

The Completion of the Kartarpur Corridor Is a Victory for the Sikh Community

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The global Sikh community is celebrating the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor on 9 November that will create an international pilgrimage route from India to the nearby Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan where the founder of the world's fifth-largest religion passed away, which will open just in time to commemorate the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak's death and is occurring in the context of this community's rising political consciousness that's increasingly taking the form of peaceful Khalistani separatism from Indian Punjab through the Sikhs For Justice's planned referendum on this issue next year.

An event of historic religious significance will take place [on 9 November](#) when the Kartarpur Corridor opens in South Asia, which will enable members of the global Sikh community to travel along an international pilgrimage route from India to the nearby Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan where the founder of the world's fifth-largest religion passed away. It's extremely important for Sikhs, the majority of which live in India, to be able to more freely do so because this year marks the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak's death. There had hitherto been obvious bureaucratic obstacles that hindered movement across the border between nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan following the bloody partition of the British Raj, but both countries realized that it's for the greater good that they put aside their differences in this respect in order to facilitate the religious practices of the global Sikh community by constructing a corridor that can enable them to easily travel back and forth en masse during this holy time.

This monumental event is supposed to be purely apolitical and undertaken for selfless reasons, but India has already tried [spoiling the festive mood](#) by previously alleging that the Kartarpur Corridor will be abused by Pakistan to encourage Khalistani separatism from Indian Punjab. The reason for such claims is that the state regards the rising political consciousness of the global Sikh community over the past year and its manifestation through the [Sikhs For Justice's](#) (SFJ) planned referendum on the independence of Indian Punjab as Khalistan to be part of an elaborate Pakistani plot to undermine the country from within. This conspiracy theory completely disregards the fact that the Khalistani cause itself was [most powerfully fueled](#) by India's deadly "[Operation Blue Star](#)" assault on the religion's holiest shrine of the Golden Temple 35 years ago in 1984, which was followed by the "[Operation Woodrose](#)" "clean-up efforts" that saw the extrajudicial killing of many Sikhs and ultimately climaxed in the [nationwide anti-Sikh pogrom](#) at the end of the same year after Indira Gandhi's assassination.

Nevertheless, India still claims that Pakistan has a secret hand in the recent revival of the Sikhs' political consciousness, [refusing to take any responsibility](#) for its own role in

historically provoking this separatist reaction through its counterproductive actions over the years. These allegations have since been used to “justify” [granting eight states the authority](#) to utilize the “Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act” for quelling Sikh separatism, especially against the SFJ that was banned earlier this year, which could set into motion a chain of events that might ultimately lead to the imposition of the feared “Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act” [in part or all of Indian Punjab](#) ahead of next year’s planned referendum. India doesn’t seem to have learned its lesson that cracking down on the peaceful expression of a religious minority’s desire for self-determination usually ends up intensifying those same sentiments that the state wants to snuff out, and its [latest “good cop, bad cop” ploy](#) of removing many figures from its blacklist is too little too late to make much of a difference at this point.

It would be ideal if India stopped obsessing over this issue that its Ambassador to the US described as “[bogus](#)” just as recently as last month, but it seems that its official statements on the matter purposely downplay Khalistan’s popular appeal among the Sikh community in the country since its actions speak otherwise by showing just how seriously the state regards this separatist campaign. As such, it can’t be discounted that India will selectively investigate and possibly even harass some of the pilgrims after they return from their trip through the Kartarpur Corridor on the basis that they’re “Pakistani-backed separatists” who could have even come into contact with fighters from the so-called “terrorist camp” that their country’s media [alleged earlier in the week](#) is located nearby in the same border district. This scenario forecast isn’t meant to deter Sikhs from paying their respects to Guru Nanak, but just to point out that it’s very conceivable that India might exploit their travels in order to advance what it claims are its “national security interests”.

In any case, the inauguration of the Kartarpur Corridor is still an historic event that should be celebrated by both the global Sikh community and the rest of the world at large. It took a lot of political will for both countries to come together in creating it, even though India has attempted to spoil the mood by politicizing it several times in the past. There’s no doubt that the political consciousness of the Sikhs will continue to rise in the coming future, especially among those who take advantage of this opportunity to conduct their sacred pilgrimage, though that of course doesn’t mean that they’ll automatically support the Khalistani cause because of it. India, however, appears to think differently, yet wisely realized that it had no choice but to continue its commitment to this project to the point of completion since stopping it on any invented pretext would have inflamed the same separatist sentiment that it’s trying its hardest to suppress. As such, the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor despite the heavy odds against it is a victory for every Sikh regardless of political affiliation.

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