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CALIFORNIA, 3RD DISTRICT

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December 4, 2020

Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu
Embassy of India to the United States
2107 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, D.C., 20008

Dear Ambassador Sandhu,

We write to you regarding the ongoing protests in India surrounding the passage of agricultural reform bills. While governments certainly have the purview to set their own internal agricultural policies, we are deeply concerned about the response to these protests by the Indian government, which has reportedly suppressed the protesting farmers' right to assemble in peaceful protest.

Hundreds of thousands of farmers from the states of Punjab and Haryana that have made their way to New Delhi to peacefully protest these new agricultural laws, and the Indian government has met these peaceful protestors with tear gas, water cannons, barricades, baton attacks, and more. Many of these farmers have children, relatives, and friends who are U.S. citizens, many of whom have reached out to us to share their concerns about these developments.

A respect for the rights of freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and a thriving civil society are core components of a functioning democracy. We have been distressed this year to see actions by the Indian government that have restricted these rights for many Indians; not only for farmers, but also for religious minorities, and human rights organizations.

The U.S.-India relationship has been deeply important for both countries for decades, and this partnership is particularly vital now in the context of growing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region. Our strong bilateral relationship is based not only on shared interests, but also on what we hope are shared democratic values.

We must acknowledge that we have also struggled at times in the United States to live up to the ideals of a just, democratic society, but we continue to strive toward it. As partners and friends, we must encourage one another to continue striving toward those ideals.

We urge the Indian government to demonstrate its respect for these crucial democratic freedoms, and to be a model of democratic values in the vital Indo-Pacific region.

Sincerely,

JOHN GARAMENDI
CALIFORNIA, 3RD DISTRICT

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/s/
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