Sikh Disinformation Lab

MISLEADING

Medium essay's "safe haven" claim conflates lawful Sikh advocacy in the U.S. with terrorism

A self-published Medium article asserts that the United States shelters "Khalistan terrorism" by permitting Sikhs For Justice to operate. The Lab assesses the claim as misleading disinformation: it treats India's domestic designations as though they governed U.S. law, and omits that U.S. authorities have prosecuted violent conduct connected to the dispute.

PUBLISHED
22 September 2026

SOURCE POSTED
18 September 2026

NARRATIVES
Portraying Foreign Governments as Safe Havens for Sikh Activists · Portraying Sikh Protests as Extremist Activity · Portraying Advocacy for Khalistan as Terrorism

OUR ASSESSMENT

A self-published Medium article arguing that the United States is an “undeclared silent enemy” of India includes a section titled “Khalistan & Terrorism – Safe Haven.” It cites SFJ's lawful operation in the United States, Pannun's citizenship, violence at the Indian Consulate in San Francisco and the U.S. assassination case involving Pannun as evidence that Washington tolerates Khalistan-related terrorism. The article does not distinguish India's designation of SFJ and Pannun from their legal status in the United States, nor does it establish that permitting Khalistan advocacy constitutes the harbouring of terrorism. India has designated SFJ as an unlawful association and Pannun as an individual terrorist under Indian law, but India separately asked the United States in 2025 to designate SFJ as a terrorist organization. The U.S. has not treated lawful SFJ advocacy as equivalent to terrorism. U.S. authorities have also prosecuted violent criminal conduct connected to the dispute: in February 2026, Nikhil Gupta pleaded guilty to participating in a murder-for-hire conspiracy targeting a U.S.-based Sikh separatist activist.

THE CLAIM

USA: Undeclared Silent Enemy of India

THE ANALYSIS

What was published, and where

On 18 September 2026, an article titled "USA: Undeclared Silent Enemy of India" was published on Medium by the account @indian.defense.ecosytem.idet. Medium is an open self-publishing platform; the piece carries no editorial masthead, named author byline or institutional affiliation in the captured content.

The article is framed as an "Overall Assessment" of "USA Activities Viewed as Threat to India's National Security." Among its sections is one headed "Khalistan & Terrorism – Safe Haven."

What it claimed

The post asserts that the United States "allowed Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) to operate," and notes that "SFJ chief Gurpatwant Singh Pannun holds dual US-Canada citizenship, runs referendum from" the United States. It further cites violence at the Indian Consulate in San Francisco and the U.S. assassination-for-hire case involving Pannun as evidence that Washington tolerates Khalistan-related terrorism.

The Lab reviewed two claims in particular: that the United States has "allowed" SFJ to operate since 2011, and that such tolerance demonstrates that America provides a "safe haven" for Khalistan terrorism.

What the review found

Verdict: Disinformation, misleading in character. Severity 3 of 5. The first claim is unsupported; the second is misleading.

The core analytical problem is a conflation of two separate legal systems. India has designated SFJ as an unlawful association and Pannun as an individual terrorist under Indian law. Those designations have force in India. They do not alter the legal status of the organization or the individual in the United States, and the article does not distinguish between the two.

The article's own premise is undercut by the diplomatic record. India separately asked the United States in 2025 to designate SFJ as a terrorist organization — a request that would be unnecessary if the U.S. already recognized SFJ as a terrorist entity and were knowingly declining to act. The United States has not treated lawful SFJ advocacy as equivalent to terrorism. Describing the absence of a prohibition as a decision to "allow" an organization to operate frames ordinary legal status as an act of state indulgence.

Nor does the article establish the logical link it requires. Permitting advocacy for Khalistan — including the referendum activity it references — is not, on the material presented, shown to constitute the harbouring of terrorism. The piece asserts the equivalence rather than demonstrating it.

The article's use of the Pannun assassination case is similarly inverted. U.S. authorities have prosecuted violent criminal conduct connected to this dispute. In February 2026, Nikhil Gupta pleaded guilty to participating in a murder-for-hire conspiracy targeting a U.S.-based Sikh separatist activist. That prosecution is evidence of U.S. enforcement action arising from the dispute, not of official tolerance for violence.

Context

The Lab tracks this item within the Portraying Foreign Governments as Safe Havens for Sikh Activists narrative. The recurring structure of that cluster is the treatment of lawful political advocacy by Sikhs in North America as if it were, in itself, evidence of terrorism — with legal protections in host countries reframed as state sponsorship or deliberate shelter.

The practical effect of the framing is to place a broad category of lawful activity, including peaceful referendum campaigning and public advocacy, inside a security threat narrative. That framing does not distinguish between people accused of crimes and people exercising protected political expression.

The Lab makes no assertion about the author's motive, affiliation or coordination with any other party. The assessment addresses the content of the article: specifically, its failure to separate Indian designations from U.S. legal status, its unsupported characterization of SFJ's lawful operation as something the United States "allowed," and its omission of the U.S. prosecution that contradicts the "safe haven" thesis.

Readers encountering the piece should note that it is self-published commentary presented as a national-security assessment, and that its central claim about U.S. policy is not supported by the legal and diplomatic record it purports to describe.

CLAIMS ASSESSED

01	The U.S. has “allowed” SFJ to operate since 2011	UNSUPPORTED
02	U.S. tolerance of SFJ demonstrates that America provides a “safe haven” for Khalistan terrorism	MISLEADING

SOURCES

01 https://medium.com/@indian.defense.ecosytem.idet/usa-undeclared-silent-enemy-of-india-08145bf546bc

02 The Lab's analyst review record, the Portraying Foreign Governments as Safe Havens for Sikh Activists narrative (status: Disinformation; nuance: Misleading; severity 3; factual accuracy: Disinformation)

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.

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