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Texte au verso

Trudeau rejects retaliation as India moves to expel Canadian diplomats

By Ian Austen

The New York Times, Oct. 3, 2023

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada said on Tuesday that his country was in talks with India over its latest demand that dozens of Canadian diplomats leave within a week.

The demand represents a further escalation of tensions between the two countries, which have been clashing since Mr. Trudeau's assertion last month that India had played a role in the killing of a Canadian Sikh activist in British Columbia.

Neither Mr. Trudeau, who spoke briefly to reporters on this way into a cabinet meeting, nor Mélanie Joly, Canada's foreign minister, discussed the specifics of India's demand or confirmed the number designated for expulsion. Both said they wanted to avoid further inflaming the rhetorical and political battle between the two countries.

"We're not looking to escalate, as I've said, we're going to be doing the work that matters in continuing to have constructive relations with India," Mr. Trudeau said, adding: "We're going through an extremely challenging time with India right now. But that's why it's so important for us to have diplomats on the ground working with the Indian government there to support Canadians and Canadian families. We're taking this extremely seriously and we're going to continue to engage responsibly and constructively."

Canada expelled the head of India's security service in Canada when Mr. Trudeau said that India was involved in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside a Sikh temple in Surrey, British Columbia, where he was the president. India swiftly followed suit by ordering a Canadian diplomat home. India also suspended visa applications by Canadian nationals, further increasing diplomatic tensions.

While the Indian government has vociferously rejected Canada's allegation, Mr. Trudeau and his officials have carefully chosen their words during the dispute. Canada's approach appears to be an effort not to undermine President Biden who has devoted much time and energy to courting Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India. For the United States, India is seen as perhaps the most important of the so-called global south states that it is wooing in its geopolitical contest with Moscow and Beijing.