

Eyes on U.S. for help pressuring Modi gov't

INDIA

Continued from NPI

He called for "severe sanctions on Indian diplomats" involved in criminal activity.

The RCMP in its comments Monday said there were six Indian diplomats they sought to question about the violent activities in Canada, and those six are the ones Canada expelled.

Singh said Canada must also ban a Hindu group that has been accused of hate speech by Sikh and Muslim groups.

"We are in uncharted territory, with implications for the diplomatic relationship as well as for Canada's public safety and national security," said Vina Nadjibulla, research vice-president for the Asia Pacific Foundation.

Nadjibulla said she's watching to see how Canada's peers respond to the "unprecedented, extraordinary" news. That could mean diplomatic moves behind the scenes, and possibly public statements of support for Canada.

"The reaction from the U.S. is going to be the one that everybody will be paying attention to," she said.

"In order for Canada, at this stage, to have any kind of co-operation from India and seek accountability for what has happened, we would need India to feel some pressure; we would need India to feel some reason to co-operate."

The U.S. State Department was scheduled to have a regularly scheduled press briefing this afternoon.

The Bloc Québécois asked Tuesday for Ottawa to "intensify collaboration with Canada's allies in terms of intelligence and solidarity, in the face of such acts."

The Conservatives Monday denounced Canada's "extremely concerning" allegations as proof that the government had not taken seriously foreign interference and national security.

India has insisted Canada has provided it no evidence to back up the allegations.

RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme said the force's deputy commissioner had attempted to share evidence with Indian police last week but was rebuffed. This past weekend, deputy foreign affairs minister David Morrison, along with the RCMP, presented evidence to India in meetings held in Singapore. Canada sought India's agreement to revoke the diplomatic immunity of the six individuals to allow for RCMP questioning, but India refused.

Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said India's refusal to co-operate is why Canada declared the six diplomats persona non grata, which is one of the stiffest penalties Canada can impose under the Vienna Convention.

Nadjibulla said it was notable that Joly accused active diplomats of involvement in criminality, and that she said violence linked to the Indian government had only increased since Canada made its concerns public last year.

The Canadian Press



NICK PROCAYLO / POSTMEDIA NEWS

A man stands outside Surrey Provincial Court as Indian nationals Karanpreet Singh, Kamalpreet Singh and Karan Brar make an appearance for the killing of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on May 7.

EXPLAINER

Canada-India: Why the rift?

DIPLOMATIC FUROR

Contentious history before expulsion of top envoys

DYLAN ROBERTSON

Ottawa's decision Monday to expel India's top envoy and five other diplomats is just the latest development in tensions that have simmered for months between the two countries.

Here's a look at what's driving the chill between Canada and India.

WHY IS INDIA MAD AT CANADA?

India is a staunch opponent to the Khalistan separatist movement, in which some Sikhs advocate for an independent state called Khalistan to be carved out of Indian territory.

India says the prospect is unconstitutional and threatens the country's national security. Ottawa has long stressed that it upholds India's territorial integrity but won't crack down on freedom of expression in Canada.

Khalistan supporters in Canada occasionally organize rallies and what they call referendum, which get little mainstream media attention in Canada but are the subject of emotive news reports in India. Organizers say India has persecuted them through decades, a claim New Delhi rejects.

Some Sikh temples have been found to be openly venerating people connected with acts of violence like the 1985 bombing of an Air India flight, which is the deadliest terrorist attack in Canadian history.

DID INDIA KILL A CANADIAN?

In September 2023, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced

that Canadian intelligence services are investigating "credible" information about "a potential link" between India's government and the killing of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia.

New Delhi initially outright denied any involvement, before shifting to saying that extrajudicial killings are not state policy.

Meanwhile, American authorities last November unsealed an indictment alleging a murder-for-hire plot by an Indian national. The court file alleges an Indian government employee directed the attempted assassination in the United States, and spoke about others, including Nijjar's killing in Canada.

This past May, police in Edmonton arrested three Indian nationals and charged them with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in Nijjar's death.

India maintains that Canada has never shared evidence of the country's involvement in the homicide, though Trudeau said Monday that Canadian authorities shared this information with their Indian peers over the weekend.

Since last autumn, India has temporarily suspended visa services for Canadians. It also withdrew diplomatic immunity for most of Canada's envoys, which Ottawa said forced it to bring home most of its diplomats.

IS INDIA IMPORTANT?

In November 2022, Canada declared India "a critical partner" in its Indo-Pacific strategy, calling for a trade agreement, more work exchanges and partnerships in renewable energy.

Canada is among the countries that have spent years trying to court New Delhi amid growing concerns about China. Ottawa has said that India is key to promoting democracy and pluralism worldwide.

India relies on Canada for large imports of lentils and potash, and is a popular destination for students looking to study abroad in both advanced research degrees

and vocational colleges.

Until September 2023, Canada and India had been in numerous rounds of high-level negotiations for a trade deal restricted to key industries, years after both countries abandoned an attempt at a comprehensive deal. Canada paused the latest negotiations shortly before making public its concerns about the Nijjar case.

IS THIS A POLITICAL SPAT?

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has argued that Trudeau hasn't taken the issue of Khalistan separatism seriously.

In 2018, Trudeau's visit to India caused controversy when it emerged that his delegation had invited Jaspal Atwal — a B.C. Sikh convicted of attempting to assassinate an Indian cabinet minister in 1986 — to two events with Trudeau.

In a background briefing arranged by the Prime Minister's Office, a government official told journalists that Atwal's presence had been arranged by factions within the Indian government who wanted to sabotage Trudeau's visit due to the Khalistan issue.

A year ago, Indian Foreign Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar suggested the latest rift comes down to issues his government has with Canada's Liberals.

"The problems we have are with a certain segment of Canadian politics, and the policies which flow from that," he said.

WHAT HAPPENED ON MONDAY?

On Monday, the RCMP warned the public about a rash of crimes including murder, extortion and coercion linked to Indian government agents.

The RCMP and other Canadian officials confronted India earlier this past weekend, and when New Delhi refused to co-operate, Ottawa ordered six Indian diplomats to leave Canada. India has similarly expelled six Canadian diplomats.

The Canadian Press

Process 'not tested in Canadian courts'

SAMIDOUN

Continued from NPI

Its full name is Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network.

Canada and the U.S. allege that Samidoun's activities go far beyond raising awareness about Palestinians behind bars in Israel or organizing street protests in Canada and around the world.

"Organizations like Samidoun masquerade as charitable actors that claim to provide humanitarian support to those in need, yet in reality divert funds for much-needed assistance to support terrorist groups," said Acting Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Bradley T. Smith, in the U.S. press release.

Samidoun is a registered not-for-profit in Canada. As of Tuesday morning, its registration page on the government of Canada website noted that it is now designated a terrorist organization.

A group designated a terrorist entity in Canada is prohibited from receiving financial services, money or property.

In designating Samidoun as a terrorist entity, Canada is following in the footsteps of Israel, which did so in 2021. Germany has also banned Samidoun, and declared it a terrorist organization.

The Vancouver Police Department had launched a hate-speech investigation into Kates, one of its directors in Canada, who praised the Hamas and Islamic Jihad attackers during a speech at a rally last spring.

"We stand with the Palestinian resistance and their heroic brave action on Oct. 7," Kates said at the time.

Jessica Davis, a counterterrorism expert at Carleton University, said the designation will make it challenging for Samidoun's leadership to travel internationally and it is likely to have its financial transactions scrutinized and bank accounts frozen.

"This process has not been tested in Canadian courts," Davis said. "A lot of the reason for that is because we are designating, for the most part, foreign entities. This is one of the only cases where I've seen a direct Canadian tie and a direct Canadian leader ... who will be directly affected by a terrorist listing."

No charges have been announced against anyone involved in Samidoun.

"In the case of an organization like Samidoun, or really any listed terrorist entity, the question comes down to what the people are doing to support the organization," Davis said. "Just being a member of an organization is not a criminal offence in Canada. However, as soon as you cross the line into conducting any kind of support or sort of advancement activities that are fairly concrete, then you come very close to facilitation (of a terrorist activity) and some of those activities."

Over the past year, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs has lobbied to have Samidoun declared a terrorist organization and B'nai Brith Canada launched a petition to have Kates and Barakat deported. (Both have said they are Canadian citizens.)

National Post