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VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 6, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madame Secretary,

The plight of displaced Pandits of the Kashmir region of India is a pressing issue that, tragically, has received little attention in recent years. The United States has welcomed efforts by India and Pakistan to maintain peace across their borders during the current turbulent period in Pakistan. With your leadership the two countries can resolve their differences peacefully. As the Kashmir issue is addressed, I urge you to continue to ensure the Kashmiri Pandits remain part of these negotiations.

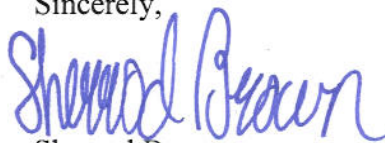
Most Kashmiri Pandits were driven out of their native land in the early 1990's. Those that remain face violence and oppression as a disfranchised minority. Only a few thousand Pandits are left in the valley today as most have moved to safe havens in other parts of India. While some experts have argued that the Pandit culture will remain vibrant in these relocation areas, every culture is reliant on its native land. If Pandits cannot return to their native territory, Pandit culture as we know it today may be lost forever.

I urge you to discuss the future of the Pandits with the Indian Government. Any agreement reached between and among the United States, India, and Pakistan must call for the preservation of Pandit culture and empower and encourage those living in refugee camps to return to their native land. This will require more than just the promise of employment and housing, but a commitment by the State government to create political and social space in the valley for ensuring a vibrant Pandit culture and way of life.

Raising these issues during the upcoming State Visit of the Indian Prime Minister, including pushing for Pandit participation in ongoing peace talks, will help ensure that the Pandits remain an integral part of the Kashmir Valley's future.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator