

Modi denies involvement in violence

DIPLOMATS

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The official said that since Nijjar's death, the pace of threats has escalated to such an extent that authorities have warned a dozen individuals of Indian descent that there was credible information they could be targeted. The official and others spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the investigation, citing the sensitivity of allegations that have caused a rupture in relations between Delhi and Ottawa.

India has vehemently denied the accusations. A statement issued by the country's Ministry of External Affairs on Monday said that Modi's government "strongly rejects these preposterous imputations and ascribes them to the political agenda" of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Even so, the new allegations add to mounting concerns among Western security officials and human rights organizations that Modi's government has become one of the world's most aggressive practitioners of "transnational repression," or the use of violence and other means to neutralize perceived homegrown adversaries who have sought refuge in other countries.

The Biden administration, which has cultivated closer ties with India, last year confronted Modi administration officials with intelligence that India's Research and Analysis Wing, a spy service known as RAW, was behind an attempt to assassinate a Sikh separatist in New York — a failed plot with parallels to the Nijjar case in Canada.

Nijjar and Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, the target of the New York plot, were leaders of a movement that for decades has campaigned to carve out an independent Sikh state in northern India. The movement was marked by violent clashes in the 1980s, but has been relatively dormant since a crackdown led to a mass exodus of Sikhs to other countries.

Modi, who came to power as a champion of Hindu nationalism, has revived concerns about the supposed threat posed by Sikhs living abroad. Modi and other officials have frequently accused Canada, which has the world's largest population of Sikhs outside India, of harbouring terrorists.

Canadian officials said they only recently began to grasp the magnitude of the covert campaign of violence India has waged against Sikhs as new evidence emerged from an investigation of Nijjar's killing that is led by the RCMP but has involved other agencies, as well as intelligence provided by the United States and other allies.

Officials said the investigation has uncovered evidence of Indian government involvement in home invasions, drive-by shootings, arson and at least one additional killing.

Officials cited the death of Sukhdool Singh, who was shot in Winnipeg on Sept. 20, 2023, less than a day after he was featured in a wanted list of gangsters posted on X by India's National Investigation Agency.

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