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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

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May 13, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

As you know, the bilateral relationship with the United States and India is one of our strongest and deepest – one that is based on a shared democracy and enriched by multiethnic diversity. In the spirit of upholding the unique relationship between our two nations, I write to urge you to include religious freedom and human rights in your continued U.S.-India Strategic Dialogues.

President Obama has called our partnership with India a “defining partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” Currently, India is undertaking the largest democratic exercise in human history – an exciting and incredible feat. A firm and collaborative relationship between the world’s oldest democracy and the world’s most populous democracy is imperative amidst the much-discussed “Asia rebalance.”

India’s plurality of faiths is matched by its complexity of history and society, much like ours. Despite India’s rich diversity of religions, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s 2014 Annual Report notes that “in the past year, reports of incidents of communal and religiously-motivated violence in India increased.” Despite the positive steps to improve religious freedom, including increasing budgets for governmental bodies that provide financial support for minority groups and programs to bolster their economic and educational opportunities, periodic outbreaks of large-scale communal violence continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable religious minorities in India; especially impacting women and girls.

I urge you and your diplomatic staff to reinforce human rights and religious freedoms through increased attention and dialogue. Doing so will further the already productive working groups. In addition, this will enhance regional and global security, as well as strengthen the institutional and human capacity to ensure peace and security. After all, persecution of any group based on their religion or ethnicity has no place in our global society.

I applaud your efforts to reinforce the U.S.-India partnership across the more than 30 diplomatic working groups. Our two nations must come together to protect religious freedom and diversity, even as we continue to work on other regional and global priorities such as national security, health disparities, hunger, energy, and education. As the Representative of Silicon Valley, I have seen firsthand the spirit and innovation of the people-to-people relationship between our two countries. I want to ensure that the international dialogue comprehensively addresses protections of human rights and religious freedom everywhere so that our relationships can grow further and lead on the global stage.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL M. HONDA  
Member of Congress