

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 20, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write in advance of your meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his upcoming visit to the United States. As the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy, the United States and India have forged a close relationship based on strategic interests and shared democratic values. India is an important member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the "Quad") and a crucial partner for stability in the Indo-Pacific. We support the trip Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin took to New Delhi earlier this month to finalize a "Roadmap for U.S.-India Defense Industrial Cooperation," deepening our strategic partnership. Trade and investment between the United States and India continue to grow, and there is an opportunity to greatly expand our economic ties. We welcome India's potential increased role in supporting secure supply chains for critical sectors such as semiconductors and pharmaceuticals. And robust cultural engagement lies at the heart of our friendship, underscored by the immense contributions of the Indian-American diaspora community in the United States, many of whom also still have close and extended family living in India. We trust and expect that these important dimensions of the U.S.-India partnership — strategic, economic and cultural — will be part of your discussion when you meet directly with Prime Minister Modi.

As longtime supporters of a strong U.S.-India relationship, we also believe that friends can and should discuss their differences in an honest and forthright way. That is why we respectfully request that — in addition to the many areas of shared interests between India and the U.S. — you also raise directly with Prime Minister Modi areas of concern.

You have rightly said that America must "lead not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example." You have once again made respect for human rights, press freedom, religious freedom, and pluralism core tenets of American foreign policy. Moreover, these tenets are necessary to the functioning of true democracy. In order to advance these values with credibility on the world stage, we must apply them equally to friend and foe alike, just as we work to apply these same principles here in the United States.

A series of independent, credible reports reflect troubling signs in India toward the shrinking of political space, the rise of religious intolerance, the targeting of civil society organizations and journalists, and growing restrictions on press freedoms and internet access. Specifically, the State Department's 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in India documents the tightening of political rights and expression.¹ Similarly, the State Department's 2022 Report on

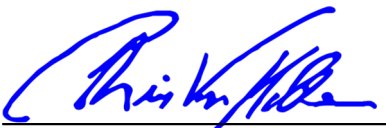
¹ U.S. Dep't of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/india>.

International Religious Freedom in India details the worrisome increase of religious intolerance toward minorities and religiously motivated violence by both private and state actors.² Further, the annual assessments compiled by Reporters Without Borders show that India, a country that has been known in the past for its vibrant and independent press, has fallen significantly in the rankings for press freedom.³ And according to Access Now, India ranks first in terms of the most internet shutdowns for the fifth year in a row.⁴

Both the United States and India enshrined human rights—including free speech, freedom of the press, and religious freedom—in our constitutions. And we share a special bond through moral leaders who shaped our histories. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, who gave his life in pursuit of building the beloved community here in the United States, was an ardent student of the teachings of the Mahatma Gandhi, known in India as the “Father of the Nation.” Both King and Gandhi had the vision of building a more perfect union among people from different backgrounds, races and faiths — Gandhi in India, and King in the United States. We share their vision.

We join you in welcoming Prime Minister Modi to the United States. We want a close and warm relationship between the people of the United States and the people of India. We want that friendship to be built not only on our many shared interests but also on shared values. We do not endorse any particular Indian leader or political party — that is the decision of the people of India — but we do stand in support of the important principles that should be a core part of American foreign policy. And we ask that, during your meeting with Prime Minister Modi, you discuss the full range of issues important to a successful, strong, and long-term relationship between our two great countries.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

² U.S. Dep’t of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: India*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/india>.

³ Reporters Without Borders, “World Press Freedom Index 2023,” <https://rsf.org/en/index>.

⁴ Zach Rosson, Felicia Anthonio & Carolyn Tackett, *Weapons of Control, Shields of Impunity: Internet shutdowns in 2022*, ACCESS NOW (Feb. 2023) <https://www.accessnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022-KIO-Report-final.pdf>.



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



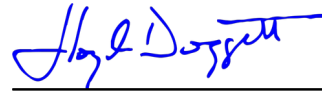
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



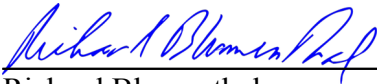
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



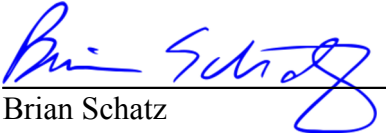
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

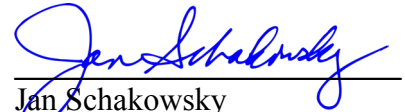


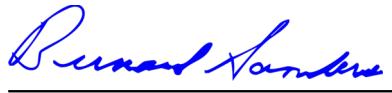
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

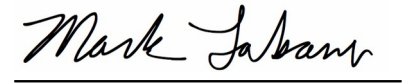


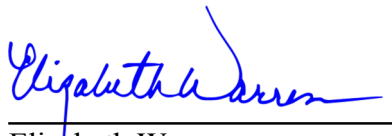
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

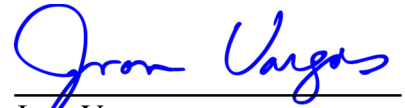

Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

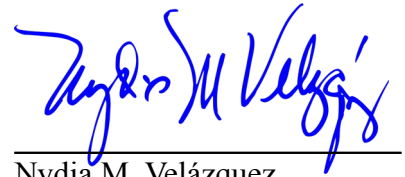

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Mark Takano
Member of Congress

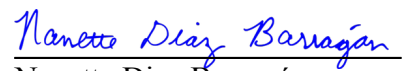

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

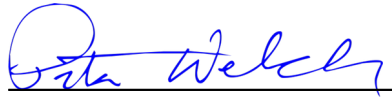

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress


Tim Kaine
United States Senator

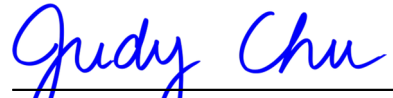

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress


Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator


Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
United States Senator



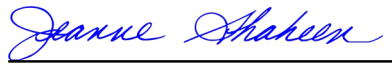
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



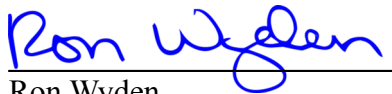
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



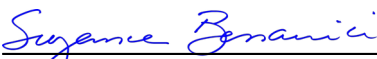
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



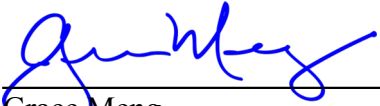
JIM TOKUDA
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



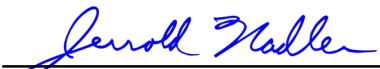
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



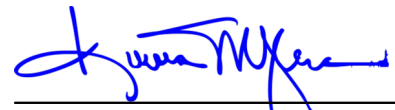
Ferrol Nadler
Member of Congress



David J. Trone
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



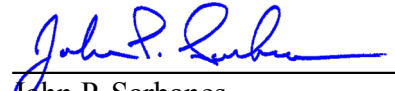
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



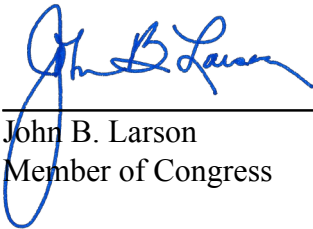
John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

André Carson


André Carson
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



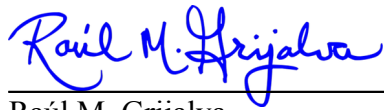
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress




Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



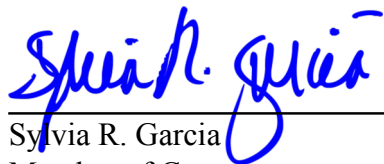
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



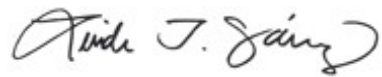
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



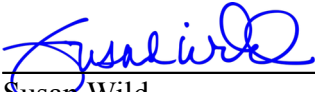
Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress