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**WALK
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
September 20-October 1
INDIANS
FOR DEMOCRACY**

STATEMENT OF THE WALK

Freedom of conscience is a fundamental human right, the suppression of which cannot be condoned anywhere in the world. Governmental policies which are meant to determine the future of a nation cannot morally and legitimately be pursued in a climate such that the people are prevented from discussing these policies openly.

For questioning some of the recent actions of their Government, the merit scholarship of an Indian student at the University of Chicago has been revoked and the passports of several Indian citizens residing in North America have been impounded. To sensitize peoples' opinion against this unjust act of the Indian Government, on September 20, 1976 the affected individuals accompanied by their supporters, consisting of students, professors, scientists, physicians, other professionals, housewives and children will start from Independence Hall in Philadelphia a 120-mile satyagraha, "Walk For Human Rights", arriving at the United Nations Building in New York on October 1.

We are undertaking this walk as a moral act in the belief that the causes of total human development and world peace cannot be served if political and economic goals are pursued by a leadership without regard to morality or ethics. We urge upon the Indian Government to take the first step toward guaranteeing basic human freedoms by restoring the scholarships and passports of the Indian citizens in North America who have been unjustly punished for following the dictates of their conscience and by ending further surveillance and intimidation of the concerned Indian community abroad.

MEMORANDUM TO MRS. INDIRA GANDHI

Dear Mrs. Gandhi:

This memorandum is being addressed to you on behalf of Indians for Democracy (IFD)--an organization of Indian citizens residing in the United States. Our membership includes students, professors, scientists, engineers, artists, doctors and businessmen. There are over 200,000 persons of Indian origin in the United States and Canada, and we believe that many share the views expressed here.

We are largely apolitical. The rapid erosion of morality and decency from Indian politics, however, caused us deep anguish. We have waited patiently for more than one year but have yet to find a credible explanation from your Government on why was it necessary to:

- (i) declare a state of emergency in the country on June 26, 1975;
- (ii) imprison without trial thousands of innocent people, including members of the Indian Parliament, newspaper editors and reporters, trade unionists, teachers and students;
- (iii) launch unprecedented assaults on freedom of the press and the judiciary;
- (iv) break the spirit of the Indian Constitution by unconstitutional amendments;
- (v) get rid of the duly elected opposition Governments in the States of Tamil Nadu and Gujrat; and,
- (vi) refuse to hold the national elections which were due in March this year.

Edmond Burke wrote that the people never give up their liberties but under some delusion. After careful analysis of the factual information which is presented below, we have come to the conclusion that the Indian people have been deluded in believing that (a) your Government is committed to democracy and social justice, and (b)

the above listed actions taken during the last year are either temporary or have minor implications only. Like our colleagues and friends in India, in our delusion we watched passively the strangulation of vital national institutions, which were so painstakingly built by our predecessors and which are so necessary for overall human development in any society. Now that the long arm of your high-handedness has reached us in America, we must wake up and either react collectively or become victims separately.

Earlier this month, the Government of India impounded the passports of four members of IPD. The individuals affected are Ram Gehani, Associate Professor at the District of Columbia Teachers College, Sangayya Hiremath, Management Science Consultant at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Sharan Nandi, Project Manager with Ralph M. Parsons--a leading Construction Engineering Company, and Shrikumar Poddar, Chairman of the Educational Subscription Service of East Lansing, Michigan. This means that if they travel to India, they may not be permitted to come back and continue their professional work here. In fact, for having voiced opposition to the official policies, like many others they may well end up in Indian jails. It is obvious that you that have thus deprived them from visiting their elderly parents, relatives, and friends who live in India.

This act of your government has outraged our conscience. None of these individuals has ever been accused of any criminal conduct, and they have never been members of any Indian political party. Apparently, their sole crime was to raise questions about certain government doings. No one who respects the right of the governed to question his government can condone such irresponsible behavior on the part of an elected government. To show how unwise, unjust, and arbitrary the actions of the Government of India have become, we present below some of the credentials of these individuals. This should also prove beyond any doubt to the Indian people that the brightest and the most patriotic of their sons and daughters continue to be mistreated and pushed aside by lesser men.

Mr. Hiremath has been working for several years with many organizations dedicated to development in India. He is Chairman of the India Development Service, a non-profit organization which has conducted workshops in many cities of the United States in order to provide assistance to returning Indians for setting up small scale industries in India. Mr. Sharan Nandi was President of the Society for Rapid Advancement of India, and he actively participated in helping rural development projects in Andhara Pradesh. Mr. Poddar was instrumental in raising over one million dollars in 1971 when

India was seeking international help to aid the refugees from Bangladesh. Some of this money was personally presented to you by him in Washington, D.C.

Emergency, Democracy and Human Development

Basic human rights are the cornerstone of a democracy. Countless Indians sacrificed their lives in order to win basic freedoms such as freedom of speech, conscience and religion. Indian history and tradition is witness to the fact that concern for basic human rights is not a "western concept." Total human development is not possible without the existence of freedoms essential to sustain moral values which help man in exploring the purpose and meaning of his existence. The choice between freedom and bread is therefore a misleading one.

We are told repeatedly by your Government that the emergency (which is associated with severe curtailment of freedom of conscience, information and justice) was declared to strengthen democracy and socialism in India. In the June 26, 1976, issue of Seminar, Nirmal Verma questions the idea of suppression of civil liberties for social reform, "If reforms are for the people, the people should have free access to all instruments through which they could make their experience available to the government... Policies which are going to determine the future of a people, cannot morally and legitimately be pursued in a climate where the people are debarred from debating freely about them." The indecent haste with which the Indian Constitution is being changed without public referendum shows how much regard your Government has for democratic ways."

The means adopted to achieve national development totally bypass the question of ethics. The Gandhian concept of total human development, including ethical, moral, and spiritual development, is conspicuously absent from the Government's thinking and actions. The message is clear that ethical considerations are irrelevant and a hindrance.

Articles 14, 19, 21 and 22 of the Indian Constitution guaranteed the fundamental human rights. Under the State of Emergency, by a Presidential Order on June 27, 1975, the right of the individual to move any court for the enforcement of fundamental rights of equality before the law, and deprivation of life or personal liberty as conferred by Articles 14, 21, and 22 of the Constitution were revoked. Freedom of information was taken away by muzzling the press with censorship orders issued on June 26, 1976 under Defense of India

Rules. On January 8, 1976, another Presidential order suspended the individual's right to move any courts for the enforcement of fundamental rights conferred by Article 19, namely, freedom of speech and expression, peaceful assembly, forming associations or unions, freedom of movement throughout the country, freedom to reside and settle in any part of the country, to acquire and dispose of property, and to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

In his book, Our Constitution Defaced and Defiled, Mr. N.A. Palkhivala, a highly respected constitutional lawyer, quotes extracts from the Constituent Assembly debates to illustrate that inalienable human rights were in the hearts and minds of the people who drafted the Constitution for the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India. For instance, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said, "We must safeguard the liberty of the human spirit against the encroachments of the State. While State regulation is necessary to improve economic conditions, it should not be done at the expense of the human spirit. This declaration, which we make today, is of the nature of a pledge to our own people and a pact with the civilized world."

The horror story of what your Government is doing to the imprescriptible rights of the citizens does not end here. We have confirmed reports that many political dissenters are being subjected to inhuman torture in jail. Even prominent social workers are not being spared if they disapprove of Government actions. On June 14, 1976, Bhogilal Gandhi, a well-known literary figure, was arrested and brought to Ahmedabad from Bombay where he was convalescing from intestinal tuberculosis. He is in a delicate state of health. Young Sarvodaya (Gandhian) workers of Gujrat, Mrs. Mandakini Dave, Mr. Rajendra Dave, and Mr. Hasmukh Patel were arrested under the Defense of India Rules. When the court granted their bail and released them, they were immediately arrested under MISA.

Taming the Judiciary and the Press

Intimidated by your Government, a majority of the Supreme Court judges upheld the Government's right to hold prisoners without trial. In his courageous dissenting opinion, Justice H.R. Khanna wrote, "The power of the courts to issue a writ of habeas corpus is regarded as one of the most important characteristics of democratic states under the law. The principle that no one shall be deprived of his life or liberty without the authority of law is rooted in the consideration that life and liberty are priceless possessions." Despite the usual denials by your spokesman, including Mr. B.K. Nehru, Indian Ambassador in London, we have comprehensive details on the taming of the judiciary through methods such as unethical release of

false and damaging personal information to the press, unprecedented transfers to remote areas against their wishes, etc. In fact, Justice Sheth has challenged the legality of his transfer from Gujrat High Court to the Andhara High Court.

It is a proven fact that in addition to independent judiciary, an independent press is the most valuable watch dog on abuses of power by politicians and public servants. We are sad to note that your Government, by various means, has succeeded in trampling upon these guardians of basic human liberties. By a recent constitutional amendment, the press control law is among the 64 items which have been removed from the jurisdiction of the courts. It is well known that as a result of your personal intervention the control of the largest English daily, Indian Express, has been taken over by Birlas--one of the wealthiest families in India. In a rare act of boldness, the newspaper Patriot said, "The decline in the quality and credibility of the press as a result of many emergency measures must cause much disquiet to those in the Government and for several million newspaper readers in the country...with lavish advertisement support, obedience has indeed become a very paying proposition...the single news agency which was formed after the forced amalgamation of four news agencies is autonomous only in theory." Corroboration of the Patriot's statement on Samachar, the sole news agency now operating in India, comes from the copies of the following messages which Samachar addressed to all newspaper editors:

"Kill--kill. Editors please kill Bombay items about Maharashtra Government's not approving of recommendations in the Swarn Singh Committee's Report on constitutional amendment regarding inclusion of Education and Agriculture in the list." SAMACHAR--APRIL 28, 1976.

"Any reports regarding indefinite fast by Acharya Vinoba Bhave on the issue of cow slaughter is not for publication." SAMACHAR--June 1, 1976.

"Jayaprakesh Narayan's letter to the Prime Minister regarding (declining) of her contribution for his health fund should not be published." SAMACHAR--June 16, 1976.

In the context of national security, the ridiculousness of the following directives from Delhi and Bombay censors is apparent:

"News about an actress, Nargis, being arrested in London for shoplifting is not to be published." (May 28, 1976)

"Any write-ups, appeals, or news items in respect of the celebration of Morarji Desai's birthday which falls on 29th February is subject to precensorship."
(February 26, 1976)

The process involving destruction of the freedom of the press included the imprisonment of over 7000 newspaper vendors, reporters and editors, according to a statement by Om Mehta, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. That this policy is still continuing is obvious from the fact that on June 24, 1976, Mr. C.T. Daru, a leading advocate of Gujrat High Court and publisher and editor of the Citizens for Democracy Newsletter, was arrested under MISA. On the same day, Mr. Chunibhai Vaidya, editor of Bhoomiputra, was also arrested under MISA. The censors have also made the prestigious social sciences journal, Seminar, cease publication.

Foreign Correspondents Have Also Not Been Spared

Lawrence Lifschultz (Far Eastern Economic Review, February 20, 1976) described a similar experience. He was expelled on orders from K.N. Prasad, a RAW official, although Mr. V.C. Shukla, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, tried in vain to get the order rescinded. According to Lifschultz, "since the emergency RAW has taken on greater powers, with its people placed at the highest level in every ministry. RAW prepares arrest lists and detailed dossiers on every political opponent of the Prime Minister. Its people are rarely in the open and like Prasad they make decisions without having to give explanations to those affected." Recently, Christopher Sweeney of the Manchester Guardian felt obligated to leave India because of veiled threats to his physical safety by A.N.D. Haskar, Chief Spokesman of the Government of India for liaison with the foreign journalists.

Violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

There is no doubt in our minds that a very low level of politics has taken over the power in India and has succeeded in usurping the fundamental rights of the entire citizenry. By this action not only the pledge given to the people of India by their own Constitution has been broken but also several articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been violated. The Charter of the United Nations, which was signed on the 26th of June, 1945, reaffirms "faith in fundamental rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person." It is ironic that your Government unleashed a process of violating human rights on the same date last year. The Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seek guarantees for the very

same fundamental rights that are guaranteed in the Indian Constitution and referred to earlier.

It is reliably learned that during the next session of the Indian Parliament you intend to make the curbs on basic human freedoms in India permanent by pushing through hastily drafted constitutional amendments. The result would be that priceless human freedoms, including the right to life and personal liberty, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of the press, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, freedom of movement throughout the territory of India, freedom to choose one's profession, and the right of equality before the law, would stand abrogated permanently. We must remind our fellow citizens in India, especially from the educated and the affluent class--who are the trustees for the basic human freedoms for the entire population until the time when the less fortunate millions are able to free themselves from poverty and illiteracy and acquire better political consciousness--that those who surrender their freedoms to buy security will eventually have neither freedoms nor security.

Emergency and Economic Growth

It is claimed that under the state of emergency, the Government of India has introduced basic reforms which are having a 'telling impact on all aspects of the economy.' It is largely true that the prices of certain consumer goods have registered a drop, inflation is controlled and agricultural production is up. But these are at best temporary gains. The real economic indicators of a healthy economy are reduced unemployment and poverty about which nothing is being said. The official employment statistics at the end of January 1976 showed that there were 2.5 million unemployed high school graduates and over one million unemployed college graduates, including doctors and engineers. In addition, there are over 400 million illiterates in the country who are still untouched by the education system and are condemned to lifelong degrading work, underemployment and unemployment. According to Mrinal Dutta Choudhary's economic report in the June '76 issue of Seminar, "whichever way one looks at it, if gainful employment is to be found for the idle labor force, it will have to be found by restructuring the country's agricultural and rural economy...there is little evidence of any new thinking in the field of rural development..."

History shows that the economic realities cannot be hidden too long from public view. People will soon learn to measure the performance of the Government, not through words or legislation, but

through explicit standards such as employment. It can be easily documented that Mohan Dharia, a former member of the Cabinet, and several MPs who are either in detention or have been purged from the ruling Congress Party, had repeatedly pleaded that the only way to achieve stable economic growth and social justice was to redirect the political and fiscal institutions to reflect more fairly the distributive aspects of the fruits of productivity among all sections of the society. It is well known that not only Dharia, but other persons of highest integrity and honesty, such as Jayaprakash Narayan, also pleaded before you that decentralization of political power and administrative authority and fixation of accountability were basic to successfully carrying out the policies and programs for the benefit of the people.

Declaration Of War On Injustice

In the history of a nation there comes a time when it becomes necessary for men and women of conscience and courage to stand up and wage a war against injustice. We believe that the time has come for the Indian people to wage this struggle.

Mrs. Gandhi, this declaration is not against you personally or against everyone associated with your Government. This is against those in power who represent the dark side of the human nature which has taken over the Indian political scene and is becoming a serious threat to life, liberty and happiness of the innocent and honest people. In short this is a war against immorality in the Indian politics. Hundreds of cases of inhuman torture of political dissenters are documented. What cannot be easily documented is the spirit of millions of decent individuals. For instance, with a voice choked with anguish, a prominent professor at a technological institute in India confided to a visiting scientist, "I wish the rains would fail...I wish the crops would fail and millions of us die rather than go through such debasement of the spirit."

The First Step

Since in India today, people are not free to organize even peaceful protests, our struggle to bring morality and justice into the Indian polity will be initiated from the United States. Millions of Americans supported the struggle for peace and justice in Vietnam and they continue to be concerned about the struggle for human rights all over the world including Chile, Iran, India and Russia. Therefore, on September 20, with active support from the American people, we will take the first step of a Satyagraha march

from the Philadelphia Liberty Bell symbolizing the American Declaration of Independence, a quote from which reads, "Prudence indeed dictates that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient reasons...But when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them(the people) under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such Government and to provide new Guards for their future security."

The final destination of our 120 mile march is the U.N. Plaza in New York, where we will arrive at noon on October 1 and hold a one-day vigil and prayers. It is obvious that in our struggle against injustice and immorality in India, we will use only the Gandhian weapons of Satyagraha, i.e. insistence upon truth nonviolently until there is a change of heart on the part of the adversary.

Indian People Shall Overcome

Mrs. Gandhi, the forces of good and the forces of evil are arrayed against each other in India today, very much in the manner described in the Mahabharata epic. Who shall be the final victor in such a confrontation? To seek an answer to this, one need not go to any astrologer. The Indian National Motto reads, "Truth alone, shall triumph." And the truth is that everywhere in the world today the yearning for freedom and social justice by the unemployed youth, the starving peasants, and the poor workers is like a tidal wave gathering momentum. Sooner or later, this wave shall overcome.

Therefore dear Mrs. Gandhi, should you decide to listen to the voices of reason, social justice and freedom, please take immediate steps to release all prisoners being held without trial, restore the democratic political process in its fullness, and issue a call for national and state elections. If there is a genuine effort to structure the political, social and economic institutions of the country for the benefit of all people, we shall gladly throw all our might in programs of national reconstruction. But if your Government persists on the present course, the building discontent will unleash itself against all unjust and immoral authority. Perhaps the fire of a massive Satyagraha alone, can purify all that has been defiled.

tyrants deny me a passport
because my poetry frightens them:
if they bolt the doors against me,
I come, like light, through windows,
if they ignite the territories against me
I enter by rivers flowing with water,
my poetry reaches into prisons
to converse with him who looks

for me,
with the fugitive I count stars
all night, in the morning I part:
the ocean's reefs do not detain me:
machine guns do not stop me:
my poems are the eyes of dawn,
they're fists of stone and winged
hearts.

When people recognize me on the
street,

in copper or barley fields,
from trains that cross the countryside,
on bitter sweet plantations,
if greeted in remote ports
or in infernal subterranean mines
it is my poetry that has passed there
with its wheel of love and vengeance
to establish worldwide clarity
to give light to those who hope for it
to advance victory to those who
struggle
to give the earth to those who work it.

— Pablo Neruda