

Khalistan Row: India Hits Back After Justin Trudeau Absurd Claim

Why In The News?

- **Tensions Between India And Canada Escalated** After Canadian PM Justin Trudeau Said There Were "**Credible Allegations**" Linking Indian Government Agents To The June Murder In Canada Of A Sikh Separatist Leader Campaigning For The Creation Of An Independent Sikh Homeland Called "**Khalistan**".



What Is The Khalistan Movement?

- It Wants An **Independent Sikh State Carved Out Of India** And Dates Back To India And Pakistan's Independence In 1947 When The Idea Was Pushed Forward In Negotiations Preceding The Partition Of The Punjab Region Between The Two New Countries.
- The Sikh Religion Was Founded In Punjab In The Late 15th Century And Currently Has About **25 Million Followers** Worldwide. Sikhs Form A Majority Of Punjab's Population But Are A **Minority In India**, Comprising 2% Of Its Population Of 1.4 Billion.
- Sikh Separatists Demand That Their Homeland Khalistan, Meaning "**The Land Of The Pure**", Be Created Out Of Punjab. The Demand Has Resurfaced Many Times,

Most Prominently During A **Violent Insurgency In The 1970s And 1980s** Which Paralyzed Punjab For Over A Decade.



How Did India React?

- The Khalistan Movement Is Considered **A Security Threat By The Indian Government**. The Bloodiest Episode In The Conflict Between The Government And Sikh Separatists Occurred In 1984.
- Then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi Sent The Military Into The Golden Temple, The Holiest Shrine For Sikhs, To Evict Armed **Separatist Leader Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale** And His Supporters, Which Infuriated Sikhs Around The World.
- A Few Months Later, **Smt Indira Gandhi Was Assassinated** By Her Sikh Bodyguards At Her Home In New Delhi. The Army Launched Operations In 1986 And 1988 To Flush Out Sikh Militants From Punjab.



- Sikh Militants Were Also Blamed For The **1985 Bombing Of An Air India Boeing 747 Flying From Canada To India** In Which All 329 People On Board Were Killed Off The Irish Coast. The Insurgency Killed Tens Of Thousands Of People And Punjab Still Bears The Scars Of That Violence.



- Although The Khalistan Movement Has Little Support Now In India, It Has Small Pockets Of Backing Among Sections Of The **Sikh Diaspora In Canada**, Which Has The Largest Population Of Sikhs Outside Punjab, And In **Britain, Australia And The U.S.**

Khalistan Issue In Recent Times

- In April This Year, India Arrested A Self-styled Preacher And Sikh Separatist **Amritpal Singh For Allegedly Reviving Calls For Khalistan**, Sparking Fears Of New Violence In Punjab.



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- Earlier This Year, India Hit Out At Canada For Allowing A Float In A Parade **Depicting The Assassination Of Indira Gandhi**, Perceiving This To Be A Glorification Of Sikh Separatist Violence.



- India Has Also Been Upset About **Frequent Demonstrations And Vandalism By Sikh Separatists** And Their Supporters At Indian Diplomatic Missions In Canada, Britain, The U.S. And Australia And Has Sought Better Security From Local Governments.

Impact On India-Canada Relations

- Indian Diplomats Based In Canada Have On Numerous Occasions Said That Ottawa's **Failure To Tackle "Sikh Extremism"**, And The Constant Harassment Of Indian Diplomats And Officials By Khalistanis, Is A Major Foreign Policy Stress Point.
- Indian PM Narendra Modi **Raised Strong Concerns** About Sikh Protests In Canada With Trudeau **On The Sidelines Of A G20 Summit** In New Delhi This Month. **Canada Has Paused Talks On A Proposed Trade Treaty With India.** Canadian Trade Minister Is Postponing A Planned Trade Mission To India.
- **India Expelled A Senior Canadian Diplomat** In A Reciprocal Move Over Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Charge That It Played A Role In The June Killing Of A Khalistani Terrorist. The Diplomat, Who Is Unnamed, Has Five Days To Leave The Country.

