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March 17, 2010

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The Honorable Hugo Llorens  
U.S. Ambassador to Honduras  
Embassy of the United States  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We write to urge you to work with the government of recently inaugurated Honduran President Pepe Lobo to curb violence against the country's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. With a new government in place in Honduras, we believe there is an important opportunity to bring this issue front and center.

As you know, last year was brutal for the LGBT community in Honduras. In its December 2009 report, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) wrote that the situation for members of the country's gay community "has become noticeably worse."

The year began with the killing of Cynthia Nicole, 32, a leading Honduran transgender rights defender on January 9, 2009. Unknown assailants murdered Cynthia in a drive-by shooting. The year ended with the killing of Walter Tróchez, a 27-year-old gay rights and HIV/AIDS activist, in another drive-by shooting by unknown assailants on December 13, 2009.

Last year's attacks on the LGBT community escalated substantially starting in June. National and international human rights organizations recorded at least 19 known murders of prominent members of the LGBT community by year's end. In addition, non-lethal attacks and other violent acts against LGBT individuals were reported on an alarming scale, and additional murders have likely gone unreported. The human rights defenders who have documented these abuses have reportedly been threatened and the atmosphere of intimidation for members of the LGBT community remains high.

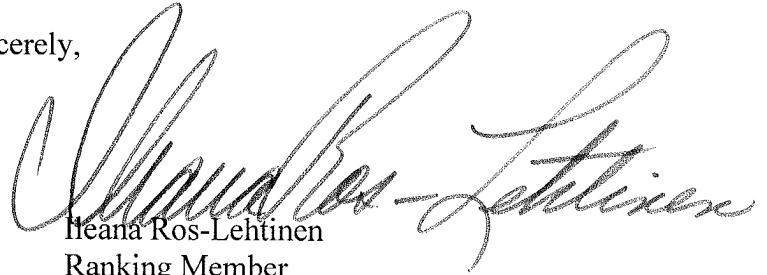
As U.S. Ambassador to Honduras, we urge you to work with the Lobo government to respond to this violence and to encourage government efforts to prevent further violence against the LGBT community. This could, for example, include police sensitization training. In addition, we ask that you urge the Honduran government to investigate any unsolved murders of LGBT individuals.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing about your efforts to address this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Eliot L. Engel  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the  
Western Hemisphere



Heana Ros-Lehtinen  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Affairs