



## Association for India's Development (Austin)

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### **SG and GSA vote to support student efforts for Bhopal**

AUSTIN, TX – The Student Government (SG) and The Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) representing the students of The University of Texas at Austin have voted to support the Bhopal resolution sponsored by Association for India's Development (AID), Austin chapter. The resolution supports the students meeting the President of The University to urge him to write "to Dow Chemical Company to address its responsibility in Bhopal and ask Dow Chemical to spend matching funds for the environmental clean-up in Bhopal". Dow Chemical has made a cumulative donation of 4.4 million to the University as of 2003. In addition to supporting the resolution unanimously, the GSA also felt that The University should not accept funds from Dow Chemical Company and that The University should develop a review mechanism to evaluate the ethical standing of its donors.

The resolution was supported by twenty student groups and signed by more than 1000 University of Texas students and 50 faculty members. It cites the company's refusal to accept any outstanding responsibilities of its subsidiary, Union Carbide, in Bhopal, India. The SG and GSA will work with AID to raise the matter with the President of The University, and request him to write to Dow asking the company to submit Union Carbide to criminal trial in India and urging the chemical giant to spend at least as much money as it gives to the University on addressing Bhopal liabilities.

A similar resolution introduced in SG on January 31<sup>st</sup> lost narrowly after a five hour debate. The support for Bhopal gained a lot of momentum and strength thereafter. "Many now realize the enormity of Bhopal tragedy and how the companies responsible are able to go scot-free even after 22 years of human suffering. The University of Texas's students have now made a powerful statement that such irresponsibility will not go unchecked," the authors of the resolution said of the victory.

On December 3rd, 1984, a poisonous gas leak from Union Carbide's pesticide plant in Bhopal, India killed more than 8000 in the immediate aftermath and more than 12,000 in the years that followed. More than 120,000 people still suffer from such ailments as blindness, lung fibrosis, long term breathlessness, chronic gastrointestinal symptoms and gynecological disorders. It is estimated that 30 people die every month because of exposure related illnesses. Toxic wastes abandoned by the company have poisoned the groundwater that is being consumed by more than 20,000 people. Despite repeated court summons, Union Carbide has refused to appear to face criminal trial in Bhopal. After its February 2001 acquisition of Union Carbide, Dow Chemical has actively shielded the company from criminal and civil liabilities even while seeking to profit from an increased business presence in India.

Bhopal might be the world's worst chemical disaster, but Dow harbors many other "Bhopals" in its closet through its legacy of human rights and environmental violations: dioxin contamination in Michigan; mass sterility because of Nemagon; Agent Orange; carcinogenic exposures in Mission, Texas; to name a few. Denial of liability for Bhopal also brings forth a case of double standards as Dow set aside \$2.2 billion for Union Carbide's asbestos liabilities, yet refuses to accept Union Carbide's liabilities in Bhopal, India.

AID is a 501(C)(3), voluntary, nonprofit organization with over 52 chapters in six countries and undertakes developmental projects related to health, education, women's empowerment, childcare and other issues in India. AID strives to enable a self-sustained and improved lifestyle of millions of people in India and has supported over 365 projects in the last 14 years. More details about AID can be found at [www.aidaustin.org](http://www.aidaustin.org).