

India Refuses to Abandon Russia. Blinken Lambasts New Delhi's Human Rights Record.

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With the US "menacing" New Delhi with sanction threats, as [Indian media](#) described it, Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar pushed back at criticism of his country's human rights record and was unapologetic for the purchase of the Russian-made S-400 missile defense system. India bought five S-400 systems from Russia as part of a \$5.5 billion deal that was signed in October 2018, but with the country establishing QUAD with the US, Australia and Japan to oppose China at sea, Washington seemingly believes that New Delhi's foreign policy is now under its control.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at a joint news conference on Monday said that the US is monitoring some recent "concerning developments in India, including a rise in human rights abuses by some government, police, and prison officials."

Although Blinken did not elaborate, the State Department released on Tuesday its annual country reports on human rights practices for 2021, and claimed that there were arbitrary arrest and detention by government authorities, torture and inhuman treatment by police and prison officials, and restrictions on internet freedom in India, among other issues. Despite the report passingly acknowledge that India has to deal with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir and its Northeastern states, as well as a Maoist insurgency, it does not do a deep dive into these issues.

According to [Ommcom News](#), Al-Qaeda are attempting to inflame sectarianism in South Asia by circulating a video that attempts to radicalize Muslims in India. The terrorist organization released a video of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri trying to whip up a sectarian frenzy among India's 200 million or so Muslims.

For their part, the Middle East Institute published a research paper by international terrorism analyst Asfandiyar Mir in 2020 which found that "[Al-Qaeda] devote substantial energy to highlighting alleged Indian excesses in Kashmir" and that the global terror group "may

consider using Afghanistan for its Kashmir plans, most likely independently, but maybe in tandem with Pakistan-aligned jihadist groups, like Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba.”

In effect, due to India being its own historical civilization with its own unique religious and ethnic demography of nearly 1.4 billion people, holding India to the same standards as Western liberal civilization will be an issue that will continue dividing the two. It is for this reason that Jaishankar said in response to Blinken’s provocations:

“Look, people are entitled to have views about us. But we are also equally entitled to have views about their views and about the interests, and the lobbies and the vote banks which drive that.”

“So, we take up human rights issues when they arise in this country, especially when they pertain to our community. And in fact, we had a case yesterday that’s really where we stand on that,” he added.

Blinken’s accusations against India come as two Sikh men were attacked on April 12 in New York in what police say could be a hate crime. The attack took place at the same intersection where 70-year-old Nirmal Singh, a Sikh tourist from India, was brutally beaten only last week.

“Sikhs have repeatedly faced this kind of violence — now multiple times in this same place in this month alone,” said Nikki Singh, a senior policy and advocacy manager at the Sikh Coalition. “As an organization that works to combat and prevent hate, we continue to stand with the Sikh community in Queens, as well as all impacted New York City communities who routinely experience these hate crimes.”

Sikh-Americans say they have faced “invisible” racism for years. This is undeniably true, especially when we recall that Balbir Singh Sodhi was the first person to be murdered in the US in a supposed “revenge attack” against Muslims for the infamous 9/11 terrorist attack. According to FBI data, there was a [68% increase in anti-Sikh hate crimes](#) from 2019 to 2020, most of them committed by White Americans.

“This targeted hate violence is not only deeply traumatizing to the individuals involved — it’s traumatizing to those entire communities,” Nikki Singh said. “We must keep fighting for justice to send the message that violent hate will not be tolerated.”

With unrelenting hate crimes aimed against Indian-Americans since the 9/11 attack, it is rather curious that Blinken is attempting to lambast India for its method of maintaining security for nearly 1.4 billion citizens despite the immense threat of terrorism. The US solemnly has to deal with direct terrorist attacks, but the single event of 9/11 was enough to enforce the highly repressive and controversial Patriot Act that allowed authorities greater rights and access to spy on their own citizens.

India on the other hand not only has a mammoth population, but the world’s third largest Muslim population, who despite being mostly integrated into the country, still has a minority of extremists that are backed by Pakistan. However, when we speak of a minority in a country like India, this still accounts for millions of individuals that are capable of causing terror across the country, as has happened far too often and much more frequently than the occasional attack that the US experiences.

It seemingly appeared that with India joining QUAD, its relations with the West would take

precedence over traditional partners like Russia. However, as the war in Ukraine demonstrated, India is not only unwilling to abandon Russia for the sake of appeasing the US, but cracks in the relationship are beginning to appear as Washington is increasingly domineering and demanding, something that New Delhi will certainly not tolerate as it [opposes neo-colonialism](#) given its own experience with the British Empire. Accusing India of human rights violations is a Pandora's box that the US may not want to open given their own atrocities that they are yet to be accounted for, something that India has been mostly quiet about but may no longer want to.

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*Featured image: Tony Blinken At His Confirmation Hearing, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jan. 19, 2021. Screenshot.
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