



India – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 24 August 2012

Information on a group called Babar Khalsh: their history, aims, objectives and whether the group is political, religious, or criminal. Treatment of Babar Khalsh members by the government or society.

A terrorist organisation profile published by the US government affiliated *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)*, in a paragraph headed “Founding Philosophy”, refers to a group called Babbar Khalsa International as follows:

“Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) is an organization of Sikh separatists associated with a wave of assassinations and terrorist attacks in the 1980s. The group's primary goal is the establishment of an independent Sikh country of unspecified size in northwestern India. Group statements and media sources usually refer to this proposed state as ‘Khalistan.’” (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (undated) *Terrorist Organization Profile: Babbar Khalsa International (BKI)*)

A paragraph headed “Current Goals” states:

“Babbar Khalsa seeks a sovereign state for Sikhs carved out of northern India. Punjab province and surrounding majority Sikh regions will serve as the basis for this state, but BKI does not articulate precise plans for the geographical, political, economic, or religious characteristics of its desired Khalistan.” (ibid)

A country advice document published by the *Australian Government – Refugee Review Tribunal*, in a paragraph headed “Overview of the Babbar Khalsa International”, states:

“The Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) is a Sikh separatist paramilitary group which has existed since the early 1980s. The BKI, like other Sikh militant groups, advocates an independent state for Sikhs, to be known as Khalistan. The BKI was active during the Sikh insurgency in Punjab between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, including alleged involvement in the bombing of an Air India flight in 1985 which killed 329 people and the 1995 assassination of Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh. Punjab police have continued to make periodic arrests of alleged BKI members during the last 10 years, and Indian security agencies have alleged that Pakistani security agencies fund and train members of the BKI and other Sikh militant groups to undertake operations within India.” (Australian Government – Refugee Review Tribunal (31 August 2010) *India – IND37173 – Maharashtra – Sikhs – Babbar Khalsa International*)

A document published by the *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, in a paragraph headed “Formation”, states:

“Even after the terrorist-secessionist movement for Khalistan was comprehensively defeated in 1993, there remain a handful of terrorist outfits chiefly supported by Pakistan and some non-resident Indian Sikh groups who continue to propagate the ideology of Khalistan. One of the most prominent among them is the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI). It is among the oldest and most organised Khalistan terrorist groups. The BKI traces its origin to the Babbar Akali Movement of 1920 and is believed to have assumed its present form after the Baisakhi 1978-clashes between the Akhand Kirtani Jatha and Nirankaris and more particularly when some followers of Bibi Amarjit Kaur brought out some leaflets styling themselves as Babbar Khalsa after the killing of Nirankari chief Gurbachan Singh, on April 24, 1980. Subsequently, the outfit started targeting all those who sympathised with the Nirankaris.” (South Asia Terrorism Portal (April 2012) *Babbar Khalsa International*)

An *India Today* article states:

“The longest-surviving Khalistani militant group, the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), has been responsible for some of the biggest terrorist strikes including the mid-air bombing of Air India Flight 182 Kanishka in 1985. Presently headed by Wadhawa Singh Babbar alias Chacha from Lahore, Pakistan, the BKI remains the most organised Sikh militant organisation with supporters in North America, Europe, South Asia and Australia. Created in the wake of a bloody clash between Sikhs and adherents of the breakaway Nirankari sect in Amritsar on April 13, 1978, the BKI's existence as a militant group was first noticed in leaflets in 1980 shortly after the assassination of the Nirankari chief Gurbachan Singh. Sukhdev Singh Babbar, his brother Mehal Singh, Indian-Canadian Talwinder Parmar and Wadhawa Singh were founding members of the group, which formed its first armed unit under Parmar in Canada in 1981. Four years later, he executed the Kanishka bombing, killing 329 people. After both Sukhdev and Parmar were killed in encounters with the Punjab Police in 1992, the leadership moved to Wadhawa and Mehal in Pakistan. The two plotted the assassination of then Punjab chief minister Beant Singh in August 1995.” (India Today (14 November 2011) *A History of Violence*)

A *Danish Immigration Service* report on a fact-finding mission to Punjab in 2000, in a section titled “The presence of militant Sikh groups and their relations with the local population” (section 6.2), states:

“Rajesh Chhabra, Department of Home Affairs and Justice, remarked that there were still breakaway groups from Babbar Khalsa which the police believed might resume activities. This was not a very large group – a maximum of two to three hundred active members, who were being trained in Pakistan. Chhabra would not dismiss the possibility that this group was now active in Punjab but if so its activities were not visible.” (Danish Immigration Service (1 May 2000) *Report on fact-finding mission to Punjab, India, 21 March to 5 April 2000*, p.17)

This report also states:

“Ravi Nair, South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, and Herkawaljit Singh, News Bureau Chief for the Daily Ajit, both believed that there still were militant Sikh groups in Punjab today. Herkawaljit Singh named three militant groups which were still active: Babbar Khalsa, the Khalistan Liberation Force

and the Khalistan Commando Force; Ravi Nair described Babbar Khalsa and the Khalistan Commando Force as the largest and most active groups. According to Nair and Herkawaljit Singh, these groups were currently operating from Pakistan and were financed by Sikhs who lived abroad – in the USA and Canada, as well as Germany and Belgium. Nowadays the groups did not have a political ideology as most of the hard core political leaders had either been imprisoned, been murdered in extrajudicial executions, or fled. Nair believed that these groups now consisted mainly of criminal elements, and he described the relationship between the Khalistan Commando Force and Babbar Khalsa as that of ‘two mafia bosses fighting amongst themselves’.” (ibid, pp.18-19)

A *South Asia Terrorism Portal* report on Punjab for 2010 states:

“The north-west Indian State of Punjab remained peaceful through 2009. This is the 16th consecutive year the State has remained relatively free of major political violence after the widespread terrorist-secessionist movement for ‘Khalistan’ was comprehensively defeated in 1993. Central intelligence sources, however, indicate that a concerted attempt to revive militancy in the State is under way. In February 2009, a joint meeting between militants of the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) chief Wadhawa Singh was held at Rawalpindi in Pakistan, where they planned terrorist attacks in Punjab during the Parliamentary elections held in the fourth and fifth phases on May 7 and May 13, 2009. Sources in the agencies said the Pakistan-based terrorist outfits had planned to take help of local BKI cadres for logistical support.” (South Asia Terrorism Portal (undated) *Punjab Assessment – Year 2010*)

An article published on the Indian news portal *Rediff News* states:

“Latest intelligence inputs suggest that the Babbar Khalsa International, which was active during the Punjab insurgency in the 1980s, has been using the Kashmir conflict to its advantage. ‘We have information that a number of persons who have been causing trouble in Kashmir are from this outfit,’ Intelligence Bureau sources told rediff.com, adding that the members of BKI have used the ongoing violence in the Valley to infiltrate into the country. ‘We have warned security agencies to keep a watch on these persons since it would get out of hand if they manage to infiltrate in large numbers,’ sources said. For Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence, the BKI is an elite wing and it has been guarding them for quite some time, which gives the indication that they want to use them for bigger operations in India. It is not a secret that the operatives of the BKI have been housed in Pakistan. IB reports state that there are at least 1,500 operatives of the BKI who have been undergoing training for quite some time now. They specialise in fidayeen strikes and hijacking, IB sources pointed out. IB sources also said that India must not take this threat lying down since this outfit is being groomed into being the next Indian Mujahideen. It is a known fact that the ISI has been trying to put an Indian face to terrorism, and they feel like the IM, the BKI could achieve their purpose.” (Rediff News (3 August 2010) *Babbar Khalsa: Another ISI terror salvo for India*)

A *Times of India* article states:

“Under pressure from their hosts to stage a ‘show’ in India, Khalistani terrorists in Pakistan - as well as some in Europe - have not been able to find more than local criminals as recruits in India as the ideological lure of the separatist movement has clearly faded. The latest Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) arrests reveal that one of those arrested in Patiala was a criminal who jumped parole while his two associates were also driven by the large sums of money offered rather than any commitment to cause that had kindled fires in Punjab. Sources said attempts to revive a dead movement have been made sporadically over the past four years.” (Times of India (28 March 2010) *Most Babbar Khalsa International men common criminals?*)

An *Indian Express* article states:

“International, the militant organisation that thrived in Punjab from the mid-1980s to the late '90s, was believed to be dying a slow death after the arrest of its key members in the late '90s. Now, a special cell of the Delhi police has seized five kilograms of explosives from a car at the parking lot outside Ambala railway station and said it was being transported by the BKI members for a terror strike in New Delhi. The internationally banned outfit had not carried out any major terror strikes over a decade except for two attacks on cinemas - in 2005 and 2007 - but investigating agencies say they had always been apprehending a revival. Police across the country have been arresting men they call BKI members, and have been recovering explosives and arms from them. These militants were supposedly being monitored by BKI chief Wadhawa Singh from Pakistan.” (Indian Express (17 October 2011) *Babbar Khalsa quieter but not quite silent*)

An *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* response to a request for information on the treatment of Sikhs in Punjab, in a paragraph headed “Treatment of Sikhs by Authorities”, quotes a representative of the World Sikh Organisation as follows:

“The WSO representative stated that the Punjab police frequently ‘announce the arrest of alleged members of Sikh separatist groups who they accuse of plotting terrorist attacks. Many of these cases languish in the courts for years before a decision is rendered’. According to the WSO representative, [s]ince 2005, hundreds of individuals have been arrested and detained as sympathizers or suspected members of Babbar Khalsa and other separatist groups. Arrests of suspected ‘Sikh terrorists’ take place regularly, not just in Punjab but across India.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2 May 2012) *India: Treatment of Sikhs in Punjab (2007-February 2012)* [IND103968.E])

A report published by the *Asian Centre for Human Rights*, in a section titled “Torture to extract confessions”, states:

“On 28 July 2010, Kulwant Singh was allegedly tortured in the custody of the Special Operation Cell (SOC) of Intelligence Wing of Punjab Police in Amritsar. He was arrested on the same day along with four other persons on the suspicion of being members of Babbar Khalsa group. Kulwant Singh was allegedly tortured and subjected to electric shocks on the ears and private parts during interrogation in custody. He had to be admitted in serious condition at Guru Nanak Dev Hospital (GNDH), Amritsar. Dr. Saurabh Dhanda of GNDH, stated that ‘There were electric shock injuries on his (the

victim's) ear and private parts. Kulwant's stomach also had injuries owing to severe beating with batons.” (Asian Centre for Human Rights (21 November 2011) *Torture In India 2011*, p.30)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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