



## Remarks of Congress President Smt. Sonia Gandhi in All Party Meeting

June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Mr Prime Minister, Ministers, Leaders of Political Parties,

We meet today in the aftermath of a tragic conflict and our hearts are filled with great sorrow & anguish. Let me begin by paying homage to the brave soldiers of our Army, who laid down their lives as also convey my deepest condolences to the bereaved families. To the injured jawans, we wish them a speedy recovery and good health.

This meeting, in my view, should have come sooner and immediately after the government had been reportedly informed about the Chinese intrusion on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 into several places in Ladakh and elsewhere. As always, the entire nation would have stood together like a rock and fully supported the government of the day in the steps required to defend the territorial integrity of the country. Alas, that was not to be.

In fact, even at this late stage, we are still in the dark about many crucial aspects of the crisis. We have some specific questions, for the Government: On which date did the Chinese troops intrude into our territory in Ladakh? When did the government find out about the Chinese transgressions into our territory? Was it on May 5<sup>th</sup>, as reported, or earlier? Does the government not receive, on a regular basis, satellite pictures of the borders of our country? Did our external intelligence agencies not report any unusual activity along the LAC? Did the Military Intelligence not alert the government about the intrusion and the build-up of massive forces along the LAC, whether on the Chinese side or on the Indian side? In the government's considered view, was there a failure of intelligence?

We in the Congress Party believe that valuable time was lost between May 5 and June 6, the date on which the Corps Commanders meeting took place. Even after the June 6 meeting, efforts should have been made to talk directly, at the political and diplomatic levels, to the leadership of China. We failed to use all avenues, and the result is the loss of 20 lives as well as dozens injured. I would urge the Prime Minister to kindly share with us all the facts and the sequence of events beginning April this year till date.

The question is, what next? What is the way forward? The entire country would like an assurance that *status quo ante* would be restored and China will revert back to the original position on Line of Actual Control.

We would also like to be briefed on the preparedness of our defence forces to meet any threat. In particular, I would like to ask what is the current status of the Mountain Strike Corps, with two mountain infantry divisions, that was sanctioned in 2013? Should the Government not treat it with utmost priority?



We in the Indian National Congress and the entire opposition unitedly stand by our defence forces and are prepared to make any sacrifice to ensure they are battle ready. The Entire nation expects that Government will take all Opposition Parties & the country into confidence and brief us regularly so that we may present to the world a picture of unity and solidarity.

Prime Minister Modiji I thank you for inviting the Indian National Congress to this meeting.

Jai Hind!