

COMMENDING EUGENE SLEDGE, OF MOBILE, ALABAMA, FOR HIS SERVICE DURING WORLD WAR II

### HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 27, 2007*

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to recognize the late Dr. Eugene Sledge of Mobile, Alabama, for his courageous service during World War II.

After graduating from Mobile's Murphy High School, he entered Marion Military Institute to study to become an officer. However, as just a freshman, he signed on as a private in the Marines in order not to miss an opportunity at combat.

Private First Class Sledge was assigned to the 1st Marine Division. He trained as a mortarman and fought on Peleliu in September of 1944 and on Okinawa in the spring of 1945. Throughout these months, he kept a journal of his impressions of the fighting, keeping the notes between the pages of his Bible. These notes later became his memoir, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*, which he published in 1981. Ken Burns, who recently produced the PBS documentary series "The War," relied heavily on this memoir. His memoir will also form the basis for the HBO series "The Pacific," the successor to "Band of Brothers."

At the end of the war, Corporal Sledge returned to Alabama where he earned both a bachelor of science and a master of science from Alabama Polytechnic Institute, now Auburn University. He earned his doctorate at the University of Florida and became assistant professor of biology at Alabama College, now the University of Montevallo. In 1970, Dr. Sledge was named a professor in the Department of Biology at the University of Montevallo, a position he held until his retirement in 1990.

Dr. Sledge passed away in 2001 before his second memoir, *China Marine: An Infantryman's Life after World War II*, was published.

Madam Speaker, the recognition of Dr. Eugene Sledge in "The War" documentary is an appropriate time for us to pause and thank him—and all of the soldiers who fought in World War II. His life and actions personified the very best America has to offer. I urge my colleagues to take a moment to pay tribute to the life of Dr. Sledge and his selfless devotion to our country and the freedom we enjoy. I also extend my thanks to his family for sharing the story of his courageous life with all of us.

OTHER MINORITIES SUFFER  
MAJOR PERSECUTION AS WELL

### HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, September 27, 2007*

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, recently, Dr. Awatar Singh Sekhon, Chairman of the Sikh Educational Trust and Managing Editor of the international Journal of Sikh Affairs, wrote to President Bush. He noted that "Sikhs live in peace and harmony in every democracy in the world; India is the only exception."

In his excellent letter, Dr. Sekhon outlines the tyranny and abuse the Sikhs have been

subjected to in India. While India talks and talks about being "the world's largest democracy," it continues to commit atrocities against the Sikhs, Christians, Muslims, and other minorities. Madam Speaker, the essence of democracy is self-determination.

As if the murders of 250,000 Sikhs by the Indian government (the number comes from the Punjab State Magistracy and human-rights groups) wasn't enough, Sikhs from outside India must get the formal permission of the Indian government to visit the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the seat of Sikhism, equivalent to the Vatican of the Sikhs. Suppose that Catholics were barred from Vatican City without permission of the Italian government. Do you think the world would be up in arms about that? Yet, the equivalent condition is imposed upon the Sikhs and nobody says a word. That is how deeply India's propaganda about being "the world's largest democracy" has permeated the world's perceptions, thanks to massive amounts of money spent to propagate this viewpoint through lobbying and media manipulation. It is time to wake up. Madam Speaker. It is time to call India on the carpet for its persecution of minorities.

If the tyranny against the Sikhs were all that India was doing, that would be bad enough. But it is compounded by the persecution of Christians and Muslims, as well as other minorities such as Assamese, Bodos, Dalits, Manipuris, Tamils, and others.

In Gujarat, 2,000 to 5,000 Muslims were killed in riots that a policeman told the newspapers were planned and organized by the Indian government. It has killed over 90,000 Muslims in Kashmir while refusing to give the Kashmiris self-determination via a free and fair plebiscite on their status, as India promised the United Nations in 1948.

Christians have been prime targets of Indian persecution. Churches have been burned. Nuns have been raped and forced to drink their own urine, to the cheers of militant Hindu organizations such as the pro-Fascist Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), which produced a booklet on how to implicate Christians and other minorities in false criminal cases. Priests have been murdered, schools and prayer halls have been vandalized, and more than 300,000 Christians have been killed in Nagaland at the hands of the Indian government. Missionary Graham Staines was killed by a mob of Hindu militants along with his eight-year-old son. The killers poured gasoline over their jeep, set it on fire, and chanted "Victory to Hanuman." Missionary Joseph Cooper, an American, was expelled from the country after he was beaten up so badly that he had to spend a week in an Indian hospital. A Christian religious festival on the theme "Jesus is the Answer" was broken up by police gunfire after people there distributed religious literature.

In several Indian states, there are laws prohibiting anyone from converting to any religion but Hinduism.

Madam Speaker, this is unacceptable. We must support the rights of these minorities by stopping American aid to India and stopping our trade with India as well. It's clearly not benefitting the Indian people. Two thirds of the population lives on less than half a dollar a day. We must also demand a free and fair vote on independence for the Sikhs of Khalistan, the Christians of Nagalim, the Muslims of Kashmir, and all the various peoples seeking their freedom from India.

Madam Speaker, I would like to add Dr. Sekhon's excellent letter to the RECORD at this time.

THE SIKH EDUCATIONAL TRUST,  
*Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, July 30, 2007.*  
Re: violation of religious and political rights of Sikhs in India.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,  
*President, United States of America, The White House, Washington, DC.*

HONOURABLE PRESIDENT, I am writing this letter to seek your intervention in the religious affairs of the Sikhs, especially the Diaspora Sikhs in North America, Europe and other continents.

The Sikhs live in peace and harmony in every democracy in the world; India is the only exception. In fact, the Sikhs are treated as slaves even in the Punjab, which is the holy and historic homeland of the Sikhs. This is because the ruling class consists of Brahmins—who are only 4 percent of the population along with 10-11 percent of Hindus of other castes. Although a majority in the Punjab, the Sikhs are 2.5 percent of the huge population of India that is approximately 1.1 billion. It is because of the denial of the right of self-determination in our land that India is able to marginalize the Sikhs as a small minority. The Hindu-Brahmin rulers have pursued their anti-human agenda: (i) practice of unsociability against the native majority who are 65 percent of the population, and (ii) persecution of mono-theistic faiths—the Sikhs, the Christians and the Muslims, by maintaining an environment of fear and of crushing poverty.

In June 1984, even the facade of Secular Tolerance was discarded when the Indian Army assaulted the holiest shrine of the Sikhs—the Darbar Sahib (also known as the Golden Temple) including the Supreme Seat of Sikh Polity, the Akal Takht Sahib, killing tens of thousands of devotees inside the temple. The Indian administration has ever since maintained heavy presence of its intelligence and armed personnel in the state. No Sikh from outside India can visit his/her holy place and the seat of Sikhs' polity without having a formal 'visa' endorsement in their passport from the Indian Embassy or Consulate. Mr. President, this constitutes a violation of the Sikhs' religious rights. Pilgrimage to pay respect to Gurus is a right that should not depend on the caprice of a government. It certainly should not depend on the goodwill of a state that has not just failed to protect but has actually been an instrument of our persecution and destruction of our holy sites by wanton bombardment.

Mr. President, India is interfering in my religious affairs. As a free citizen of a free country, I cannot approve of the way the Sikhs are treated in India; I cannot condone the assault of the Indian Army on Darbar Sahib in June 1984; I cannot support that the Sikhs relinquish their right to self-determination. I am required to do all this in order to get a visa. And if I did any of these things, I would not be a Sikh. That means, in order to get an Indian visa, I am required to renounce my faith. That cannot be acceptable.

Mr. President, no Roman Catholic needs a visa to visit the Vatican, no Jew is prevented from visiting Jerusalem, a visa cannot be denied to a Muslim to go to Mecca, why do the Sikhs need to have India's Hindu/Brahmins (neither a religion nor a culture), permission to visit their holiest shrine? Indian administration's control of the Sikhs' shrines constitutes an intervention into their religious affairs. That's why, Honourable President, none of the elected representatives of the Sikhs accepted/initiated/endorsed the Indian Constitution of 1950. Under Article 25 of that Constitution, the Sikh faith and national