All,

First of all, I want to say how extremely grateful I am for all the support and effort of people, including those in this group, who have worked so hard to get us to this point, where we have our best shot ever to make change in this district. The whole reason I resigned from the Foreign Service and came home to run for Congress is because I truly believe that this is the best way to serve our country right now. If we are successful next year, we will be able to enact meaningful change to address the issues that we are care so much about.

Second, I want to say that my heart goes out to all of the people of Kashmir and to anyone here in America who has been affected by the current situation, including those who have been unable to communicate with their loved ones. I have served in conflict zones where friends and colleagues have been killed, and these are not topics I take lightly. We must stand up for human rights, both at
us can do the most good and the least harm.

While most of this campaign will remain focused on issues like health care, climate change, etc. rather than foreign affairs, I realize this is an extremely sensitive and personal issue to many people here and I want to be respectful of the feelings of all our constituents, many of whom disagree very strongly on it. In that vein, I’ve had numerous private conversations, listening to activists and supporters on multiple sides, including Pakistani-Americans, Indian-Americans, organizers of the visit Sunday and the protest, and many others about this issue. I’ve had more discussions on this issue than any other in the entire campaign, more than 60 hours worth in the last month. However, I realize that all those who have not been in those private discussions still want some explanation, and for everyone who has worked so hard to build our movement, you deserve a response.

Regarding the visit Sunday, I attended not as an endorsement of any specific figure or policy, but as a show of respect for the Indian-American community and especially the volunteers who worked hard to organize the largest collection of Indian-Americans in America’s history, many of whom were also volunteers on our campaign last year, and who worked alongside people in this forum to register and get out voters last year. (These are the same reasons I attended Imran Khan’s speech at ISNA, as well as Indian Independence Day, Pakistani Independence Day, and many other events organized by other communities.) Inside the stadium there was a heterogeneous group that included many Democrats, many strong progressives, many opponents of President Trump, and many Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians. I believe it would be a mistake to label all attendees of Sunday’s event as opponents of our cause or to disengage with them for that reason.

My background is very different from a politician. I served in the Foreign Service for almost 15 years, and in my experience, most of the work on influencing foreign governments, especially on human rights issues in conflict zones, happens behind closed doors, usually on the ground in the region itself. I have not served in this region and I am not an expert on these issues, so I continue to learn every day. However, my career has taught me that to have any influence on a foreign government, you must have a relationship. I’ve been in the room with members of Congress when they visit foreign leaders, and I know firsthand how critical these relationships are in order to get anything accomplished. This is the reason why there were almost as many Democratic leaders there as Republican ones at NRG on Sunday, and why a group of Muslim Americans met with PM Modi on Saturday. From my own experience, I can say that there is a big difference between the public statements made by politicians and the actual hard work of conflict mitigation. The latter
that at the end of the day this issue is not simply about a statement, but about seeking moral consistency from our elected officials and making sure they are held accountable when it comes to representing you as voters.

Having said that, as your candidate, I continue to expect you to hold me accountable and can promise you that I will continue to advocate and tirelessly fight for human rights for all minorities, both at home and abroad, as anyone who has been part of this movement knows. If there is any doubt about this I would ask people to look at my record over my career as well as every statement we have made in this campaign, and the people I’ve supported in local elections. In particular, I have spoken out repeatedly against Islamophobia and especially Trump’s Muslim ban since before I resigned from the State Department, and I have stood with the Muslim community on numerous issues, not because of “politics” but because it is the right thing to do. The truth is, these kind of conflicts are a dream for people those who are sowing division, anger, and hatred in our country right now. They know that if all of us who believe in a pluralistic democracy ever unite, they have no chance at shutting our voices out. Divide and conquer has been a successful strategy throughout history and it still works today, if we let it. Building a multicultural movement is difficult because there are extremely sensitive issues which various groups disagree passionately about, and if we wait until everyone agrees we will never achieve progress. However, we do have broad consensus on things at home like ensuring we reduce gun violence and have safe schools for our children, protecting Medicare and Social Security, and many of the other issues we have focused on that help all of our families. Over the last year and half, we built a strong coalition, in which over 1500 volunteers spent thousands of hours to get us to this point. We are on the cusp of being in a position to improve this community and this country, so my plea is to not sabotage ourselves at the last moment. I am asking everyone who supported us in the past to trust that I will continue to stand up for this community and be a good public servant for you in Washington. We can make a positive change in our country, if we are able to focus on what unites us, instead of what divides us.