

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 24, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 "C" Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

Next Monday, June 28th, marks the first anniversary of the coup in Honduras. We write to express our continuing concern regarding the grievous violations of human rights and the democratic order which commenced with the coup and continue to this day. We recognize the challenges facing President Lobo and welcome efforts to reconcile the country and strengthen the rule of law that are consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law.

It is our belief that the State Department should rise to this occasion and assign Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Posner to visit Honduras and make a prompt assessment of what is occurring there with regards to human and political rights. Without an early and accurate report, we would be reluctant to see U.S. support for Honduras continue without significant restrictions.

During your recent visit to Latin America, you asserted that Honduras has made progress since President Lobo took office in January 2010. However, it is our view that political violence continues to wrack Honduras, and insecurity grips much of the population. Reports indicate that many Hondurans fear for their safety, lack confidence in the rule of law, and remain subject to the whims of those in power, including architects and holdovers from last year's coup that are protected by a climate of impunity.

In this year alone, nine journalists in Honduras have been murdered, and several more have been tortured, kidnapped and suffered death threats, including threats against their families. Also, there are cases of reporters who have been forced to leave the country due to these threats, some of them looking for asylum here in the U.S. and Canada. Members of social movements who oppose or criticize the government have been victims of violence and subject to ongoing intimidation. Several judges have been summarily dismissed for raising principled questions about the legality of the coup. Against this backdrop, a number of Army officials suspected of being involved in the coup have been appointed to executive positions in the Lobo government. Most notably, General Romeo Vásquez Velásquez, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces at the time of the coup, is now the head of Hondutel, the national telecommunications company. The appointment of Velásquez, a primary actor in the coup, is troubling because in his new position he controls the country's telephone, Internet and fax lines at a time when human rights advocates and political opposition leaders fear they are being persecuted for their activism.

President Lobo is eager, in his words, to bury the past. But these violations of human rights and democratic order persist in Honduras on his watch. At the same time, Honduras has failed to live up to its commitments regarding the Truth Commission and establishing a

government of national unity, which the U.S. last year deemed as prerequisites for Honduras being treated again with the legitimacy of a democratic government.

We strongly believe U.S. policymakers need an accurate assessment of the current human rights situation in Honduras in order to formulate policies that can support the Lobo administration's efforts to strengthen the rule of law and return the democratic order to the country. We strongly and respectfully recommend that you direct Assistant Secretary Posner to visit Honduras for the purpose of collecting the facts on the current human and political rights situation and reporting back to you and to us as promptly as possible, including but not limited to, the following issues:

1. The murders, assaults, threats and exiling of journalists.
2. The murders, assaults, threats and exiling of members of the Resistance Movement, labor unions and the Afro, Indigenous and LGBT communities.
3. The dismissal by the Supreme Court of judges who opposed the coup.
4. The resources and mandate available to Ana Pineda, special advisor to President Lobo on human rights, to carry out her work.
5. The potential for the Truth Commission to lead to justice and reconciliation.

The Congress needs a clear and candid assessment by the U.S. Department of State concerning conditions on the ground in Honduras as they are – not as we might wish or imagine them to be. Our country cannot claim to uphold the democratic values at stake in Honduras or the region more broadly, and we in Congress cannot countenance additional support for the government of Honduras, without a reliable report about the status of political and human rights as they prevail under President Lobo and a plan for addressing these conditions effectively.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress



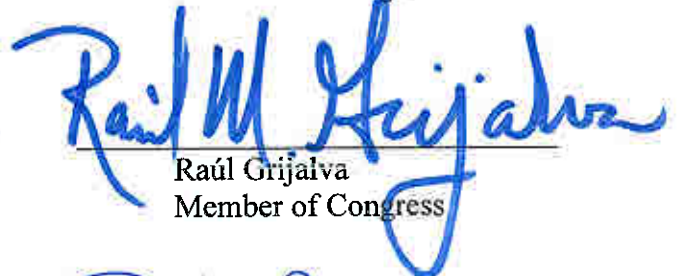
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress



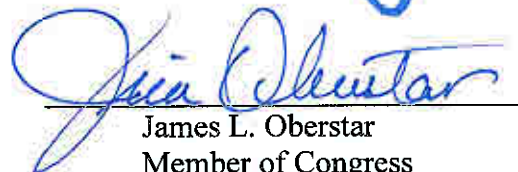
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



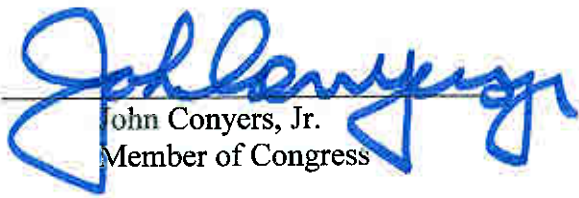
Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

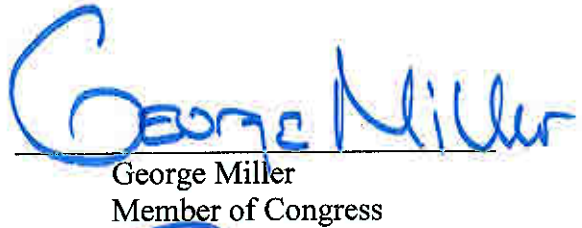


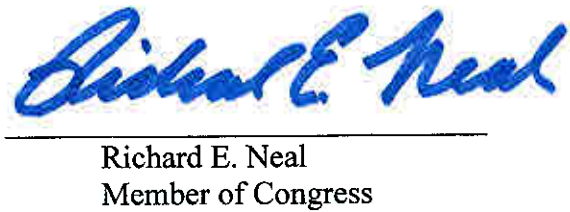
James L. Oberstar
Member of Congress

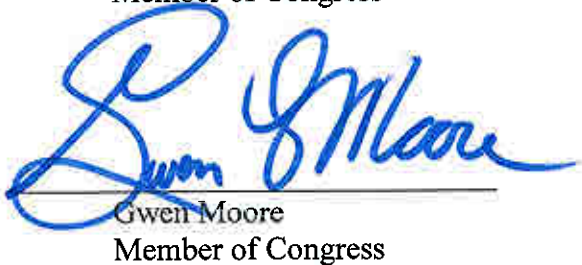

John Conyers, Jr.
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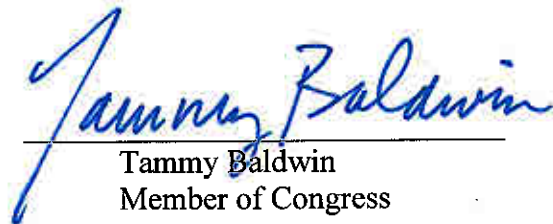

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

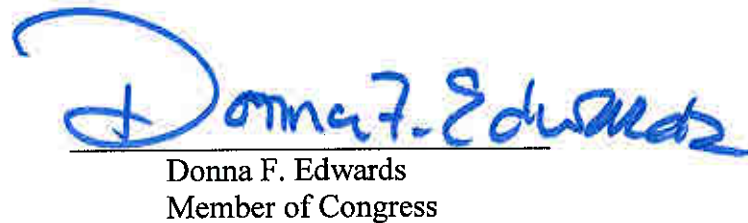

John W. Olver
Member of Congress

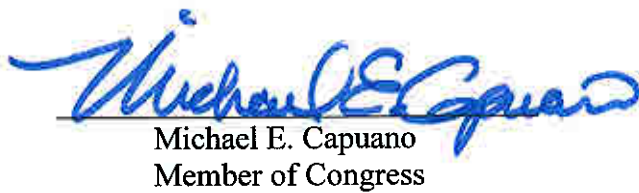

George Miller
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Richard E. Neal
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Gwen Moore
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Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

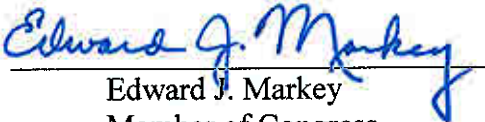

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress


Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

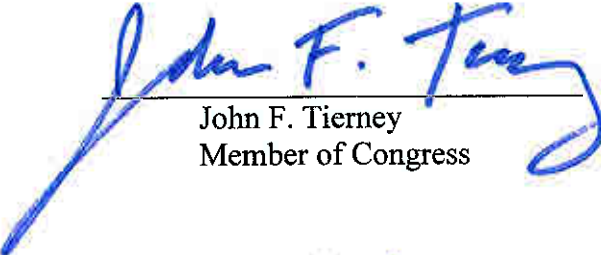

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

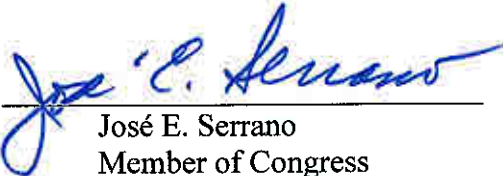

James P. Moran
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Member of Congress



Bill Delahunt
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Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress


John F. Tierney
Member of Congress


José E. Serrano
Member of Congress


Betty McCollum
Member of Congress


Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

cc: Michael Posner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
Arturo Valenzuela, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs