

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2006

The Honorable Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India
New Delhi, India

Dear Prime Minister Singh:

We are writing to express our support for the *New Delhi Padyatra*, a march on foot by the people of Bhopal, victims of the world's worst industrial disaster in 1984 when toxic gases escaped from a Union Carbide factory. The march, which began on February 20, 2006 and goes from Bhopal to New Delhi, is the largest and most important action ever organized by the Bhopal campaign. We urge you to personally meet the marchers upon their arrival in New Delhi and address their long-standing demands for justice and a life of dignity.

As you know, on the night of December 2, 1984, 27 tons of poisonous gas, including methyl isocyanate, leaked from a storage tank at the Union Carbide Corporation's pesticide plant in Bhopal and quickly spread to the surrounding residential areas. Official estimates indicate a death toll of 3,000 lives in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, with unofficial estimates putting the toll much higher at 8,000. To date, the death toll has climbed to more than 20,000.

Although it has been more than 20 years since the disaster, approximately 10-30 people continue to die every month in Bhopal from toxic exposure and another 150,000 people suffer long-term health consequences. The effects of the toxic gases also appear to be harming the next generation, as overwhelming evidence is surfacing that points to a higher incidence of health effects and birth defects among children born to gas-affected people.

The disaster raises fundamental questions about government and corporate responsibility. Survivors are still waiting for appropriate compensation and adequate medical assistance and treatment. Despite a May 2004 order from the Supreme Court of India that clean drinking water should be supplied immediately, more than 20,000 people in Bhopal are forced to consume water known to be laced with poisons seeping out of Union Carbide's toxic wastes in and around the infamous factory. The plant site has not been cleaned up, and toxic waste continues to pollute the environment and contaminate drinking supplies in the area.

More over, no one has been held accountable for the leak and its after-effects. It is outrageous that the CEOs of Union Carbide and its successor, Dow Chemical, have yet to be brought to justice. Survivors have made continuous demands through both protest and litigation, but it has had little effect. It is disappointing that the Indian Government has been reticent to pursue Union Carbide and Dow Chemical for their civil and criminal liabilities in the country.

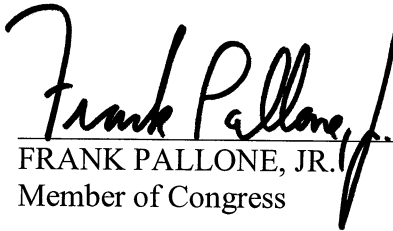
The conduct of American corporations outside the US is a long-standing concern of ours, especially with regards to environmental protection standards. The US-run Union Carbide built a poorly designed pesticide plant that poisoned local water, and therefore should be held

accountable for these crimes and their disregard of basic human rights. Such issues involving the lack of environmental protection caused abroad by American corporations are increasingly before US courts either because foreign jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to adjudicate those claims or where, as in this case, US corporations have refused to submit to the jurisdiction of foreign courts. As such, there are existing civil cases for the clean up of the contaminated plant sites that are pending in the US. Although these cases may be alleged by some as interference of a foreign government, the gravity of the arguments being asserted by the defendants of these cases is significant.


After all this time, it is difficult to understand why so few steps have been taken to alleviate the suffering of the Bhopal survivors. The Indian Government has repeatedly said that justice will be served, but has exemplified no commitment to this end. At a time when a new generation of victims is surfacing among children born to gas-affected parents and those exposed to contaminated drinking water, the Government must take care of those affected by this horrific tragedy. In addition, they must hold Union Carbide and its parent company Dow Chemical responsible for the disaster.


We support the Bhopalis in their epic march and urge you to meet with the group in order to address their enduring demands. Thank you for your consideration and commitment. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress

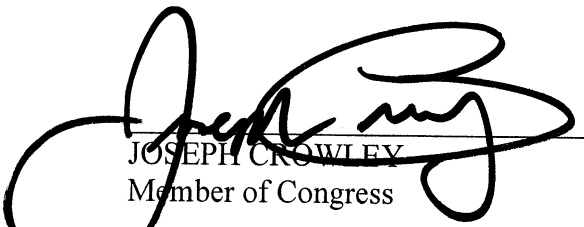

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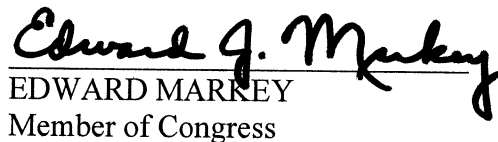
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CAROLYN KILPATRICK

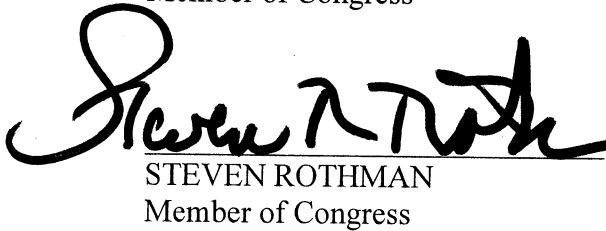
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PATRICK KENNEDY

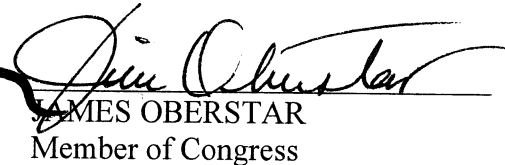
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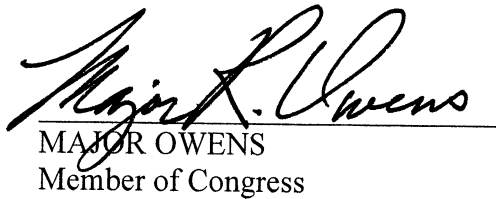
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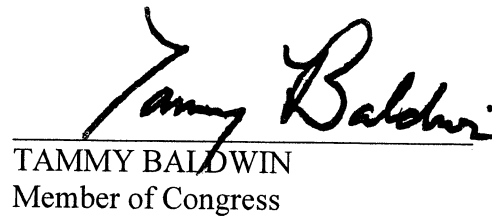
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cc: Embassy of India to the United States, Washington, DC