Sikh Disinformation Lab

MISLEADING

Orissa Post report on ISI and Khalistan rests on unnamed officials, not evidence

An October 21 article republished by Orissa Post, originally reported by IANS, asserts that Pakistan's ISI is reviving the Khalistan movement through criminal financing, manipulated footage and intimidation of Canadian Sikhs. The Lab's assessment is Misleading: the report's central claims are unsupported, and its attendance and support figures are contradicted by reporting on a recent Edmonton referendum.

PUBLISHED
23 October 2026

SOURCE POSTED
21 October 2026

NARRATIVES
Claiming Pakistan Controls Sikh Political Activism · Linking Sikhs to Gangs, Drugs and Organized Crime · Portraying Advocacy for Khalistan as Terrorism · Labelling Sikhs as “Good” or “Bad” Sikhs · Stereotyping Sikh Youth and Migrants as Dishonest or Dependent · Portraying Sikh Protests as Extremist Activity

OUR ASSESSMENT

The October 21 Orissa Post article, originally reported by IANS, alleges that Pakistan's ISI is attempting to revive the Khalistan movement through criminal financing, manipulation of referendum footage, political advocacy networks and intimidation of Canadian Sikhs. The report relies almost entirely on unnamed Indian intelligence officials and provides no documentary evidence establishing the specific financial or operational arrangements described.

A particularly consequential claim is that recent SFJ referendums attract only 20–30 participants. This characterization is difficult to reconcile with reporting on the October 18 Edmonton referendum, where journalists described thousands of participants and organizers claimed more than 23,000 votes. The organizers' figure has not been independently audited and cannot establish wider Sikh political preferences. However, the article provides no dates, locations, attendance methodology or original footage to substantiate its substantially lower estimate. Its separate allegation that referendum videos are manipulated is similarly unsupported by any identifiable before-and-after comparison.

The claim that Canadian Sikh support declined from 20–30 per cent to below five per cent is also presented without representative surveys or comparable historical measurements. The article attributes these figures to an unnamed official, yet describes them as though they establish a measurable collapse in community support. Neither official source establishes that SFJ's Canadian referendum activities are directed by Pakistan's ISI or that the broader movement functions as a criminal syndicate. The article additionally characterizes Khalistan-related asylum applications as opportunistic without identifying the tribunal decisions or evidence supporting that generalization. India's designation of SFJ as an unlawful association also operates under Indian law and should not be treated as establishing the illegality of peaceful Khalistan advocacy in Canada.

An important omission is Canada's own security record. In October 2024, the RCMP publicly disclosed investigative evidence concerning alleged Indian government-agent involvement in violence, intimidation and organized crime targeting Canadian residents, including members of the pro-Khalistan community. India has denied those allegations. The findings remain relevant when evaluating claims about criminal threats and foreign-state activity affecting Sikh Canadians.

THE CLAIM

Pakistan’s ISI struggles to revive Khalistan movement in Punjab

THE ANALYSIS

What was published

On October 21, 2026, orissapost.com published an article headlined "Pakistan's ISI struggles to revive Khalistan movement in Punjab," originally reported by IANS. The piece asserts that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence "is leaving no stone unturned in its efforts to revive the Khalistan movement in Punjab" and that it is "pumping in substantial funds."

The Lab assesses the item as Misleading, with a severity rating of 4.

The basis of the report

The article relies almost entirely on unnamed Indian intelligence officials. It supplies no documentary evidence establishing the specific financial or operational arrangements it describes.

The claims, one by one

ISI is pumping substantial funding into Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) and Khalistan-related activity. Unsupported. No amounts, transactions, named recipients or intelligence documents are supplied.

Recent SFJ referendums draw only 20 to 30 participants. False. This is difficult to reconcile with reporting on the October 18 Edmonton referendum, where journalists described thousands of participants and organizers claimed more than 23,000 votes. The organizers' figure has not been independently audited and cannot establish wider Sikh political preferences. The article, however, provides no dates, locations, attendance methodology or original footage to substantiate its substantially lower estimate.

Canadian Sikh support for Khalistan declined from 20 to 30 per cent to below five per cent. False. No surveys, sampling methodology, dates or comparable historical population measurements are provided. The figures are attributed to an unnamed official, yet presented as though they establish a measurable collapse in community support.

Khalistan-related activities have become primarily a drugs, arms and extortion syndicate. Misleading. The characterization is overgeneralized. Canadian authorities document financing concerns involving specific violent extremist organizations, not an entire political movement.

CSIS labelled Khalistanis a serious national-security threat. Misleading. The terminology misstates the Canadian position. CSIS identifies a small category of violent extremist actors while explicitly recognizing peaceful Khalistan advocacy as lawful.

Canadian courts and the Immigration and Refugee Board have rejected Khalistan-related asylum claims as opportunistic. Misleading. This is not established as a general finding. No decisions or case statistics identifying such a category are provided.

SFJ threatens diaspora Sikhs to extract donations. Unsupported. No victims, complaints, charges or identifiable investigations are presented in the article.

SFJ manipulates referendum videos to exaggerate attendance. Unsupported. The report offers no identifiable before-and-after comparison of original and edited footage.

ISI plans to finance SFJ social-media initiatives and political advocacy groups. Unsupported. No organizations, funding arrangements or operational records are identified.

A Sikh delegation told Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in 2023 that Khalistan support was declining. Misleading. PTI reported the delegation's remarks, so the statement was made. The remarks do not independently establish a wider decline in public support.

Context

Neither of the article's official sources establishes that SFJ's Canadian referendum activities are directed by Pakistan's ISI, or that the broader movement functions as a criminal syndicate.

India's designation of SFJ as an unlawful association operates under Indian law. It does not establish that peaceful Khalistan advocacy is unlawful in Canada.

The article also omits Canada's own security record. In October 2024, the RCMP publicly disclosed investigative evidence concerning alleged Indian government-agent involvement in violence, intimidation and organized crime targeting Canadian residents, including members of the pro-Khalistan community. India has denied those allegations. That disclosure remains relevant when evaluating claims about criminal threats and foreign-state activity affecting Sikh Canadians.

The cumulative effect of the article is to present contested, source-free assertions from unnamed officials as settled fact, while attributing organized criminality and foreign direction to a lawful political movement in Canada.

CLAIMS ASSESSED

01	Pakistan's ISI is pumping substantial funding into SFJ and Khalistan-related activity.	UNSUPPORTED
02	Recent SFJ referendums draw only 20–30 participants	FALSE
03	Canadian Sikh support declined from 20–30% to below 5%.	FALSE
04	Khalistan-related activities have become primarily a drugs, arms and extortion syndicate.	MISLEADING
05	CSIS labelled Khalistanis a serious national-security threat.	MISLEADING
06	Canadian courts and the IRB have rejected Khalistan-related asylum claims as opportunistic.	MISLEADING
07	SFJ threatens diaspora Sikhs to extract donations.	UNSUPPORTED
08	SFJ manipulates referendum videos to exaggerate attendance.	UNSUPPORTED
09	ISI plans to finance SFJ social-media initiatives and political advocacy groups.	UNSUPPORTED
10	A Sikh delegation told Nirmala Sitharaman in 2023 that Khalistan support was declining.	MISLEADING

SOURCES

01 https://www.orissapost.com/pakistans-isi-struggles-to-revive-khalistan-movement-in-punjab/

02 Sikh Disinformation Lab analyst review of the flagged item (October 2026)

03 Reporting on the October 18 SFJ referendum in Edmonton

04 RCMP public disclosure, October 2024, concerning alleged Indian government-agent involvement in violence, intimidation and organized crime in Canada

05 PTI reporting on a 2023 Sikh delegation's remarks to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

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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