

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

November 13, 2013

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to express support for free and fair national and municipal elections in Honduras on November 24, 2013. The elections, which will be monitored by numerous domestic and international observers, are important for the future stability of Honduras and the region. The State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Honduras should make it clear that the United States, along with the Organization of American States, have an interest in promoting a free, fair and transparent electoral process.

Hondurans prepare to go to the polls in a difficult and dangerous climate. The country suffers from elevated levels of crime and the highest per capita murder rate in the world. Fragile institutions and a besieged judiciary have done little to punish the perpetrators of the violence, encouraging a climate of impunity and undermining citizens' confidence that their political, civil and human rights will be protected. Moreover, Honduran journalists are regularly the targets of violence and threats, and political candidates have been killed as a result of running for office. These challenges raise serious concerns over the Honduran government's ability to conduct free and fair elections. The United States must press the Government of Honduras to ensure the right of all its citizens to peacefully assemble, campaign and vote.

International and domestic election monitors – including some who are receiving U.S. assistance -- must be as vigilant during the ongoing campaign as they are the day of the vote. Planned assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) should support the integrity and transparency of the process by giving domestic observers the training and assistance they need to do their jobs effectively. The United States should urge Honduran officials, including representatives of the Honduran Supreme Electoral Tribunal, to ensure equal opportunities for the various political parties, including fair access to the media.

On Election Day, monitors must have unrestricted access to electoral facilities and officials, particularly at the voting precincts. U.S. and international officials should encourage the leading candidates to use appropriate legal channels for any disputes, consistent with the signing of the August 23, 2013 "Commitment to Minimum Guarantees for Electoral Ethics and Transparency in the 2013 General Elections." Now and on Election Day, the United States must encourage the Honduran military to communicate clearly its constitutional role in distributing ballots to the precincts, and should stress that it remain strictly neutral in the political process. The United States should verify the results based on all available information, and encourage all candidates and the government to work towards a seamless and peaceful political transition.

A peaceful and fair election would promote Honduran confidence in the electoral process and help reduce polarization within Honduran society and bolster the stability needed to tackle the country's

critical social, economic and security problems. Free and peaceful elections could serve as an important model of the democratic electoral process throughout the hemisphere. Finally, we urge the State Department to continue its efforts to ensure free, fair and transparent elections and to keep us apprised of any developments which may threaten the credibility of the process or its results.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.