

Tamil-Style

Madame Chair, I speak today on behalf of the Sikh community, which continues to face systematic repression in India, which fundamentally undermines any trust or cohesion. Currently in Punjab, six students at Punjab University are facing police crackdowns and disciplinary measures for organizing peaceful protests against government interference in academic institutions. These institutions have historically been centers of Sikh intellectual life and cultural continuity. Attempts to weaken their autonomy and silence student voices are not only attacks on academic freedom, but a deliberate effort to sever the connection between Sikh youth and their heritage. The crackdowns on the six students are not isolated disciplinary actions. They fit into a longer pattern of state oppression against Sikh political and cultural expression, especially youth activism, for Sikh academic autonomy is tied to minority rights and self-determination. When the state interferes in Sikh-majority institutions, it is perceived not just as bureaucratic overreach, but as an assault on Sikh identity and collective memory, which undermines any social cohesion or trust that can be built. This repression does not stop at India's borders. Sikh activists have been targeted through extrajudicial assassinations and plots abroad. In June 2023, Sikh leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, was assassinated outside a gurdwara in Canada, an act linked by Canadian authorities to the government of India and presented to India in a formal communication by several special procedure mandate holders of the United Nations, Reference No. ALIND10/2024. In the United States, the Department of Justice revealed a plot by the government of India to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a US citizen and Sikh lawyer-activist. Both individuals were targeted for their support of Sikh self-determination in the form of [inaudible]. In these circumstances, building trust and social cohesion globally requires concrete measures and I urge this Forum and the United Nations to call on India to end arbitrary repression, for the United Nations to address transnational repression, and further support to safeguard minority rights.