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Honorable Chair, Ranking Member, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Intro:

For many of us, this resolution—and this very moment—holds profound meaning. It offers a rare and powerful opportunity to share the painful truth of what happened to our community in the early 1990s, and to appeal to your conscience in our collective pursuit of justice and healing.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Kingdom of Bhutan—nestled between China to the north and India on its other borders—entered one of the darkest chapters of its history. During this time, widespread and systematic human rights violations were committed, primarily targeting the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese population, known as the Lhotshampas. Other ethnic groups were also affected—especially those who stood for justice, human rights, and democratic values.

In 1990, I was just 11 years old. I knew little of politics—only the peace of my village. My family had land, a home built with care, and fields nourished by the labor of our own hands. We grew what we needed. We were not involved in any political movement. We lived simply, quietly, and with deep love for our country.

But everything changed when news spread that the Bhutanese army was coming. Neighbors were taken in the night—arrested, tortured. Some never returned. Stories of deaths in prison reached us like cold whispers, and fear began to fill every corner of our lives. Schools shut down. The silence in our village became heavy with dread. We were terrified. Suddenly, our homeland felt like a place where we no longer belonged.

At the root of this injustice was fear—fear of difference. The Bhutanese government saw our culture, language, and religion as a threat. In 1985, they amended the citizenship law, making it nearly impossible for people like us to prove we belonged. Then in 1988, a census was conducted only in the southern districts where most Lhotshampas lived. Its true purpose was not documentation—it was exclusion.

The census divided families into seven categories—from “genuine” citizens to so-called “illegal immigrants.” Many of us who had lived in Bhutan for generations became stateless overnight—even while holding official citizenship cards. The only accepted proof of citizenship was a land tax receipt from 1958—something most of us never had or were never given. The message was clear: we were no longer wanted.

Under the policy of "One Nation, One People," the government enforced cultural assimilation—banning our language, our dress, our religion. What followed was a wave of repression: arrests, torture, disappearances, and eventually the mass expulsion of over 100,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanese.

To this day, the Bhutanese government has refused to acknowledge or address these grave injustices. Thousands remain denied the right to return home or reclaim their citizenship.

After many years in refugee camps in Nepal, the United States offered us hope through the Third-Country Resettlement Program. Nearly 100,000 of us were welcomed here with dignity and compassion. We are deeply grateful to be part of your communities—as neighbors, workers, and proud Americans.

Yet about 7,000 Bhutanese refugees still remain in camps, waiting—hoping—to return to the land of their ancestors. They continue to dream of home.

While we remain thankful for the opportunity to rebuild our lives, we respectfully ask the United States to use its global leadership to help resolve this ongoing crisis. Your moral voice can encourage the government of Bhutan to recognize the suffering it caused, restore citizenship to those wrongfully stripped of it, release political prisoners, and allow Bhutanese Americans to visit their homeland and reunite with loved ones.

I urge this distinguished committee to support this resolution. As the saying goes, *“Justice delayed is justice denied.”*

We have waited 35 years—to see our parents again, to attend the funerals of our brothers and sisters, to return to the soil that raised us. We never got that chance.

But you can help make it possible. I believe in your leadership. And I still believe in justice.