




12 May 2025



Ref: OIA-2024/25-0854

Tēnā koe 

### Official Information Act request relating to Khalistan referendum

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 30 April 2025. You requested:

*"the document in full, under the OIA, listed in the reply to WPQ 17144 (2025) to the Prime Minister, entitled: 'Khalistan "referendum" and system response, 5 November 2024', as well as any other briefing material provided to the Prime Minister regarding the Khalistani movement in advance of his March 2025 trip to India?"*

On 2 May 2025, the part of your request for "any other briefing material provided to the Prime Minister regarding the Khalistani movement in advance of his March 2025 trip to India" was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade for response under section 14(b)(ii) of the Act.

### Information being released

Please find attached the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet briefing "*Khalistan 'referendum' and system response*," 5 November 2024.

As marked on the released document, some information has been withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- section 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.
- section 6(b)(i), to protect the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the Government of any other country or any agency of such a Government.
- section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.
- section 9(2)(g)(ii), to prevent improper pressure or harassment.

Where section 9 applies, in making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act. No public interest has been identified that would be sufficient to outweigh the reasons for withholding that information.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Nāku noa, nā



Bridget White  
**Executive Director**  
**National Security Group**



# Briefing

## Khalistan “referendum” and system coordination

To	Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence		
Date	05/11/2024	Security level	s6(a)

### Purpose

1. This briefing provides information s6(a) on the upcoming Khalistan “referendum”, scheduled to take place in Auckland on 17 November, and some of the risks associated with it.
2. It also outlines DPMC actions to ensure system awareness of, and a coordinated response to, any activity. It seeks your advice as to whether you would like further information or support on this issue.

### Recommendations

We recommend you:

1. **note** the contents of this briefing s6(a) and
2. **indicate** whether you would like further advice or support on this issue. YES / NO

 Bridget White Executive Director, National Security National Security Group	Rt Hon Christopher Luxon Prime Minister and Minister for National Security and Intelligence
05/11/24	...../...../.....

## Background

3. As you are aware, US-based group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) intend to host an unofficial "referendum" on Khalistan in Auckland on 17 November. The "referendum" is a non-binding, unofficial event that seeks to raise awareness for the idea of Khalistan – an independent Sikh homeland within the Indian state of Punjab. SFJ has held these events around the world, and aims to present the results to the UN, to seek a UN-supervised official referendum.
4. NZ Police are engaging with the event organisers about the event in Auckland. We understand the organisers have communicated their desire for a peaceful event, and that they currently expect approximately 8,000 people to attend. On social media, SFJ have been promoting Aotea Square as the venue for the "referendum".

s6(a)



s6(a)



**DPMC is leading system coordination on this issue**

12. This issue potentially touches on a range of interests s6(a)

13. s6(a) on 24 October DPMC convened an Interagency Working Group of officials – including DPMC's National Security Group, NZ Police, MFAT, NZSIS, Ministry for Ethnic Communities, and Immigration NZ – to ensure a common understanding of the situation, risks, and triggers for convening the ODESC system.

14. Among other things, the meeting included discussion of:

s6(a)

15. The focus of discussions was on ensuring agencies were considering and managing their own risks, and sharing information relevant to other agencies. The ODESC system was not activated at this time.

16. In addition, MFAT recently provided a submission s6(a)

**Next steps**

17. A further IAWG meeting will be held on 8 November, to ensure agencies continue to share information, identify and communicate any emerging issues, and are comfortable that they are managing risks within their respective mandates. Additional IAWG meetings will be held if warranted, and the ODESC system will be activated if required.

18. We will continue to update you as appropriate, particularly if there is an indication of a significant change in the situation s6(a). Beyond this, we would welcome advice from you as to whether you would like further briefings or support on this issue.

Attachments:	Title	Security classification
s6(a)		

Attachment B: MFAT submission s6(a)

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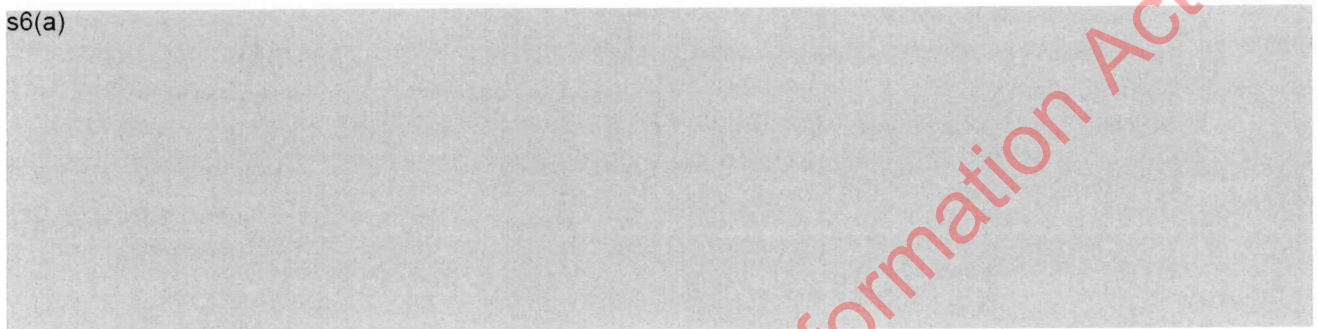
24 October 2024

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For information by

29 October 2024

s6(a)



Recommended referrals

Prime Minister	For information by	31 October 2024
Minister for National Security and Intelligence	For information by	31 October 2024
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS	For information by	31 October 2024
Minister for Trade	For information by	31 October 2024

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
s9(2)(g)(ii)			

## Key points

s6(a)

- On 14 October the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) announced it had evidence of Indian diplomats in Ottawa using their positions to engage in criminal and coercive activities against members of the Indian diaspora, notably the Sikh community, and that imminent domestic security concerns required them to publicise this.
- The RCMP is conducting separate criminal and national security investigations following Canadian allegations in September 2023 of Indian government involvement in the assassination of a Sikh activist and advocate for a separate Sikh state of Khalistan in June 2023. The RCMP statement was also made in the context of ongoing investigations into foreign interference in Canada.
- India has continued to deny these allegations and has been critical of Canada's approach, accusing it of making the dispute public prior to, and instead of, sharing evidence.
- Canada has expelled the Indian High Commissioner and five other Indian diplomats. India – which has strongly rejected the allegations – retaliated with tit-for-tat expulsions.

s6(a)

- In response you posted on X about the situation on 15 October emphasising the need to respect the rule of law and judicial processes, and noting the allegations, if proven, would be concerning. s6(a)

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)




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s6(a)



- Protests in support of an independent "Khalistan state" may continue in the lead up to the "referendum". s6(a)
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Deborah Geels  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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## Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **s6(a)**  

- 2 Agree messages for public use outlined in Annex 1 be shared with relevant Ministers. Yes / No
- 3 **s6(a)**  

- 4 Agree that MFAT should remain in touch with posts and relevant agencies, and provide further advice to Ministers as more information becomes apparent. Yes / No
- 5 Refer a copy of this submission to the Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and Intelligence, Minister Responsible for the NZSIS, and Minister for Trade. Yes / No

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
Minister of Foreign Affairs


Date:        /        /

## Report

1. On 14 October the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) released a statement that, over the course of a lengthy investigation, it had compiled credible evidence implicating agents representing the Indian Government in serious criminal activity against members of the pro-Khalistan movement in Canada. Those implicated included the Indian High Commissioner and a further five Indian diplomatic staff posted to Canada.
2. The RCMP's decision to go public with these findings was prompted both by an immediate threat to public safety **s6(a)**  
Canada and India subsequently announced reciprocal diplomatic expulsions, with the Indian High Commissioner in Ottawa and Canadian Charge d'Affaires in New Delhi among the 12 diplomats expelled (6 from each side).

**s6(b)(i)**



4. Canada's announcement on 14 October is the latest in a series of events stemming from the assassination of Canadian Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023. In September 2023 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada was "actively pursuing credible allegations" linking Indian government agents to Nijjar's murder. India denied the allegations, suspended visa operations in Canada, and threatened to revoke diplomatic immunity for 41 Canadian diplomats in New Delhi - who were subsequently withdrawn by Canada. **s6(a)**
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5. On 17 October the US also published criminal charges against an employee of the Government of India for his alleged role in directing an assassination plot against a US-based associate of Nijjar. The indictment alleged that hours after the killing in Canada, the Indian official communicated the address of a US-based target to a criminal associate recruited in a murder-for-hire scheme, with instructions that the assassination not take place around the time of Prime Minister Modi's visit to the US.

**s6(a)**





s6(a)



8. Public reaction from partners, to date, has been measured.
9. **Australia's** Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade released a statement stating: "Australia has made clear our concerns about the allegations under investigation in Canada, and our respect for Canada's judicial process". The statement also called for respect of the rule of law and the sovereignty of all countries.
10. The **UK** Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office put out a statement expressing: "full confidence in Canada's judicial system". It noted that "respect for sovereignty and the rule of law is essential" and that "the Government of India's cooperation with Canada's legal processes is the right next step." UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer also spoke with Prime Minister Trudeau about the allegations on 15 October.
11. The **US** addressed the situation during a regular State Department daily briefing, which occurred the same day Indian officials arrived in the US for a meeting of the High-Level Committee of Inquiry. A State Department spokesperson described the allegations as "serious" and said the US had "wanted to see India take them seriously and cooperate with Canada's investigation. They have taken an alternate path."

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14. Canada is one of our closest partners, a fellow member of the Five Eyes, and one with which we work closely with in support of shared values – including the maintenance of the international rules-based system and respect for rule of law.

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Released under the Official Information Act 1982



s6(a)



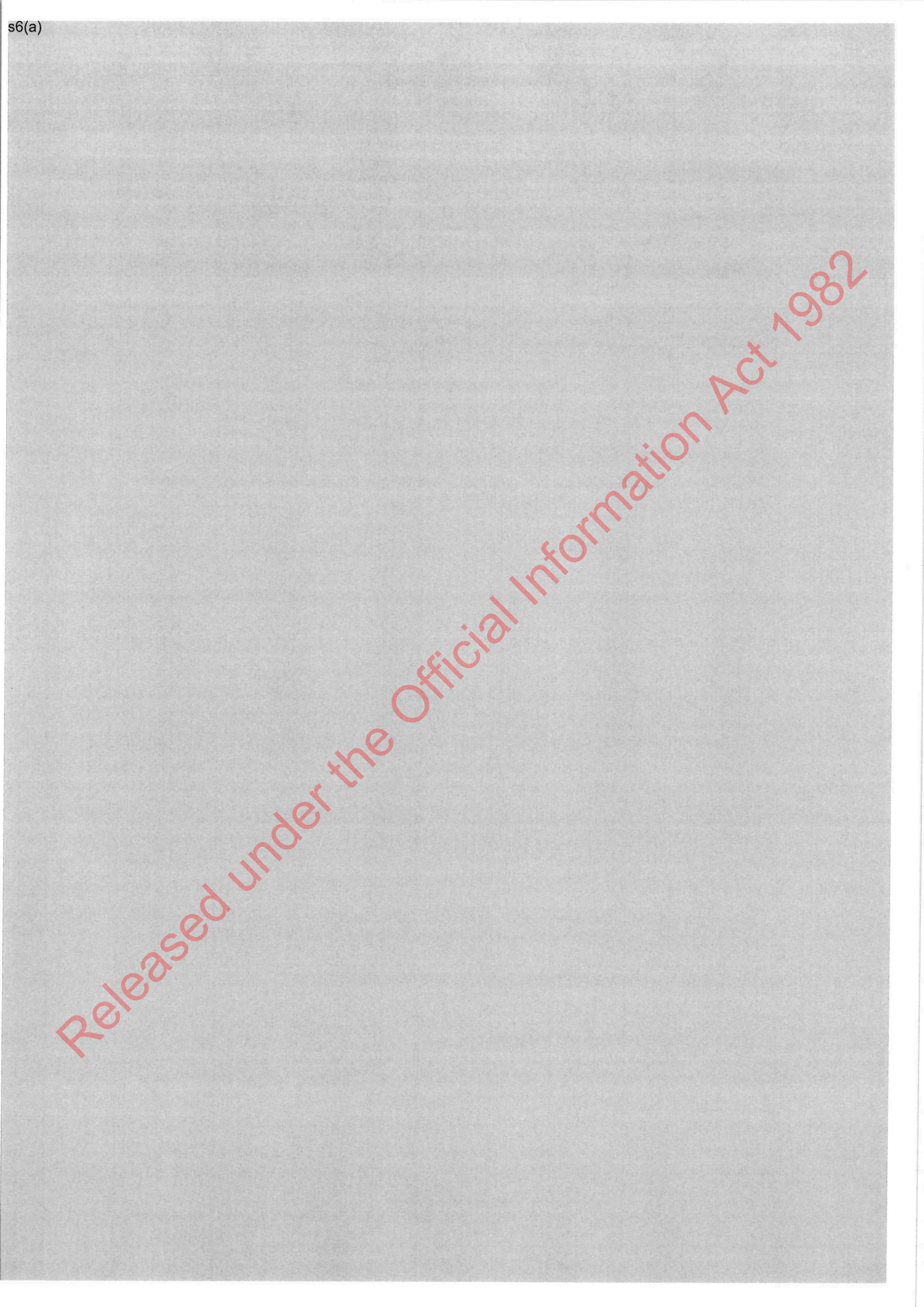
*New Zealand response so far and next steps*

26. You released a message on X on 15 October which emphasised the need to respect the rule of law and judicial processes, and noting the allegations, if proven, would be concerning. We have provided public talking points along these lines in an Annex attached to this submission. We also provide talking points to draw on if asked about Sikh separatist activity and the upcoming "Khalistan referendum" in New Zealand.

s6(a)







Released under the Official Information Act 1982

## Annex: Talking points

### *Canada / India*

- New Zealand has been briefed by Canada about its recent announcements on ongoing criminal investigations into violence and threats of violence against members of its South Asian community.
- Alleged criminal conduct of the kind outlined publicly by Canadian law enforcement authorities and still under investigation would be very concerning.
- We do not comment on the details of ongoing criminal investigations, in New Zealand or abroad, other than to note that we have confidence in the Canada judicial processes. It is important that the rule of law and judicial processes be respected and followed.
- New Zealand has a diverse population, with large communities with cultural connections to a broad range of countries from across Asia, the Pacific and Europe. We expect all such communities to act lawfully and be treated with respect.

s6(a)



- We are aware of the so-called "referendum" by a non-government organisation.
- New Zealand is a strong supporter of human rights, at home and around the world, including freedom of speech – provided such initiatives are lawful and peaceful.
- New Zealand recognises India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- New Zealand takes any threats or incidence of violence against ethnic and religious communities in New Zealand seriously.
- Our ethnic communities are a vital part of New Zealand's diverse society. We expect all communities to act lawfully and be treated with respect.