

# Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 28, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to express concern about the ongoing human rights situation in Honduras. As a new President and Congress have recently taken office, we ask the State Department to use its leverage to urge the Honduran government to protect the fundamental human rights of its citizens, end the use of military forces for law enforcement, investigate and prosecute abuses, and, more broadly, restore the rule of law.

Almost five years after the 2009 coup ousting President Zelaya, egregious violations of human rights continue. The Associated Press has documented ongoing death-squad style killings by Honduran police. Independent media and human rights organizations continue to report that vulnerable groups, including members of the LGBT community and indigenous and campesino activists, are being targeted and killed. Basic labor rights are routinely violated and union leaders have received increased death threats in recent months.

Instead of implementing reforms to address those pervasive problems, the Honduran government adopted policies that threaten to make the human rights situation even worse. The former and current administrations have promoted the militarization of police forces and use their armed forces for domestic law enforcement. In August 2012, a new Military Police was created, with a projected size of at least 5,000. That force has committed human rights abuses while engaged in policing, such as the October 2013 raid on the home of opposition activist Edwin Espinal. Members of the armed forces are also implicated in the killing of Tomás Garcia in July 2013. Because of a continuing record of human rights abuses by the Honduran police and military, Members of Congress have repeatedly called for a cessation of U.S. aid to the country's security forces.

Those and other human rights abuses have not been effectively investigated or prosecuted in recent years. According to the National Commissioner for Human Rights, during the last administration, dozens of lawyers and journalists were killed and 97 percent of cases regarding these suspected human rights abuses remain unpunished. The non-governmental group Rights Action cites allegations of almost 100 killings of lands rights activists in the area of Bajo Aguán. According to a Human Rights Watch study, there is "virtually complete impunity for crimes" believed to be associated with land conflicts in that region of the country.

We are also concerned about recent developments impeding Hondurans' freedom of speech and association. In the first two months of 2014, the Honduran government published a new decree that could revoke the legal status of over ten thousand non-profit organizations, including a wide range of opposition groups. Those groups include women's and environmental organizations, a prominent group that regularly reports on press freedom issues, and schools.

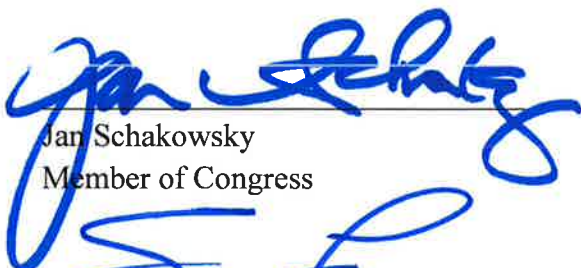
We are also concerned about reports that last year's election in Honduras was not free and fair. The human rights group COFADEH reports that at least 18 members of the leading opposition party LIBRE were assassinated in the lead-up to the election, with an additional six LIBRE-affiliated individuals and a well-known progressive journalist killed in the weeks after. Election observers documented widespread vote-buying activities, acts of intimidation, and cases of citizens' names being eliminated from voting rolls. Challenges by opposition parties regarding discrepancies in the vote were not transparently addressed by the Supreme Electoral Council.

Just recently, a combination of police and military forces beat and used tear gas against demonstrators protesting beneath and in front of the National Congress. Inside, Members of Congress aligned with the minority LIBRE party were surrounded, beaten and forcibly ejected – leaving several wounded and a number hospitalized. This incident illustrates our concern about human rights and the rule of law in Honduras.

We ask that you pay close attention to those issues, strictly evaluating U.S. support and training for the Honduran police and military in accordance with human rights conditions placed in the 2014 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations law. We also ask that you fully enforce the Leahy Law, which prohibits assistance to individuals or units of any foreign military or police body that commit gross human rights abuses with impunity. The State Department, along with our embassy in Honduras, must take a consistent and public stance supporting those threatened with human rights abuses, and strongly encourage the investigation and prosecution of those perpetuating crimes, including state agents.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



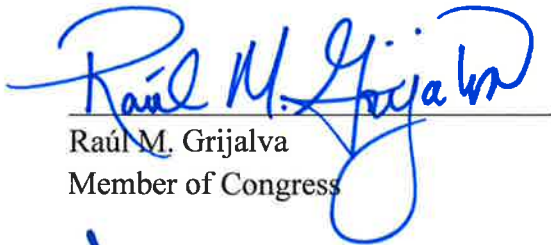
Sam Farr  
Member of Congress

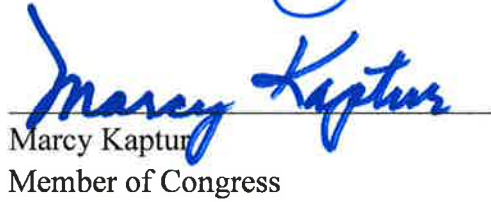


George Miller  
Member of Congress

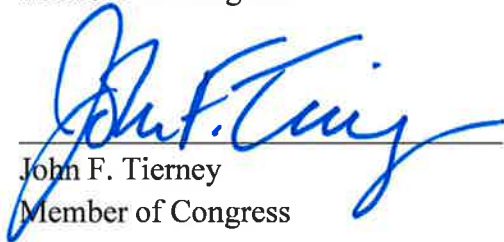


Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

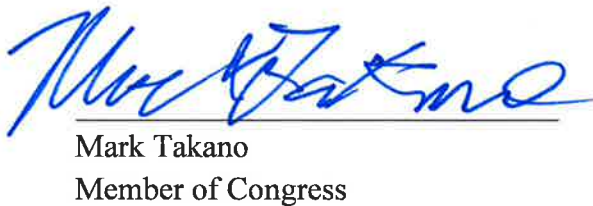
  
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

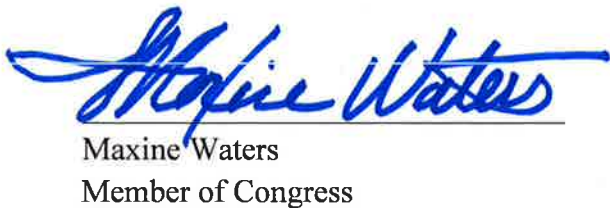
  
Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress

  
Rosa DeLauro  
Member of Congress

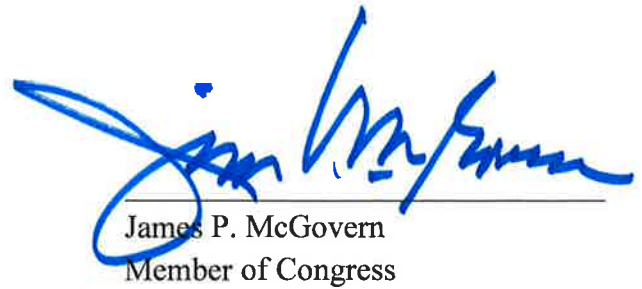
  
John F. Tierney  
Member of Congress

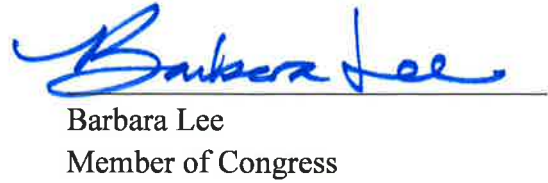
  
Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

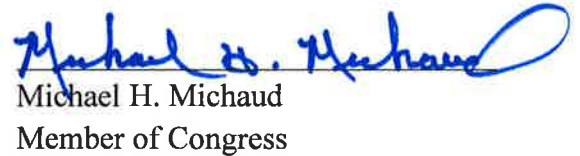
  
Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

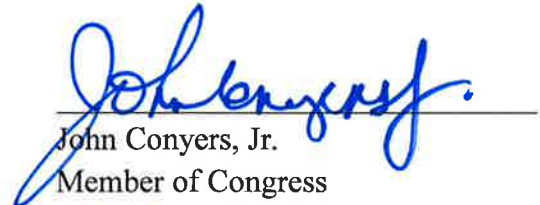
  
Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

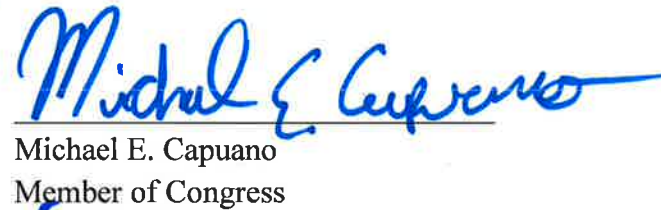
  
Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

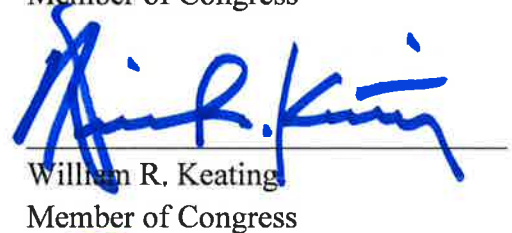
  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

  
Michael H. Michaud  
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John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
Michael E. Capuano  
Member of Congress

  
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

  
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

  
Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress





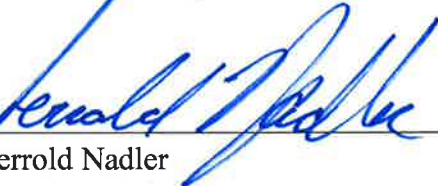
Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



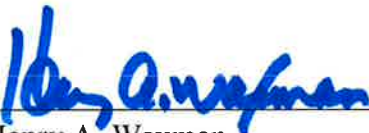
Karen Bass  
Member of Congress



David Cicilline  
Member of Congress



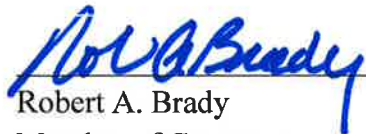
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



Henry A. Waxman  
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress



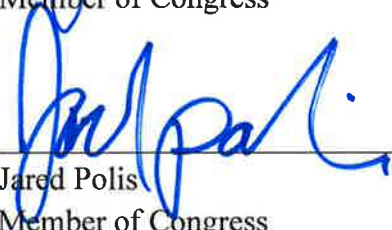
Robert A. Brady  
Member of Congress



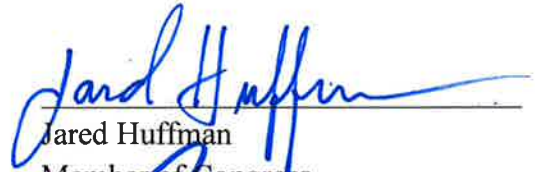
Doris O. Matsui  
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress



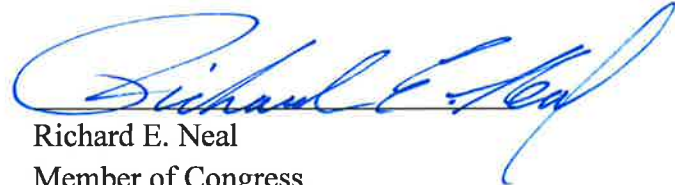
Jared Polis  
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress



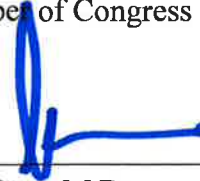
Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress

*Gloria Negrete McLeod*

Gloria Negrete McLeod  
Member of Congress

*Ron Kind*

Ron Kind  
Member of Congress

*Paul D. Tonko*

Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress

*Alcee L. Hastings*

Alcee L. Hastings  
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*Earl Blumenauer*

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

*Jim Langevin*

James R. Langevin  
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*Alan Grayson*

Alan Grayson  
Member of Congress

*Bruce Braley*

Bruce L. Braley  
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*Mark Pocan*

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

*Keith Ellison*

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

*Stephen F. Lynch*

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

*Loretta Sanchez*

Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress

*Joaquin Castro*

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

*Beto O'Rourke*

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Member of Congress


*Emanuel Cleaver, II*


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Member of Congress

*Sheila Jackson Lee*


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Member of Congress

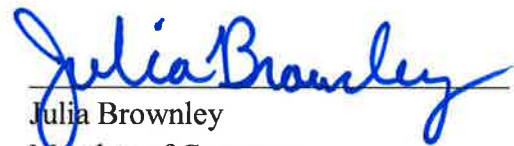
  
John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

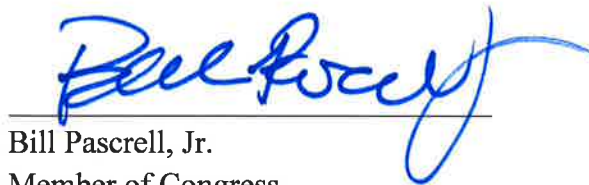
  
John Lewis  
Member of Congress


  
Rush Holt  
Member of Congress

  
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress


  
Joseph P. Kennedy III  
Member of Congress

  
Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress


  
Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress


  
Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress

  
Eric Swalwell  
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Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

  
Katherine Clark  
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Luis V. Gutierrez  
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

  
William L. Enyart  
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Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

  
Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



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Theodore E. Deutch  
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle

Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
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Linda T. Sánchez

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Matt Cartwright

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James A. Himes

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Madeleine Z. Bordallo

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Charles B. Rangel

Charles B. Rangel  
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Lloyd Doggett

Lloyd Doggett  
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Elizabeth H. Esty

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Zoe Lofgren

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Mike Thompson

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Bobby L. Rush  
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Cheri Bustos  
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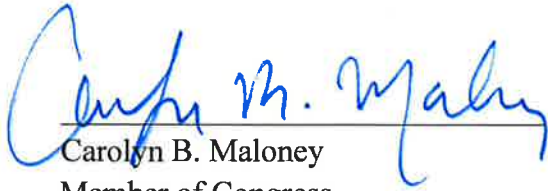
John B. Larson  
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André Carson  
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Mike Quigley  
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Lois Frankel  
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Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

  
Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

  
Wm. Lacy Clay  
Member of Congress

  
Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

  
Donna F. Edwards  
Member of Congress

  
Chaka Fattah  
Member of Congress

  
Lois Capps  
Member of Congress

  
Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress