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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0517

1126 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0517
(202) 225-2861

100 WEST ALISAL
SALINAS, CA 93901
(831) 424-2229

701 OCEAN STREET
ROOM 318
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
(831) 429-1976

www.farr.house.gov

October 19, 2010

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

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We are encouraged to see that the U.S. government has acknowledged the gravity of the political and human rights situation in Honduras. The August 4, 2010, trip by senior State Department official Maria Otero to review the state of human rights and democratic governance under Honduran President Porfirio Lobo demonstrates a new assertiveness by the Obama Administration to observe and protect political and human rights in the country. We believe U.S. assistance, particularly military and police aid, should be suspended until the government of Porfirio Lobo distances itself from individuals involved in the June 28, 2009 military coup d'etat and adequately addresses the ongoing human and political rights violations.

We have received credible reports from Honduran human rights organizations that abuses continue with near impunity. Members of the human rights community, journalists and activists continue to be attacked and intimidated. The Honduran Committee of the Families of the Detained and Disappeared (COFADEH), a highly esteemed human rights organization, reports assassinations, arbitrary arrests, beatings and death threats targeting political activists and the human rights workers who attempt to protect them. COFADEH described August as a "black" month for human rights and has documented a disturbing number of incidents that have taken place in recent weeks.

Since the beginning of August 2010, at least six individuals identified with the opposition movement against the Lobo Administration have been murdered, including several rural activists, a teacher union leader and a journalist. Several journalists known for their criticism of the coup d'etat have been arbitrarily detained or suffered physical attacks.

cc: David T. Johnson, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
Maria Otero, Under Secretary of State for Democracy & Global Affairs
Michael Posner, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights & Labor
Dr. Arturo Valenzuela, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs
Julissa Reynoso, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Dan Restrepo, Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs, National Security Council

An opposition radio station - Radio Uno of San Pedro Sula - was forced off the air and its transmission cables were cut; police fired tear gas and a water cannon at demonstrators outside the radio station. The Honduran authorities have failed to investigate and prosecute dozens of other murders and violent attacks against pro-democratic political activists since the June 28, 2009 coup d'etat. The victims and their families have been left vulnerable with no access to justice. There is serious concern that the rule of law is directly threatened by members of the Honduran police and armed forces.

On the weekend of September 17, 2010, a leader in the Social Security labor union, Juana Bustillo, was assassinated while riding in a car with the union's president Hector Escoto, who was hospitalized. Earlier in September, four peasants were murdered in the Aguan region - home to a land conflict where landless peasants are attempting to secure plots to build homes. In the first incident, three people were killed, allegedly by private security guards of Miguel Facussé Barjóm -- one of Honduras' largest landowners. In the second incident, Francisco Miranda, a leader among landless peasants, was shot several times by unknown men while running errands on his bicycle. The newspaper La Tribuna, owned by Facussé's nephew, reported that the killing was part of an internal dispute in the landless peasants' organization.

On many occasions, Honduran authorities have summarily dismissed the attacks against political activists, human rights defenders and journalists as a symptom of criminality linked to drug trafficking and organized crime. Crime is a problem; however, since the June 28, 2009 coup, there has been a distinct pattern of political violence that merits a strong U.S. response.

It is our expectation that the Obama Administration will advance justice by urging the Lobo Administration to vigorously investigate and prosecute threats and attacks against activists and journalists, and to suspend any members of the police or military credibly alleged to be involved in such crimes while investigations take place. In addition, the State Department should urge the Lobo Administration to recognize the undeniable political character of many of the attacks against activists and journalists. A strong democracy provides security to those who participate peacefully in political process. Lack of security demonstrates deficiencies in Honduran democracy. Tragically, since the August 4, 2010 visit of Undersecretary of State Maria Otero, Honduras has not advanced human rights or political freedoms. Until the government of Honduras makes sustained progress in improving its deplorable human rights record, we believe it is inappropriate to provide direct assistance to Honduran authorities, particularly to the police or military.

We also urge the Obama Administration to refrain from supporting the immediate re-entry of Honduras in the Organization of American States. The Obama Administration does a great disservice to democracy and human rights across the Western Hemisphere by making an exception for Honduras, while the Lobo Administration continues to include perpetrators of the June 28, 2009 coup d'etat and fails to prosecute politically motivated crimes.

Sincerely,



REP. SAM FARR



REP. JESSE JACKSON



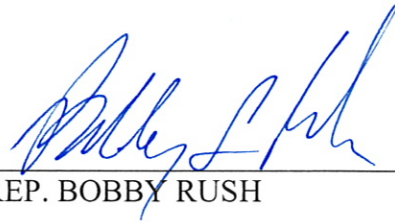
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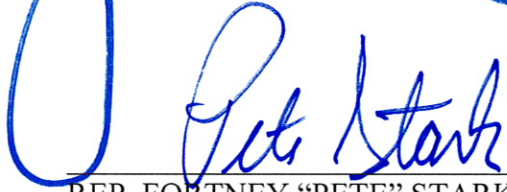
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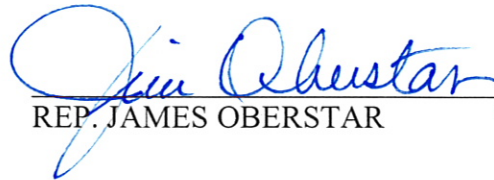
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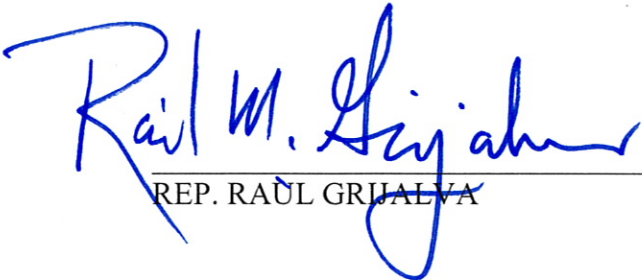
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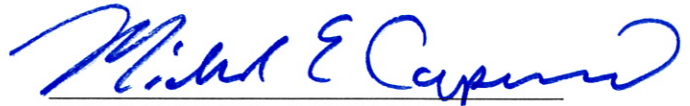
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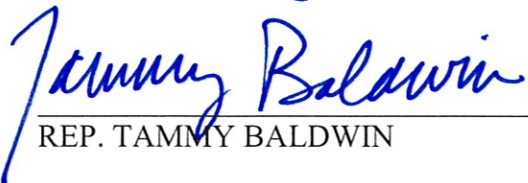
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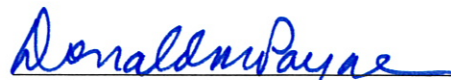
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