

# Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 31, 2012

President Porfirio Lobo Sosa  
c/o Ambassador Jorge Ramón Hernández Alcerro  
3007 Tilden Street, NW, Suite 4M  
Washington, DC 20008

Dear President Lobo:

We are writing to express our serious concern about ongoing threats to human rights defenders in Honduras, as well as the recent targeting of international accompaniers. We urge to you take immediate action to ensure the safety of Honduran and international human rights activists working in Honduras, and to launch a full investigation into recent threats, attacks, and murders.

International accompaniers – the non-Honduran citizens who provide accompaniment to Honduran human rights defenders who face threats and intimidation -play a critical role. Human rights defenders in Honduras tell us that they cannot rely on the police, who are often implicated in the very abuses under investigation, or on state and local authorities, who routinely fail to provide adequate protection. By providing a link to the outside world, international accompaniers provide a minimal degree of protection.

Over the last few months, members of the Committee of the Families of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), a key Honduran human rights organization, received a series of violent threats via phone call and text message. In late April, two international accompaniers from the Honduras Accompaniment Project (PROAH) received death threats via text message. These threats are often signed “C.A.M.” – Comando Alvarez Martinez – a group that overtly associates itself with Honduran paramilitary organizations of the 1980s.


We are also concerned by continuing attacks on civil society leaders, activists, and journalists. On May 16, 2012, the BBC reported that kidnapped journalist Alfredo Villatoro was found murdered. This is not an isolated case: over the last three years, many other reporters have been murdered or targeted for harassment, intimidation, and violence. Prominent international human rights groups, including Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders, have reported on a series of serious threats made against Dina Meza, a journalist and human rights activist. Erick Martínez Ávila, a journalist and LGBT activist, was murdered in early May 2012. At least 18 other journalists and media workers have been killed in Honduras since 2009, according to UNESCO.

Mr. President, at this time we are concerned about the escalating pattern of threats and violence directed against Honduran human rights defenders, journalists, and international accompaniers. We believe these individuals and groups perform a critical function, and that their fundamental rights must be protected. We urge you to ensure that any threats against human rights defenders and their international accompaniers are promptly and thoroughly investigated, and that perpetrators are prosecuted. We also call on you to launch a serious investigation of the so-called CAM group, which appears to be responsible for issuing many of these threats.

Again, we strongly urge you to fully investigate and prosecute threats and violence against human rights defenders, civil society leaders, journalists, and international accompaniers, and to work to ensure that these individuals and groups are free to safely conduct their important work.

Thank you for your consideration.


Sincerely,

  
Jan Schakowsky

  
Rosa L. DeLauro


  
Sam Farr

  
Chaka Fattah

  
Raúl M. Grijalva

  
Luis V Gutierrez

  
Michael Honda

  
Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.

  
James Langevin

  
Barbara Lee

  
James P. McGovern

  
George Miller



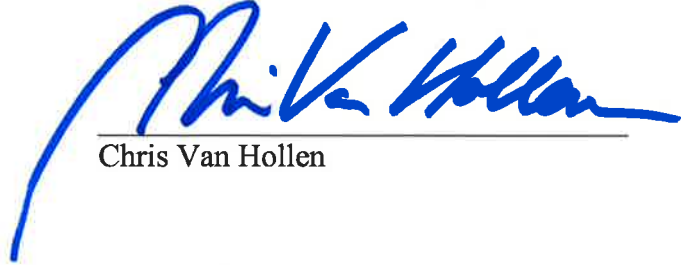
Mike Quigley



Paul D. Tonko



Edolphus Towns



Chris Van Hollen



Maxine Waters