

Hindus for Human Rights

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing
on
Transnational Repression: Trends and Policy Approaches
Tuesday June 24, 2025
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1334 Longworth House Office Building

WITNESS STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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To

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Chairman Smith, Chairman McGovern, and distinguished Members of the commission, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Canada for the G-7 Summit, where Prime Minister Mark Carney raised the issue of the Indian government's alleged attacks on Sikh Canadians and Americans, including the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar and surveillance of former Canadian MP Jagmeet Singh. While the US government, last year, indicted Indian intelligence officer Vikash Yadav in a connected murder, Canadian intelligence officials also revealed that they had evidence that the North American murder plots were orchestrated by India's Home Minister, Amit Shah. According to the Sikh Coalition and SALDEF, Sikh Americans continue to report credible threats against the community.

These incidents are only the beginning. As we shared last year, the Indian Government's transnational repression of Americans include diverse strategies to intimidate critics both online and offline.

Hindus for Human Rights

India continues to use disinformation to intimidate critics of Modi and his Hindu nationalist government. As we and others have reported in the past, Hindu nationalist troll armies are often cultivated by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and other influencers in their political system. This ecosystem has directed harassment towards private individuals, and BJP leaders and Cabinet Ministers spread disinformation about American citizens and organizations. Most recently, after the Biden administration announced criminal and civil corruption charges against leaders of the Adani Group, the BJP's official accounts spread antisemitic disinformation to intimidate US officials to throw out the case against Modi's closest business ally. Earlier this year, Disinfo Lab alleged that Freedom House served as a front for shadowy Western foundations and the Five Eyes to whitewash anti-Indian terrorism through the term "transnational repression."

The Indian government has also tried to censor foreign critics of the Prime Minister. Both Hindus for Human Rights and Indian American Muslim Council have had our Twitter accounts withheld in India since October 2023 and Sikh Coalition's content has been withheld previously. As of this month, IAMC's Instagram account has been withheld by the Indian government. The government of India also has begun deporting foreign journalists, like Avani Dias of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, because of a report she produced on Nijjar's death in Canada.

Critics of the Indian government often find themselves unable to enter India. As Freedom House noted last August, Kashmiri Americans, in particular, have borne the brunt of India's weaponization of the Indian immigration system. And as the Indian government escalates repression in Kashmir in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack, we anticipate a new wave of repression against the Kashmiri diaspora.

The Indian government targets the Indian American community comprehensively while weaponizing the Hindu American diaspora. While these organizations may not be fronts for the Indian government, they often echo Modi's talking points and try to intimidate critics of the government. Ironically, this hearing will probably lead to more disinformation, harassment, and threats against all of us by the Government of India, the BJP, and this weaponized diaspora.

However, the US government can provide powerful protection against the Modi government's aggressive assault on the rights of Americans. I want to echo the recommendation that Congress should create a legal definition of transnational repression. At HfHR, we urge Congress to also push the Executive Branch on a number of fronts. First, we hope you will urge Secretary Rubio to use the State Department's new visa ban against Indian officials who have censored Americans. Second, we ask you to review the intelligence from the Canadian government that allegedly proves that Home Minister Amit Shah was involved in the murder-for-hire plots in the US and Canada. If the evidence proves compelling, we hope you will ask the State Department to implement a visa ban and sanctions against the Home Minister, consistent with US law. Finally, we hope that you can ask the State Department to determine whether arms sales to India must be conditioned based on India's "consistent pattern of intimidation and harassment of Americans" as described in Section 6 of the Arms Export Control Act.

We've seen how the US government responds to its foes when those enemies have undermined Americans' safety. But we have yet to see the US government hold its friends to account. Like most Indian Americans, I want the US and India to have a deeper relationship. But the US should not sacrifice the safety of Indian Americans, who embody the US and India's people-to-people ties. As you continue to engage this issue, I hope that you will continue to uplift the concerns of Indian Americans like my colleagues and me.

Thank you.