the event, reported it passed essentially without incident. Amarjot had attended a peaceful rally, largely out of loyalty to his wife's brother, a Sikh activist jailed in India. The accusation upended his life: he and his wife left Montreal for their safety, spent six months finding new work, and watched Indian authorities raid the homes of his mother, sister and uncle in Punjab. The claims against him surfaced days after Bhai

³¹ Global News, "Canada accuses Indian businessman of foreign interference, disinformation," February 26, 2025.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11015090/india-canada-foreign-interference-disinformation/>

³² CBC News, "Huge pro-India fake news network includes Canadian sites, links to Canadian think tanks," November 21, 2019.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/india-fake-news-sites-canada-1.5366591>

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ The Walrus, "India Accused This Canadian of a Terror Attack in Ottawa. Did the Incident Even Happen?" by Katharine Lake Berz, November 2025.

<https://thewalrus.ca/india-accused-this-canadian-of-a-terror-attack-in-ottawa-did-the-incident-even-happen/>



Nijjar was assassinated and closely resemble accusations made against Avtar Singh Khanda in England, who died in unexplained circumstances the week before Amarjot was named. Manufacturing a terrorist, his case shows, requires nothing more than a name, a protest, and a compliant press.

Recent Incident Matrix

Incident/Source	Core Claim	Observed Pattern	Why it Matters
CBC: bots/Indian TV after Hindu temple clashes	Misleading claims about Sikh gatherings and police officers.	Bot-like amplification, diaspora influencer post, Indian TV repetition.	Shows event-triggered amplification that risks Sikh-Hindu tension in Canada.
CBC/Global: false release of Nijjar suspects	Indian press falsely reported suspects were released.	Misreading or misuse of court material, then mass repetition.	Undermines Canadian courts and injects doubt into a live murder case.
CBC: CBSA employee cleared	CBSA employee falsely linked by Indian media to terrorism.	Personalized smear using terror labels.	Creates employment, safety, and reputational harm for Sikh Canadians.
Global: Srivastava Group case	Canadian officials alleged fake media and influence activity tied to pro-India narratives.	Infrastructure-based disinformation using fake or pseudo-local outlets.	Connects media manipulation to foreign interference concerns.
Toronto Star: disinformation website treated as news	Major Indian outlets used questionable website claims about Canada.	Narrative laundering from fringe source to mainstream outlet.	Demonstrates how low-quality claims gain legitimacy.

Toronto Star: Trudeau/government targeted	False personal claims about Canadian leaders after Nijjar allegation.	Character assassination and racialized/conspiratorial framing.	Shifts attention away from allegations of Indian involvement in Nijjar's killing.
Baaz News: National Post/Dosanjh piece	Khalistan-linked narco-terrorism claim tied to Peel investigation.	Domestic amplification of foreign-aligned narratives.	Shows how claims can enter Canadian mainstream opinion spaces.
The Walrus: Amarjot Singh accusation	Indian government accused a Canadian of a terror attack in Ottawa.	State accusation unsupported by Canadian public record.	Raises serious concerns about transnational repression and criminalization of protest.
Lokmat Times example	Khalistan-gangster-ISI nexus framing.	Use of regional/Indian media to normalize the "Sikh activism equals terrorism" frame.	Can be cited as an example of the recurring gangster/ISI template, but should be treated cautiously unless independently verified.



Image 10: The Walrus investigation into the fictional Ottawa “grenade attack” India attributed to Amarjot Singh.

(<https://thewalrus.ca/india-accused-this-canadian-of-a-terror-attack-in-ottawa-did-the-incident-even-happen/>)

Measuring the human cost:

Disinformation researchers often struggle to measure impact. Ben Nimmo’s Breakout Scale, which the CIR applied to the #RealSikh network, measures how far an operation travels across platforms and into traditional media and policy debate.³⁵ The cases above show Indian disinformation routinely reaching the highest categories: it crosses platforms, breaks into mainstream media in two countries, provokes policy responses, and has been followed by real-world violence and intimidation.

Our own survey data measures the other end of the pipeline: what Sikh Canadians actually experience. Between January 1 and March 1, 2025, the World Sikh Organization collected responses from more than 1,600 Sikh Canadians, supported by nationwide townhalls.³⁶ The findings describe a community under sustained pressure from two converging sources, domestic racism and transnational repression and disinformation from India:

³⁵ Ben Nimmo, *The Breakout Scale: Measuring the Impact of Influence Operations*, Brookings Institution, 2020.

³⁶ World Sikh Organization of Canada, *Understanding Anti-Sikh Hate, 2025. Survey of over 1,600 Sikh Canadians conducted between January 1 and March 1, 2025, with nationwide townhalls.*

- 80% of respondents felt that hate and discrimination against Sikhs has increased over the past five years.
- 65% of participants have experienced verbal harassment, the most commonly reported form of hate.
- 91% of visibly identifiable Sikhs, including those who wear dastaars, reported being targeted.
- 70% of victims chose not to report incidents, citing futility, fear of retaliation, or a lack of institutional support.
- 65% of respondents reported that hate incidents had significantly impacted their mental health and well-being.
- Of the more than one thousand respondents who answered a question about hate experiences tied to their political beliefs or support for Khalistan, 54% reported experiencing hate.
- In Québec, 89% of French-speaking respondents reported experiencing anti-Sikh hate, compared with 65% of those who did not speak French.

The 54% figure deserves particular attention. It captures hate experienced because of political belief, the precise territory the disinformation campaign targets. When more than half of respondents who answered that question report hostility connected to their views on Khalistan, the manufactured equation between Sikh political expression and extremism is measurably shaping how Sikhs are treated in Canada. Incidents in the survey ranged from hate crimes and school bullying to employment discrimination and invasive airport screenings, and common impacts included trauma and anxiety, anger and alienation, intergenerational trauma, and depression.³⁷

³⁷ *Ibid*

The Information Dissemination Cycle – Understanding How Narratives Spread

Cocaine, romance and murder: Justin Trudeau and his government targeted by disinformation campaign in wake of India allegation

Members of Parliament say online attacks and disinformation aimed at discrediting the Trudeau government risk dividing Indo-Canadians in the wake of Ottawa's declaration that security agencies are probing whether the government of India is linked to the killing of a B.C. Sikh leader.

Updated Oct. 5, 2023 at 7:22 p.m. | Oct. 5, 2023 | 3 min read | 430

Image 11: The disinformation campaign targeting Trudeau and Canadian officials.

(https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/cocaine-romance-and-murder-justin-trudeau-and-his-government-targeted-by-disinformation-campaign-in-wake/article_d8f3b625-7a36-5750-a47f-0057d35c5643.html)

One of the recurring observations emerging from the cases examined in this report is that misleading information rarely spreads through a single publication or platform. Instead, narratives move through an interconnected information environment where social media, television, digital news outlets, political commentators, and ordinary users interact in ways that can significantly increase the visibility and perceived credibility of claims.

This section does not attempt to determine who initiates every narrative or whether every actor involved shares common intent. Such attribution requires access to platform data, intelligence reporting, or investigative authorities beyond the scope of this assessment. Instead, the purpose of this section is to describe observable patterns of dissemination documented across multiple independently reported incidents. The cases reviewed throughout this report suggest that misleading narratives concerning Sikh Canadians, Canada–India relations, and Canadian institutions frequently follow a comparable sequence of development. Although not every case includes every stage, enough similarities exist to identify a recurring dissemination cycle.

The Information Dissemination Cycle

Political or Social Trigger



Initial Narrative Formation



Online Amplification (Social Media/Influencers/Bots where documented)



Cross-Platform Migration (Television -> Digital News -> Commentary)



Public Acceptance Through Repetition



Institutional Investigation or Correction



Residual Narratives Continue Circulating



Narratives Reappear during Future Events

The Patterns Identified:

Drawing the incidents together, eight patterns define how this disinformation operates and propagates.

propagates.

1. Fabrication at arm's length. Claims originate with anonymous "intelligence sources," fake outlets, unverifiable websites or misread documents, giving the state deniability while supplying the press with material.

2. Volume as corroboration. Dozens of outlets repeat a claim within hours. Repetition substitutes for verification, and debunked articles remain online, available to be cited again.



3. Selective automation. Bot networks concentrate almost exclusively on anti-Sikh and anti-Canada content. In CBC's sample, critics of the Khalistan movement received thousands of automated boosts; Khalistan advocates received almost none.

4. Laundering through Canadian voices. Op-eds, commentators and embedded tweets give foreign narratives a Canadian face, which Indian media then cite as independent confirmation.

5. Timing around flashpoints. Campaigns surge at moments of leverage: the Nijjar announcement, court dates, temple clashes, diplomatic expulsions, leadership changes and elections.

6. Personalization. The campaign names individuals, a border officer, a truck driver, a cabinet minister, an MP, converting an abstract narrative into concrete intimidation and warning others into silence.

7. Identity manufacture. Fake personas and recycled framings define the "real Sikh" as loyal and apolitical while fusing Khalistan with terrorism, gangsterism and the ISI, criminalizing ordinary advocacy by association.

8. Recycling. The same core narratives, Pakistan's hidden hand, hijacked protests, narco-terror, Canada as a safe haven, return with new hooks each cycle. The 2018 template still governs the 2025 output.

Conclusion & Recommendations:

The Foreign Interference Commission concluded that disinformation is the single biggest risk to our democracy. For Sikh Canadians, that risk is not abstract. It arrives as a false terrorism accusation on a relative's phone at dawn, as a bot swarm turning a police officer's religious practice into a threat, as a national newspaper printing a refuted criminal allegation against an entire community, and as the 54% of surveyed Sikhs who have experienced hate connected to their political beliefs.

The pattern is now documented beyond reasonable dispute, by this organization, by the Centre for Information Resilience, by CBC, Global News, the Toronto Star, The Pointer, The Walrus and Baaz, by the EU DisinfoLab, and by Canada's own commission of inquiry and intelligence agencies. What remains is the response. We recommend the following:

For federal and provincial policymakers:

- Recognize anti-Sikh disinformation as part of the wider foreign interference ecosystem, not as an isolated community dispute.
- Create a rapid correction pathway when foreign media falsely names Canadian residents, public servants, or institutions.
- Require briefings for MPs, MLAs, and municipal officials on narrative laundering and diaspora-targeted disinformation.
- Support independent monitoring of foreign-language and diaspora-targeted media ecosystems, including Punjabi, Hindi, and English content.

For police and public safety agencies:

- Distinguish lawful protest, Sikh religious expression, and political advocacy from criminality or extremism unless evidence supports a criminal assessment.
- When false claims involve police operations or investigations, issue timely factual clarifications where legally possible.
- Track online narratives that may increase threats against Sikh individuals, gurdwaras, public servants, or elected officials.
- Consult Sikh community organizations before adopting terminology that may unintentionally reproduce foreign-state narratives.

For media organizations

- Do not cite Indian media claims about Canadian Sikhs without independent Canadian verification.
- Treat terms such as “Khalistani terrorist,” “ISI-backed,” “narco-terror,” and “anti-India” as claims requiring evidence, not as descriptors.
- Where a story originates from a foreign outlet or anonymous website, explain the provenance clearly.
- Correct false reports with equal visibility and avoid embedding misleading clips without context.

For social media platforms

- Prioritize detection of coordinated identity-manufacturing networks using stolen Sikh identities or repeated “real Sikh/fake Sikh” narratives.
- Preserve data on suspected bot amplification connected to Canadian incidents so civil society and researchers can assess impact.
- Apply consistent policies to cross-platform campaigns that move from X/YouTube/Facebook into broadcast media and back.

Canadian Sikhs have told these stories for four decades. The RCMP, the Prime Minister’s Office and a federal commission have now confirmed them. Talking about human rights in India, or about Khalistan, is protected political expression, whatever a foreign government’s press may assert. The Sikh community will remain vigilant, and it will not be intimidated. Together we can ensure that the ugly specter of anti-Sikh hate, and the disinformation machine that feeds it, is relegated to the past.