

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.

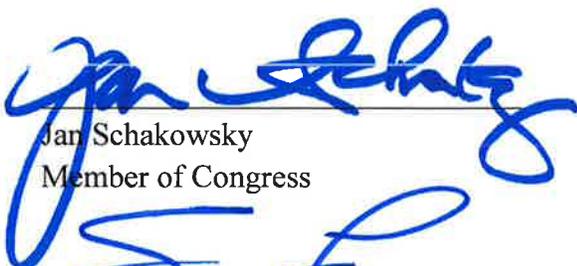
We are also concerned about reports that last year's election in Honduras was not free and fair. The human rights group COFADEH reports that at least 18 members of the leading opposition party LIBRE were assassinated in the lead-up to the election, with an additional six LIBRE-affiliated individuals 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



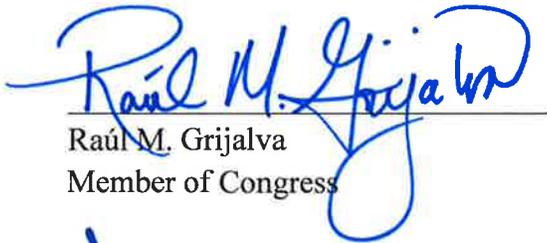
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



George Miller
Member of Congress

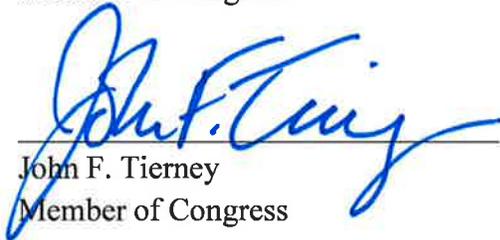


Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress


Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress


Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress


Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress

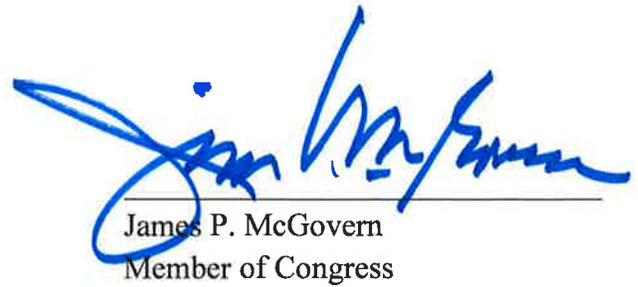

John F. Tierney
Member of Congress

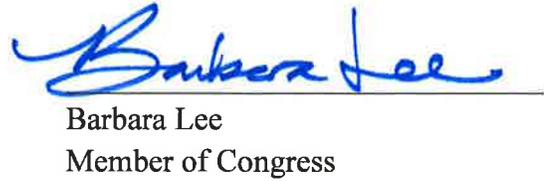

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

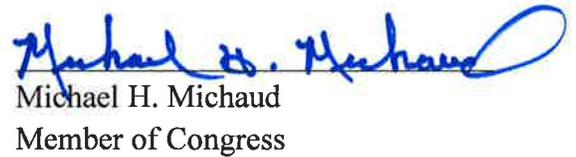

Mark Takano
Member of Congress


Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

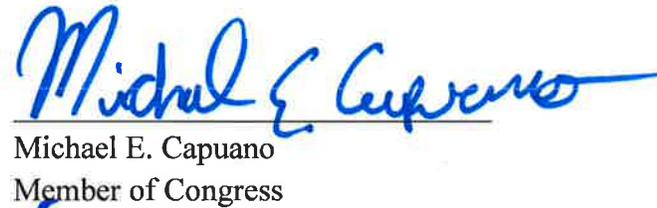

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

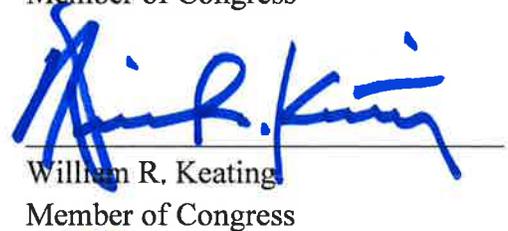

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress


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



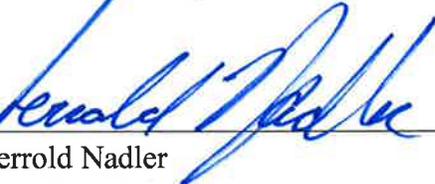
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



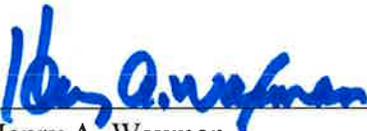
Karen Bass
Member of Congress



David Cicilline
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress



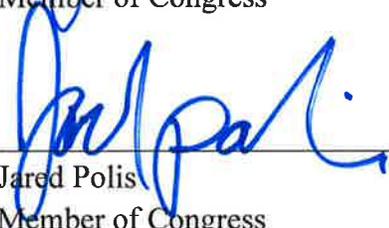
Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress



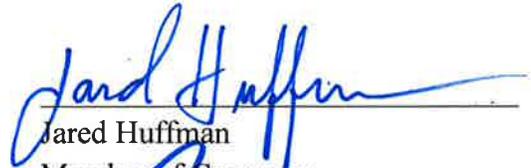
Doris O. Matsui
Member of Congress



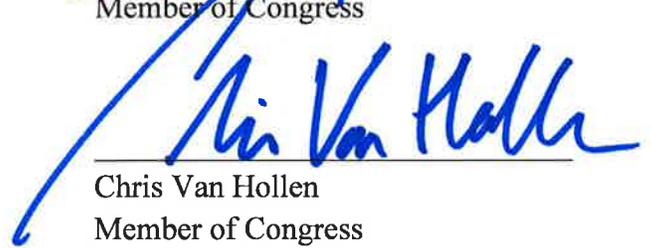
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



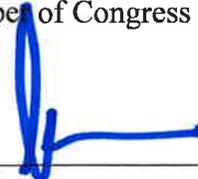
Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



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
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Jim Langevin

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Alan Grayson

Alan Grayson
Member of Congress

Bruce Braley

Bruce L. Braley
Member of Congress

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

Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

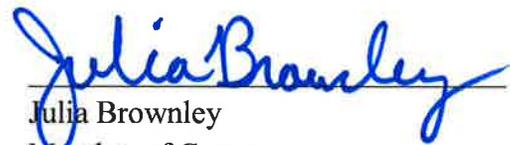

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

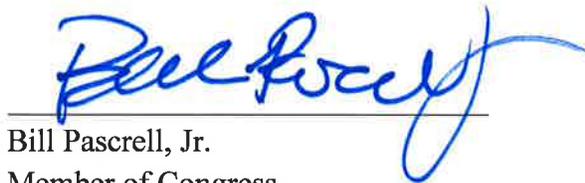

John Lewis
Member of Congress


Rush Holt
Member of Congress


Judy Chu
Member of Congress


Joseph P. Kennedy III
Member of Congress

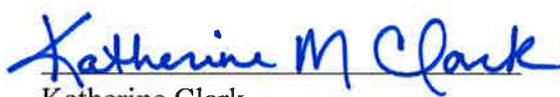

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress


Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress


Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress


Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress


Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

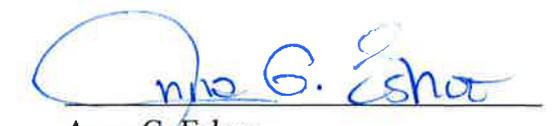

Katherine Clark
Member of Congress


Luis V. Gutierrez
Member of Congress


Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress


William L. Enyart
Member of Congress


Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress


Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

And Deutch

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
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Matt Cartwright

Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

Jose E. Serrano

Jose E. Serrano
Member of Congress

James A. Himes

James A. Himes
Member of Congress

Madeleine Z. Bordallo

Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Elizabeth H. Esty

Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Gary C. Peters

Gary C. Peters
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly

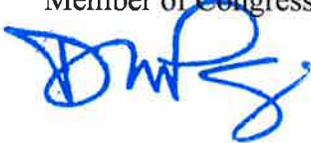
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



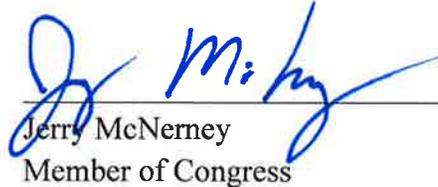
Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress



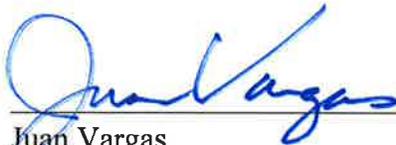
John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress



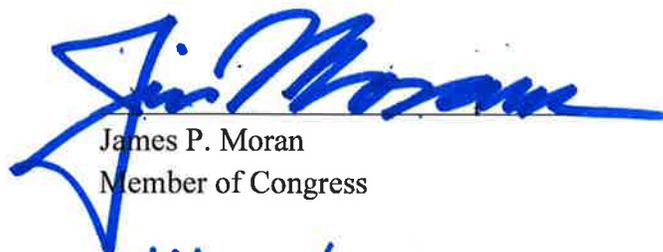
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



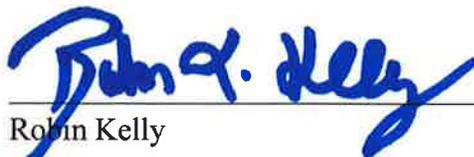
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



James P. Moran
Member of Congress



Robin Kelly
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Ann M. Kuster
Member of Congress



John B. Larson
Member of Congress



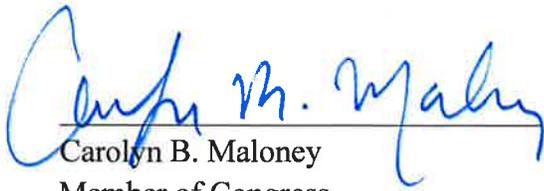
André Carson
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

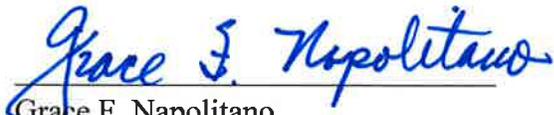


Lois Frankel
Member of Congress


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