Sikh Disinformation Lab

MISLEADING

Shillong Times report ties SFJ Edmonton referendum to militancy on unnamed-source claims

An IANS report republished by The Shillong Times asserts that a Sikhs for Justice referendum in Edmonton could serve as a recruitment vehicle for Babbar Khalsa International and is linked to weapons and narcotics operations. The Lab assesses the item as disinformation, misleading in character, with its central security allegations unsupported and one factual claim false.

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14 October 2026

SOURCE POSTED
12 October 2026

NARRATIVES
Portraying Advocacy for Khalistan as Terrorism · Linking Sikhs to Gangs, Drugs and Organized Crime · Claiming Pakistan Controls Sikh Political Activism · Portraying the Sikh Freedom Struggle and the Events of 1984 and After Solely as Terrorism

OUR ASSESSMENT

he Shillong Times republishes an IANS report linking SFJ's scheduled October 18 referendum in Edmonton to alleged terrorist recruitment and criminal operations in Punjab. The article relies extensively on unidentified Indian intelligence officials to connect SFJ's political activities with Babbar Khalsa International, Pakistan's ISI, weapons trafficking, narcotics operations and proposed recruitment of women for surveillance and intelligence-gathering activities. The principal concern is the expansion of unverified security allegations into a narrative about the wider Khalistan movement. The report claims that SFJ hopes to use the referendum as a recruitment opportunity for BKI and that proceeds from alleged criminal operations are intended to finance Khalistan. Neither proposition is supported by an identifiable investigative record establishing the claimed relationship. The report moves between these organizations without sufficiently distinguishing documented facts, intelligence allegations and journalistic inference. A further concern is the article's characterization of Khalistan advocacy as internationally recognized as illegal and meaningless. India's designation of SFJ as an unlawful association is a specific domestic legal measure and should not be presented as a universal legal position. The absence of legal effect from an unofficial referendum does not itself establish that peaceful political advocacy is unlawful in Canada.

THE CLAIM

SFJ’s Canada referendum puts Punjab’s Khalistani terror threat under scanner

THE ANALYSIS

What was published

On 12 October 2026, theshillongtimes.com published a report under the headline "SFJ's Canada referendum puts Punjab's Khalistani terror threat under scanner," datelined New Delhi. The piece republishes an IANS report. It opens by stating that "an event organised by the banned outfit Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) has come under the scrutiny of intelligence agencies," referring to a referendum scheduled to be held in Edmonton on 18 October.

What it claimed

The report draws on unidentified Indian intelligence officials to connect SFJ's political activities to Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), Pakistan's ISI, weapons trafficking and narcotics operations. It asserts that SFJ hopes to use the referendum as a recruitment opportunity for BKI, and that proceeds from alleged criminal operations are intended to finance Khalistan. It further asserts that BKI is proposing to recruit women for surveillance and intelligence-gathering work.

The Lab's assessment

The Lab assesses the item as disinformation, with a verdict nuance of misleading and a severity rating of 3 out of 5.

The principal concern is the expansion of unverified security allegations into a broader narrative about the Khalistan movement. The report moves between SFJ, BKI and Pakistani agencies without sufficiently distinguishing documented facts, intelligence allegations and journalistic inference.

Claim 1: The referendum could serve as a BKI recruitment tool

Unsupported. The assertion is attributed to an unnamed official and is not accompanied by supporting evidence. No identifiable investigative record is cited that establishes the claimed relationship between the scheduled referendum and recruitment activity.

Claim 2: SFJ and BKI are intensifying recruitment together

Unsupported. The report supplies no independently documented operational relationship between the two organizations. The proposition rests on the same unattributed sourcing as the recruitment claim.

Claim 3: BKI is targeting women for surveillance, honey traps and trafficking

Unsupported. This allegation is based on unnamed intelligence sourcing. No corroborating material is presented in the report.

Claim 4: The Parti Québécois has a referendum scheduled for 19 October

False. The referendum taking place on 19 October is Alberta's provincial referendum, not an event of the Parti Québécois.

Framing of Khalistan advocacy

A further concern is the article's characterization of Khalistan advocacy as internationally recognized as illegal and meaningless. India's designation of SFJ as an unlawful association is a specific domestic legal measure under Indian law. It does not constitute a universal legal position and should not be presented as one.

Separately, the fact that an unofficial referendum carries no legal effect does not establish that peaceful political advocacy is unlawful in Canada. The two propositions are distinct, and the report conflates them.

Context

The item has been logged under the Portraying Advocacy for Khalistan as Terrorism narrative. The Lab's assessment concerns the evidentiary basis of the published claims. It is not a determination about the conduct of any individual or organization named in the report, and the assessment of a claim as unsupported indicates that the published material does not substantiate it, not that the underlying subject matter has been investigated and cleared by the Lab.

Readers encountering reporting of this kind are encouraged to note where allegations are attributed to unnamed officials rather than to an identifiable investigative record, and to distinguish such attributions from established fact.

CLAIMS ASSESSED

01	SFJ's referendum could serve as a BKI recruitment tool	UNSUPPORTED
02	SFJ and BKI are intensifying recruitment together	UNSUPPORTED
03	BKI is targeting women for surveillance, honey traps and trafficking	UNSUPPORTED
04	Parti Québécois has a referendum scheduled for October 19	FALSE

SOURCES

01 https://theshillongtimes.com/2026/10/12/sfjs-canada-referendum-puts-punjabs-khalistani-terror-threat-under-scanner/

02 The Lab's analyst review record (item flagged 2026-10-12; the Portraying Advocacy for Khalistan as Terrorism narrative)

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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