Sikh Disinformation Lab

MISLEADING

Agniban report on Nikhil Gupta sentencing accurate on facts, misleading in framing

An Agniban article on the 235-month US sentence handed to Nikhil Gupta is substantially correct on the case details, but the Lab assesses it as Misleading for labelling the targeted Sikh activist a "Khalistani terrorist" without qualification, misstating one of the offences and omitting key context.

PUBLISHED
24 November 2026

SOURCE POSTED
21 November 2026

NARRATIVES
Labelling Sikh Individuals as Terrorists Without Evidence · Portraying Advocacy for Khalistan as Terrorism

OUR ASSESSMENT

Agniban's November 21, 2026 report covers Nikhil Gupta's 235-month prison sentence for participating in a conspiracy to assassinate Sikh political activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in the United States. However, the article introduces Pannun as a “Khalistani terrorist” without immediately explaining that this designation originates from India's domestic anti-terrorism legislation, rather than from the US criminal proceedings.

The report also inaccurately identifies the offences to which Gupta pleaded guilty. The official US court record confirms murder-for-hire, conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire and conspiracy to commit money laundering. The article substitutes conspiracy to commit murder for the standalone murder-for-hire charge.

Although the report identifies Vikash Yadav as a co-accused, it does not explain that US prosecutors identified him as an Indian government employee accused of directing the operation. It also gives prominence to Gupta's expressions of remorse and his assertion that nobody was killed or injured because of his actions, without discussing the documented communications concerning Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar's assassination in Canada.

The Lab's concerns relate to the unqualified terrorism designation, incorrect legal terminology and selective contextual framing. These elements can obscure the political targeting of a Sikh activist and the broader evidence concerning the assassination conspiracy, while Gupta's criminal participation has already been established through his guilty plea.

THE CLAIM

Plot to Assassinate Pannun: US Court Sentences Indian National Nikhil Gupta to 19 Years and 7 Months in Prison

THE ANALYSIS

What was published

On 21 November 2026, the India-based outlet agniban.com published a report headlined "Plot to Assassinate Pannun: US Court Sentences Indian National Nikhil Gupta to 19 Years and 7 Months in Prison". The report covers the 235-month prison sentence imposed on Nikhil Gupta for his part in a conspiracy to assassinate Sikh political activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in the United States.

The Lab's verdict is Misleading. The core facts of the sentencing are accurate. The framing around them is not.

What the review found

The great majority of the report's factual assertions hold up. The Lab assessed as True the claims that a US court sentenced Gupta to 19 years and 7 months in prison; that the sentence relates to a plot to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun; that Gupta pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire, to conspiracy to commit murder and to conspiracy to engage in money laundering; that Vikash Yadav is Gupta's co-accused; that prosecutors alleged Yadav instructed Gupta to arrange an assassin; that Gupta contacted an individual who was a confidential

source for the US Drug Enforcement Administration; that the supposed contract killer was an undercover DEA officer; that the proposed payment for the assassination was $100,000; and that approximately $15,000 was delivered as an advance payment around 9 June 2023.

Two claims were assessed as Misleading.

The majority of the report's factual assertions are supported by the available evidence. The Lab assessed as True the claims that a US court sentenced Gupta to 19 years and 7 months in prison; that the sentence relates to a plot to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun; that Gupta pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire and conspiracy to engage in money laundering; that Vikash Yadav is Gupta's co-accused; that prosecutors alleged Yadav instructed Gupta to arrange an assassin; that Gupta contacted an individual who was a confidential source for the US Drug Enforcement Administration; that the supposed contract killer was an undercover DEA officer; that the proposed payment for the assassination was $100,000; and that approximately $15,000 was delivered as an advance payment around 9 June 2023.

Two claims were assessed as Misleading.

The first is the report's introduction of Pannun as a "Khalistani terrorist". The designation originates in India's domestic anti-terrorism legislation, not in the US criminal proceedings the article is reporting on. The report does not make that distinction at the point the label is used. Presented without qualification, the label shifts attention from the assassination conspiracy to India's criminalizing characterization of the intended victim.

The second concerns the prominence given to Gupta's assertion that nobody was killed or physically injured as a result of his actions. That statement relates to the foiled assassination plot targeting Pannun and forms part of Gupta's sentencing mitigation. The report does not explain this limitation or discuss the documented communications following the assassination of Bhai Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada. Those communications provide relevant context, although they do not establish Gupta's responsibility for Nijjar's killing.

Legal terminology

The official US court record confirms guilty pleas to murder-for-hire, conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire and conspiracy to commit money laundering. The Agniban report instead lists conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire, conspiracy to commit murder and conspiracy to engage in money laundering. By substituting conspiracy to commit murder for the standalone murder-for-hire charge, the article incorrectly identifies one of the offences to which Gupta pleaded guilty. This is a factual error in the description of the charges, rather than simply a difference in terminology.

Missing context on the co-accused

On 21 November 2026, the India-based outlet agniban.com published a report headlined "Plot to Assassinate Pannun: US Court Sentences Indian National Nikhil Gupta to 19 Years and 7 Months in Prison". The report covers the 235-month prison sentence imposed on Nikhil Gupta for his part in a conspiracy to assassinate Sikh political activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in the United States.

The Lab's verdict is Misleading, with a severity rating of 3 out of 5. The central sentencing facts are supported by the US court record, but the report's terminology and contextual framing raise concerns.

Why it matters

Gupta's criminal participation has been established through his guilty plea. The Lab's concerns are specific: an unqualified terrorism designation applied to the intended victim, an incorrect description of the criminal charges, and selective contextual framing. Taken together, these elements can obscure the political targeting of a Sikh activist and the broader evidence concerning the assassination conspiracy.

The assessment is Misleading, with a severity rating of 3 out of 5.

CLAIMS ASSESSED

01	A US court sentenced Nikhil Gupta to 19 years and 7 months in prison.	TRUE
02	Nikhil Gupta was sentenced in connection with a plot to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.	TRUE
03	Gurpatwant Singh Pannun is a Khalistani terrorist.	MISLEADING
04	Gupta pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire.	TRUE
05	Gupta pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder.	TRUE
06	Gupta pleaded guilty to conspiracy to engage in money laundering.	TRUE
07	Vikash Yadav is Gupta's co-accused in the case.	TRUE
08	Prosecutors alleged that Yadav instructed Gupta to arrange an assassin.	TRUE
09	Gupta contacted an individual who was a DEA confidential source.	TRUE
10	The supposed contract killer was an undercover DEA officer.	TRUE
11	The proposed payment for Pannun's assassination was $100,000.	TRUE
12	Approximately $15,000 was delivered as an advance payment around June 9, 2023.	TRUE
13	Nobody was killed or physically injured as a result of Gupta's actions.	MISLEADING

SOURCES

01 https://www.agniban.com/plot-to-assassinate-pannun-us-court-sentences-indian-national-nikhil-gupta-to-19-years-and-7-months-in-p

02 https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/indian-national-sentenced-235-months-prison-plotting-assassinate-us-citizen-new-york

03 https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/indian-national-pleads-guilty-plotting-assassinate-us-citizen-new-york-city

04 https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/us-attorney-announces-charges-against-indian-government-employee-connection-foiled

05 https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1635710

06 https://www.reuters.com/world/us/indian-man-sentenced-more-than-19-years-us-plotting-kill-sikh-separatist-2026-11-20/

07 https://apnews.com/article/862cf5a608b00694f2cc661ece763134

Sikh Disinformation Lab

About Sikh Disinformation Lab

Sikh Disinformation Lab is an independent, evidence-based programme founded and hosted by the World Sikh Organization of Canada. It monitors, analyses and publicly documents disinformation affecting Sikhs.

The Lab examines claims against evidence, publishes assessments with that evidence attached, and tracks coordinated campaigns over time. Every published assessment names what was claimed, where it appeared, what the review found, and what that assessment rests on. Where an item makes several distinct claims, each is assessed separately.

Assessments are made against the methodology framework in force at the time of publication. That framework is public, versioned, and reviewed at each phase gate; a material change produces a new version rather than a silent edit. The full method is published at sikhdisinfolab.ca/method.

Corrections are dated entries, never silent edits. Where a published assessment is found to be wrong or incomplete, the correction is recorded against it and listed at sikhdisinfolab.ca/corrections. If you believe something published here is inaccurate, write to the programme and it will be reviewed.

Assessments are the responsibility of Sikh Disinformation Lab.

This project has been made possible with support from the Government of Canada.

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