As Introduced

136th General Assembly
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S. R. No. 69

Senator Reynolds

A R E S O L U T I O N

To recognize the Kingdom of Bhutan as responsible for the oppression and forced eviction of more than 120,000 Bhutanese citizens during the late 1980s and 1990s.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

WHEREAS, The Kingdom of Bhutan was responsible for the oppression and forced displacement of more than 120,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanese citizens, Sharchops, and other minorities in the 1980s and 1990s due to their identity, culture, language, religion, and political opinion; and

WHEREAS, Several individuals of these communities were subjected to unjust detention, violence, and human rights abuse and torture; and

WHEREAS, Thirty-two identified political prisoners continue to be held in Bhutanese prisons in indefinite incarceration; and

WHEREAS, Persecuted Bhutanese were forced to cross into Nepal, where more than 100,000 remained for nearly two decades in refugee camps; and

WHEREAS, 6,500 Bhutanese refugees remain in refugee camps in Nepal, and the Royal Government of Bhutan continues to deny dignified repatriation to those who desire it; and

WHEREAS, The remaining Bhutanese refugees in Nepal continue

to endure severe challenges in accessing adequate health care, quality education, and sustainable employment opportunities, which hinders their ability to rebuild their lives with dignity and security; and

WHEREAS, More than 250,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanese and other minorities still inside Bhutan suffer political, social, and economic oppression, while the government of Bhutan has continuously refused to reinstate the citizenships that were stripped during the 1990s; and

WHEREAS, Such incidences of human rights violations and abuses and acts of violence perpetrated by any individual actor or state should be condemned; and

WHEREAS, The Bhutanese citizens who were refugees in Nepal have now resettled in other countries, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States; and

WHEREAS, Although Bhutan and the United States have not established diplomatic relations, the two countries maintain warm and productive unofficial ties; and

WHEREAS, The Kingdom of Bhutan transitioned to democracy in 2008 and has held successive elections and transitions of power since that time; and

WHEREAS, The Kingdom of Bhutan has been a leader in the global fight against climate change and is the only carbon-negative country; and

WHEREAS, The Kingdom of Bhutan has stood with the United States and other like-minded countries in the area of common international concerns; and

WHEREAS, the Kingdom of Bhutan is a close Indo-Pacific partner of the United States and committed to upholding the rules-based international order; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we, the members of the Ohio Senate of the 136th General Assembly, urge the Congress of the United States to declare that the Royal Government of Bhutan is responsible for the political, cultural, and ethnic oppression of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese, Sharchops, and other minorities in Bhutan during the late 1980s and 1990s; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge the Congress of the United States to urge the Royal Government of Bhutan to conduct a rapid and unconditional release of all political prisoners, with due reparations and restitution; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge the Congress of the United States to, in a spirit of friendship, urge the Royal Government of Bhutan to resume discussions with the governments of Nepal and India on the status of the Bhutanese Refugee in Nepal who asserts a claim to Bhutanese citizenship; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge the Congress of the United States to request the Royal Government of Bhutan to restore citizenship of all those whose citizenship was arbitrarily revoked in the 1980s and 1990s; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge the Congress of the United States to request the Royal Government of Bhutan to accept and facilitate the voluntary repatriation of its displaced citizens from refugee camps in Nepal, ensuring their safe and dignified return; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge the Congress of the United States to urge the Royal Government of Bhutan to engage in a comprehensive peacebuilding and reconciliation process by establishing an independent truth commission to investigate human rights violations and abuses committed during the 1990s, publicly disclose its findings, and implement its recommendations to prevent future oppression; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we recognize that over 55,000 Bhutanese Americans call Ohio home, contributing significantly to the state's economic growth and cultural vibrancy. In light of this, we respectfully urge the United States government to diligently engage with the governments of Bhutan, Nepal, India, and other relevant stakeholders to address the ongoing refugee crisis. This includes seeking agreements that facilitate repatriation options, support family reunification, advocate for the releasing of political prisoners, and promote human rights and democracy in Bhutan; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit duly authenticated copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, Secretary of State, and members of the Ohio Congressional delegation.