

# 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.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the State Department's 2022 Report on

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> And according to Access Now, India ranks first in terms of the most internet shutdowns for the fifth year in a row.<sup>4</sup>

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

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<sup>2</sup> 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>.

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

<sup>4</sup> 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>.



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



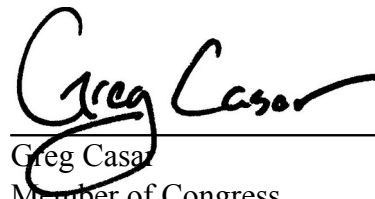
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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



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Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



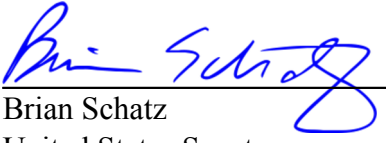
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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



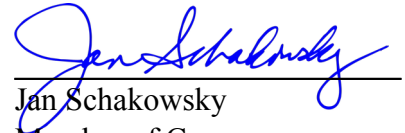
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



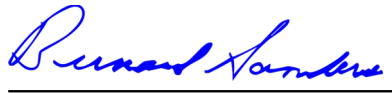
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Brian Schatz  
United States Senator




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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



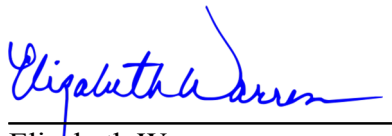
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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



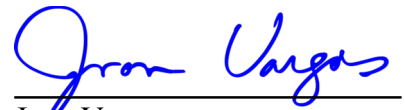
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Mark Takano  
Member of Congress




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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



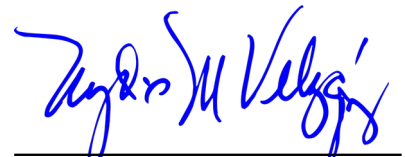
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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress




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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



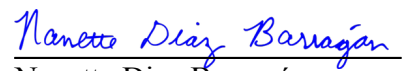
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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

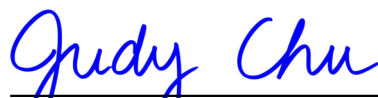


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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



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



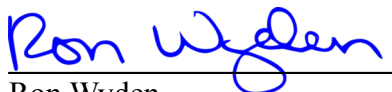
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



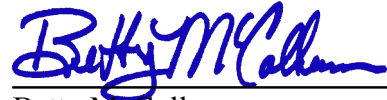
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Maxwell Alejandro Frost  
Member of Congress



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Al Green  
Member of Congress



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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



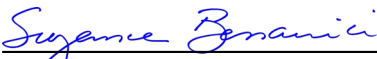
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



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JIM Tokuda  
Member of Congress



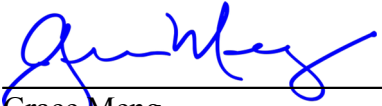
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Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



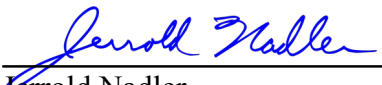
Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress



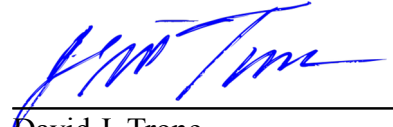
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



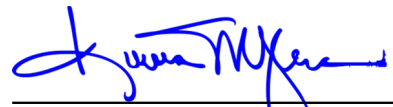
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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



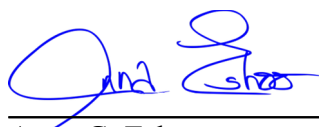
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Mike Levin  
Member of Congress



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John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress



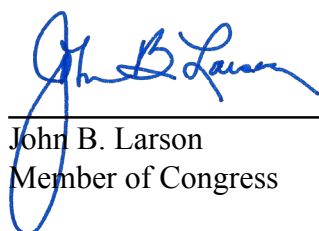
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Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



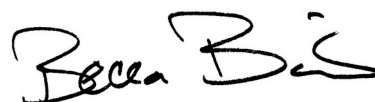
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André Carson  
Member of Congress



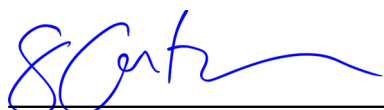
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John B. Larson  
Member of Congress



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Becca Balint  
Member of Congress



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Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



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Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress



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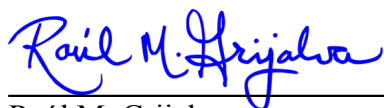
Elissa Slotkin  
Member of Congress



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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress





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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



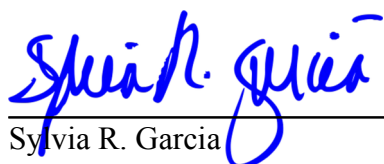
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Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



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Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



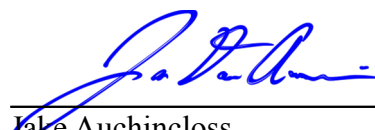
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Valerie P. Foushee  
Member of Congress



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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress




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Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress



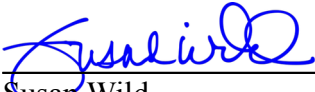
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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



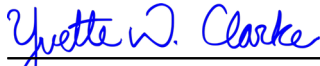
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Susan Wild  
Member of Congress



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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress