

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We write to follow up on an exchange of letters with State Department officials regarding the urgent situation for trade unionists in Honduras who have faced death threats and other forms of intimidation. The gravity of this request is all the more salient with the murder of prominent Honduran activist, Berta Cáceres, co-founder of the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras (Copinh), barely a week after she was threatened once again. The safety of activists throughout Central America remains a serious concern, and we appreciate the efforts and diligence of the State Department to ensure a strong message of support for indigenous and labor rights, freedom of association, and freedom of speech.

Despite recent efforts, we are left with concerns we hope you are able to address. It is our understanding that the Honduran government offered police protection to Nelson Geovanni Nuñez Chavez, Technical Advisor for the Federation of Unions of Agro-Industrial Workers (FESTAGRO, formerly COSIBAH), but that it was not accepted due to concerns with allegations of police corruption in Honduras, which has been widely documented. Therefore, under these circumstances, offering protection from the police is not a viable option for threatened activists. Additionally, a colleague and fellow activist of Mr. Nuñez, Tomás Membreño, has not been offered any protection. We ask the U.S. Embassy to work with the government of Honduras to provide funding for protection for Mr. Nuñez and Mr. Membreño in the form and from a private provider of their own choosing. This type of security arrangement has worked well in similar situations involving activists in Colombia and Mexico.

Additionally, we request a detailed record of all Embassy personnel's contacts with Mr. Nuñez and Mr. Membreño, including dates, issues discussed, and follow-up steps that the Embassy plans to take to continue communications. We also request a detailed record of all Embassy personnel's contacts with the Honduran government regarding the security of or the threats against these trade unionists, including the name and position of the official, the issues discussed, the requests made by the Embassy, the response from the Honduran officials, planned follow up action, concrete measures and the dates on which they are or will be implemented.

As with our earlier letter, we urge you to communicate your alarm about these threats against activists to the Government of Honduras, and to press the government to denounce these attacks. Securing labor rights by holding countries accountable has been a top priority for this Administration, and calling on the Honduran government in a public forum to condemn the

threats and murder would send a clear message that the plight of the unionists and the workers they represent is not acceptable.

We also request the Embassy to promptly issue a public statement expressing its alarm about continuous threats against trade unionists, and calling on the government of Honduras to immediately investigate, prosecute and swiftly bring to justice those responsible for terrorizing these individuals and their families.

It is our understanding that the Support Mission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) is beginning to be implemented. It is our hope that the Embassy will urge the Honduran government to give the body full political independence and the ability to enforce its mandate to combat corruption and impunity. Honduran citizens demand progress, rather than another body to perform studies and evaluations to issue recommendations that are never adopted, as has happened in the past. We hope the embassy will encourage the MACCIH, within its quite limited mandate, to forcefully address violence and threats of violence against trade unionists and other human rights defenders, swiftly bringing the perpetrators to justice and ending impunity.

Furthermore, we ask the Embassy to strongly encourage the government of Honduras to promptly enact legislation creating a government-funded nationwide system of protection of the individual's choosing for labor, campesino, Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous activists, LGBTI and other human rights defenders. Ms. Cáceres' murder highlights the peril activists face in Honduras. Her efforts on behalf of indigenous Hondurans must not be in vain.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your report back on the details requested and on planned actions to ensure protection for those who have already been threatened, as well as to prevent future threats.

Sincerely,



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



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



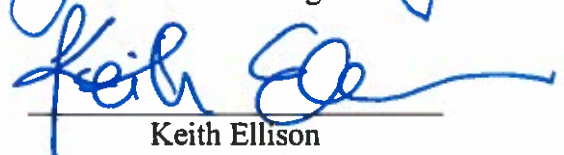
John Conyers, Jr.
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Janice Schakowsky
Member of Congress



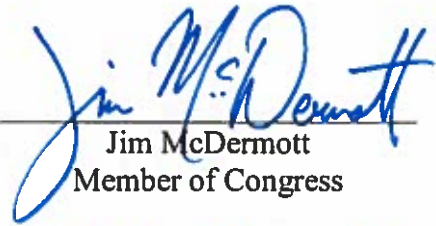
Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



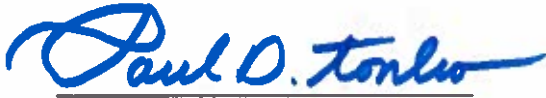
Keith Ellison
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Donna F. Edwards
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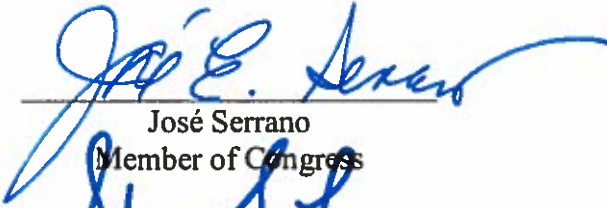
Jim McDermott
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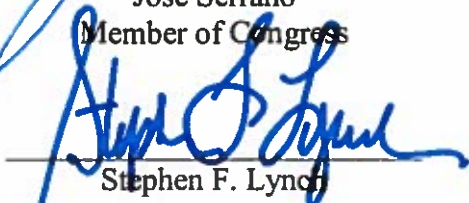
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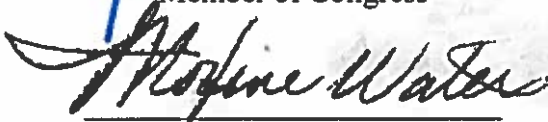
Betty McCollum
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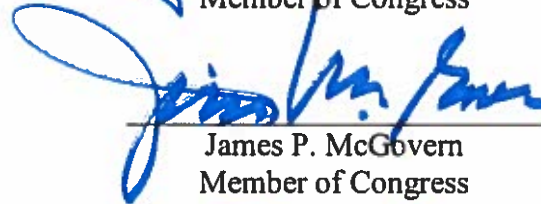
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