

Dhan Dhital Lamitare
Columbus, Ohio

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kumari Dhital Lamitare. I am the proud mother of two kids and RN/ BSN by profession. I am very proud to say that I belong to the Bhutanese Nepali community, and I call Ohio my home.

My grandfather, Devi Bhakta Lamitare, was an early political activist with the Bhutan State Congress in the 1950s. He faced threats of imprisonment and ultimately fled Bhutan. He lived in exile in India for the rest of his life and passed away in 2022, never having been able to reunite with his family.

Government officials frequently visited our home in Chirang district, harassed us, and interrogated our family members daily. In 1991, the Bhutan army raided our home, looking for my father, Shiva Adhikari. Although he was ill and bedridden, they dragged him outside, took him to a military camp, and tortured him for five days. The only questions they asked were related to his supposed support for democracy and his relation to my uncle.

He was eventually released after signing a voluntary migration form. He did this under government pressure to save his and his family's life.

Our family was given 15 days to leave our homeland. That is how we ended up in a refugee camp in Nepal, where we lived for two decades.

We were among the lucky ones who found a new beginning through the U.S. third-country resettlement program. We are forever grateful to the U.S. government and the American people for their generosity and compassion.

Today, I am here to urge you to pass this resolution. We seek the U.S. government's support to establish a peaceful dialogue with Bhutan—one that will help reunite families, allow the repatriation of over 6,000 Bhutanese refugees still in Nepal, and secure the release of political prisoners who have been unjustly detained for over 30 years.

Because of my family's political history, I continue participating in community events and engaging politically where needed in my hometown.

While in Bhutan, we were persecuted and could not use our family name, "Lamitare," which simply refers to people from the plains. But in America, we live without fear.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. Let justice and peace finally be restored for the Bhutanese people.

And I ask your votes to pass this resolution.