

**Remarks of David N. Cicilline**  
**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing**  
**on**  
**“Jammu and Kashmir in Context”**

Thank you to the Co-Chairs for calling this hearing and to the witnesses on both panels for being here today.

I have been following the situation inside Jammu and Kashmir closely since the August 5<sup>th</sup> decision to revoke article 370 of the Indian Constitution, changing the status of the formerly semi-autonomous states of Jammu and Kashmir.

The accompanying actions included mass arbitrary detention, including of local political leaders, imposing curfews, restricting access to telephone and internet, and restricting the ability of citizens to peacefully protest or organize. I have heard from my own constituents that their families back in Kashmir have been subject to violence by Indian police for attempting to engage in peaceful political protest, and there have been widespread stories about how the lack of food, medicine, and telecommunications have led to avoidable deaths of people within Jammu and Kashmir.

I am also concerned about the religious motives that seem to be at play here, with the majority BJP party couching this move as a return to Hindu nationalism in India, and of course we are speaking of provinces that are majority Muslim and which include many religious and ethnic minorities.

I have raised these concerns directly with the Government of India, and last month I sent a letter along with you, Chairman McGovern, and 5 of our colleagues, asking the Indian Ambassador here in DC to respond to some specific questions. I ask for unanimous consent to enter this letter into the record.

I am quite concerned that the Indian Government, which is an important partner to the United States, seems unconcerned by the stories emerging from Jammu and Kashmir and that they seem willing to take decidedly undemocratic steps in order to achieve their political goals.

The relationship between our two countries is based on a foundation of mutual respect for democracy and human rights and these actions seem to fly in the face of those values.

I look forward to the testimony today and I yield back.