

Brief

Canada's Bill C-9 and Its Implications for Hindus and Khalistani Extremism

Published March 30, 2026
Publication No. 0345-30032026

First Session, Forty-fifth Parliament,
3-4 Charles III, 2025-2026

Première session, quarante-cinquième législature,
3-4 Charles III, 2025-2026

HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA

CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES DU CANADA

BILL C-9

PROJET DE LOI C-9

An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places)

Loi modifiant le Code criminel (propagande haineuse, crime haineux et accès à des lieux religieux ou culturels)

AS PASSED

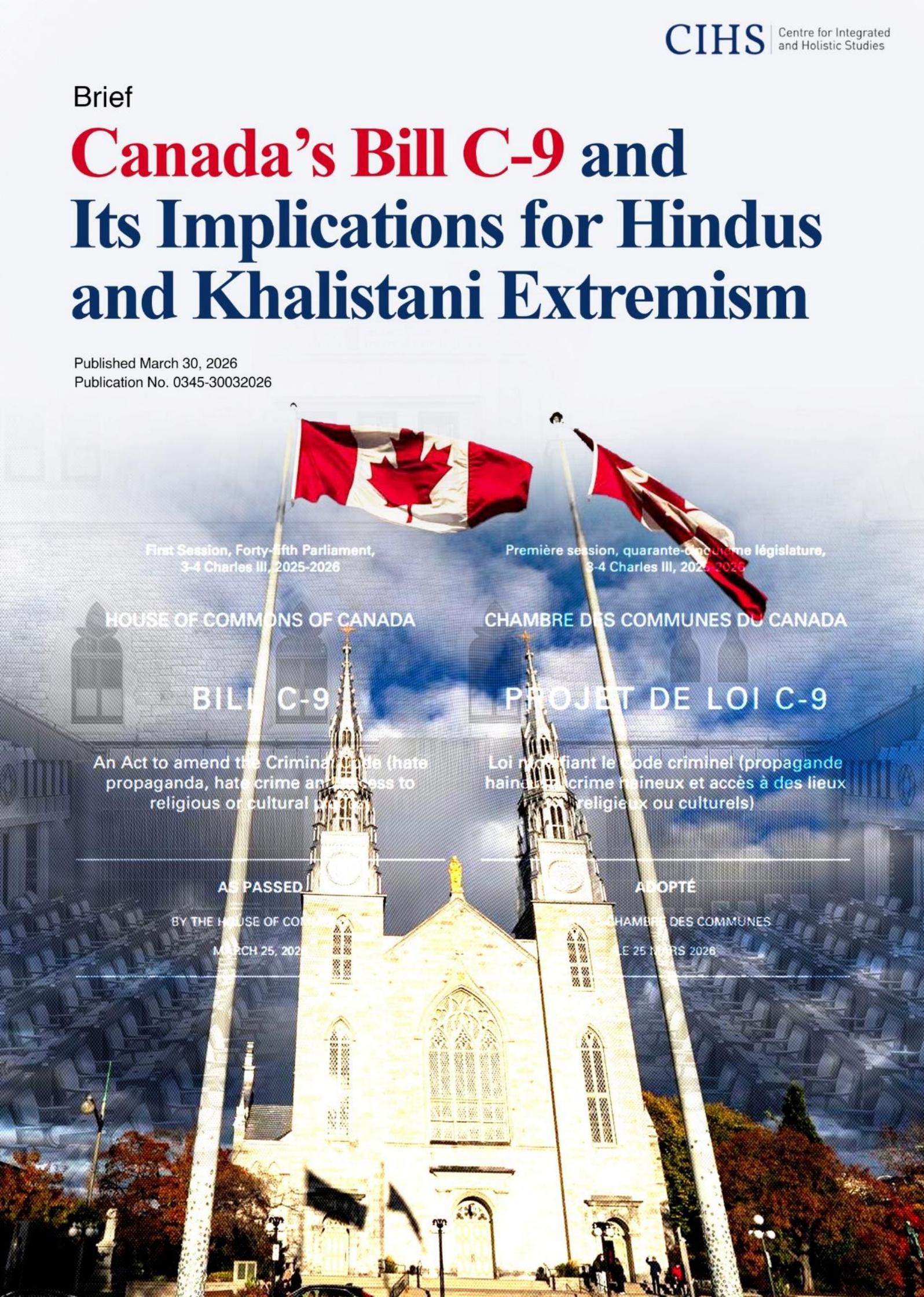
ADOPTÉ

BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES

MARCH 25, 2026

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Canada's Bill C-9 and Its Implications for Hindus and Khalistani Extremism

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Executive Summary

- A more robust legal framework to combat hate speech, extremist iconography and intimidation at places of worship is introduced by Canada's Bill C-9 (Combatting Hate Act). The rule was passed in response to growing worries about targeted animosity toward Hindu populations, temple destruction, and radicalisation of the diaspora.
- Bill C-9 makes three significant changes to Canada's criminal justice system:
 - **Criminalises Symbols Associated with Terror**
When used to incite hatred, the public display of insignia linked to terrorist or extremist organisations (such as those connected to Khalistan) is prohibited.
- **Strengthens Provisions Against Hate Crimes**
 - Defines more precise offenses and harsher punishments for crimes driven by identity, ethnicity or religion.
- **Safeguards places of worship.**
Makes it illegal to:
 - Intimidate people outside places of worship
 - Block access to schools, mosques, temples and gurdwaras.
- Hindu communities are increasingly dealing with:
 - Vandalism of temples with pro-Khalistan and anti-Hindu graffiti
 - Protests that are intimidating close to places of worship
 - Hate crimes against Hindu identity, both online and offline
- Bill C-9 offers a much-needed legal tool to deal with these trends by:
 - Preventing the public praise of radical actors
 - Making it possible to take action against harassment at temples
 - Making room for the prosecution of Hinduphobia
- Networks connected to Khalistan are immediately impacted by the law:
 - **Symbolic Crackdown:** When used to foment hatred, flags and images associated with organisations like Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) are scrutinised.
 - **Interrupting Intimidation Strategies:** Criminal responsibility now applies to protest tactics that involve harassment or obstruction at places of worship.
 - **Narrative Shift:** Khalistan extremism shifts from a "free speech shield" into the realm of criminal prosecution, especially when it is connected to coercion or hatred.

- Key prospects
 - Strengthened Protection: Hindu temples and community institutions are better protected.
 - Deterrence Effect: Extremist propaganda is less visible
 - Legal Clarity: Enables law enforcement to combat mobilisations motivated by hatred

- Risks
 - Enforcement Deficit: Consistent policing and prosecution are necessary for effectiveness.
 - Challenges to Free Speech: Possible legal resistance could weaken application
 - Selective Application Risk: Impact on organised extremist networks may be limited by inconsistent interpretation

- India's Strategic Consequences
 - Diplomatic Engagement: A chance to put pressure on Canada to take more aggressive measures against Khalistani extremism
 - Diaspora Security: A legal foundation for calling for the defense of Hindu institutions and communities
 - Narrative Alignment: Supports India's stance that radical separatist overseas is a security issue rather than just a form of political expression.

- Bill C-9 represents a major change in the law that could:
 - Protect Hindu communities from hate crimes.
 - Limit the use of forced mobilization and extremist symbolism
 - Reframe extremism in the diaspora as a problem for law enforcement.

However, political will and enforcement credibility will determine its actual impact.

Context

With the enactment of Bill C-9 (Combatting Hate Act), Canada's legislative stance on hate speech, extremist iconography and religious space protection underwent an important change. The law establishes penalties for intimidation at religious institutions motivated by hatred and makes it illegal to publicly display insignia associated with terrorist groups.



The law is both a chance for legal protection and a test of the legitimacy of enforcement for Canada's Hindu minority, which is dealing with an increase in

temple destruction, intimidation, and hate speech related to Khalistan.

The rule was passed in response to growing worries about targeted animosity toward Hindu populations, temple destruction, and radicalization of the diaspora.

What is Bill C-9? Key Provisions

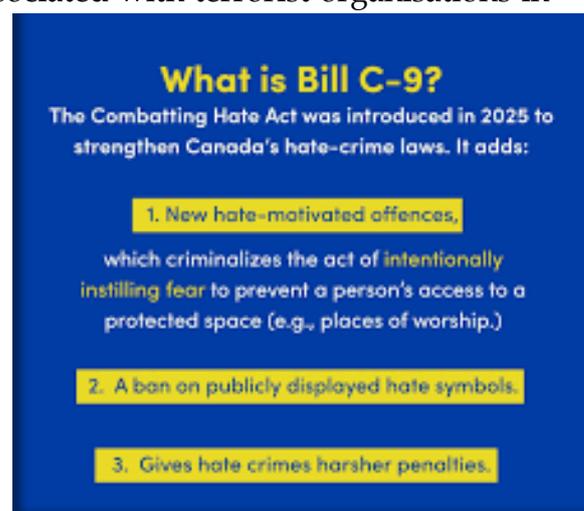
The Canadian House of Commons introduced Bill C-9, the "Combatting Hate Act," in March 2026 with three crucial pillars. This important addition to the Criminal Code aims to strengthen legal powers against hate crimes, hate propaganda, and intimidation targeting religious and cultural communities.

a) Criminalisation of Hate Symbols:

- It is now illegal to display emblems associated with terrorist organisations in public.
- Contains emblems linked to listed organisations (such as extremist groups).

b) New Framework for Hate Crimes:

- Creates a new offense for crimes driven by hatred (religion, ethnicity, etc.). This makes any crime motivated by hatred a distinct offense that can be punished as a specific hate crime.
- Permits harsher punishments based on the severity.



What is Bill C-9?
The Combatting Hate Act was introduced in 2025 to strengthen Canada's hate-crime laws. It adds:

1. New hate-motivated offences, which criminalizes the act of intentionally instilling fear to prevent a person's access to a protected space (e.g., places of worship.)
2. A ban on publicly displayed hate symbols.
3. Gives hate crimes harsher penalties.

C-9 Bill - Key Provisions

c) Safeguarding Religious Sites:

- Creates new offenses for "intimidation" to prevent individuals from entering places of worship or public areas.
- Criminalises:
 - Intimidation outside places of worship illegal
 - Preventing entry to schools, gurdwaras, and temples

This is especially relevant for diaspora tensions where religious institutions have been the subject of protests.

Rising Hinduphobia in Canada

A concerning pattern of targeted hostility against the Hindu community has emerged in Canada over the past few years, characterised by persistent online and physical intimidation of community leaders, frequent vandalism of temples with pro-Khalistan and anti-India graffiti and threatening protests outside places of worship. Graffiti that both directly targets Hindu identity and honours extremist personalities has been seen in documented occurrences, such as the vandalism of temples in Brampton, Windsor and Edmonton. The seriousness of the situation is further highlighted by recent reporting, which highlights incidents of violent protests at temples and overt threats made by extremist groups, raising grave worries about the safety, security and religious freedom of Hindus in Canada.



Temple Vandalism

This pattern, which is frequently associated with diaspora extremism, shows a change from isolated hate crimes to organised ideological intimidation.

Khalistani Extremism:

By establishing a more distinct legal line between protected communication and incitement or intimidation, Bill C-9 has important ramifications for radicalism associated with Khalistan. The law directly addresses the public exaltation of those involved in the bombing of Air India Flight 182 and the dissemination of radical propaganda at demonstrations by making it illegal to use symbols and flags associated



with prohibited organisations like Babbar Khalsa International and International Sikh Youth Federation when used to incite hatred. Additionally, it makes it illegal to harass or block devotees outside of temples and gurdwaras, which is a practice frequently employed in diaspora-based radical mobilisation.

This increases action against intimidation tactics. Importantly, the bill marks a more significant change in the narrative, taking Khalistan extremism out of the so-called "free speech grey zone" and firmly placing it under criminal liability when it turns into hate speech, incitement or compulsion.



Khalistani Extremism

What the Bill Can Do for Hindus

By creating a clear legal shield for temples against protests, intimidation and obstruction, Bill C-9 offers vulnerable communities a comprehensive protective framework. It also introduces deterrence against extremist symbolism through criminal penalties that limit the open display of violent separatist imagery. Crucially, it makes room for Hinduphobia to be officially recognised, making it easier to identify and prosecute anti-Hindu hate. Simultaneously, the Act reinforces community security and the rule of law by strengthening the mission of law enforcement organisations and giving them clearer ability to intervene proactively, before situations develop into violence.

Key Limitations and Risks

Despite its good intentions, Bill C-9 has significant operational issues that may limit its practical application. The rule may remain mostly symbolic in the absence of proactive and regular police, since Canada has long been criticised for its lax enforcement against extremist networks. Hostility parties and civil rights organisations, on the other hand, caution against possible overreach, claiming that enlarged hate laws could lead to hostility to free expression and spark discussions about uneven or selective enforcement. This is made worse by the possibility of narrow interpretation; if authorities are reluctant to label some Khalistani mobilisation as "hatred," enforcement may continue to be uneven, undermining both deterrence and public trust in the efficacy of the law.

Strategic Implications for India

By using Bill C-9 to fight for the official acknowledgment of Khalistani extremism as a serious security problem and to ensure severe enforcement against terror-linked symbolism, India has a window of strategic opportunity to recalibrate its engagement with Canada. Additionally, it gives India a stronger legal foundation to demand better safety for Hindu institutions and more vigilant oversight of extremist networks working overseas, strengthening India's position in promoting diaspora security. Importantly, the law upholds a more comprehensive narrative shift consistent with India's long-standing stance that Khalistan-related activities in the diaspora must be understood in the context of extremism, intimidation and transnational security concerns rather than just as political expression.

Concluding Observations

By providing Hindus with long-needed legal protection against targeted hatred and establishing a clearer road to address Hinduphobia and recurring temple attacks, Bill C-9 represents a structural shift in Canada's approach to hate and extremism. It also marks a significant shift in the way Khalistani extremism is viewed, from one of relative tolerance to one of regulation, especially with regard to the employment of intimidating techniques and inflammatory symbolism. However, political will, uniform policing and fair judicial interpretation will determine the law's actual impact. Bill C-9 has the potential to reduce extremist messaging, improve Hindu community security and redefine diaspora-linked extremism as a question of legal accountability rather than merely political speech if it is implemented firmly and without selective application.

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