

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

We write to express our grave concern with the attacks against environmental and land activists, human rights defenders and local communities in Honduras. As you know, Congress has approved specific conditions to promote and protect human rights and address corruption in Honduras. We therefore urge the Administration to vigorously apply U.S. law related to assistance for, and investment in, Honduras.

Just over one year ago, renowned Honduran indigenous activist Berta Cáceres was murdered. She had denounced 33 death threats against her and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had previously tasked the Honduran government with providing her protective measures. Unfortunately, Ms. Cáceres's death was part of a longstanding pattern of killings of human rights defenders and environmental activists who advocate for the protection of their natural resources, and journalists and others who expose corruption associated with extractive activities.

On January 31st, the nongovernmental organization Global Witness published a report which concludes that Honduras is "the most dangerous place in the world to defend land rights and the environment," with over 120 activists murdered since the coup d'état in 2009. The report details the widespread threats, attacks, stigmatization, and criminalization of civil society activists who raise concerns about the human rights, social and environmental impacts of hydropower, agribusiness, mining, logging and tourism projects. The report indicates that government officials, security forces, and business elites have colluded to impose extractive projects on indigenous, Afro-Honduran and campesino communities and to silence opposition. Lack of political will and weak institutions too often fail to respond effectively to these crimes, reinforcing impunity in Honduras.

We are concerned with reports from these communities that their free, prior and informed consent is not being obtained in relation to the use of their land. Meanwhile, acts of corruption undermine laws governing environmental impact assessments, and conflicts of interest are ignored in order for extractive projects to proceed.

We are concerned that U.S. assistance has been provided to the Honduran government despite recurring threats and assassinations of human rights defenders and land rights and

environmental activists, and contrary to the requirements in section 7045(a) of division K of Public Law 114-113, including that civil society be able to “operate without interference.” Many of us are so troubled that we called for the suspension of U.S. military and security assistance and cosponsored the *Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act* in the last Congress.

Mr. Secretary, it is essential to ensure effective scrutiny of Honduras’ compliance with human rights conditions on U.S. assistance. In that regard, we call on you to:

- Establish effective criteria for measuring compliance with such human rights conditions, with the input of representatives of Honduran human rights and other civil society organizations that have been targeted and in consultation with the relevant U.S. congressional committees.
- Ensure effective scrutiny of whether such conditions are met, and if not met that assistance is withheld in accordance with U.S. law.
- Provide transparency and public access to comprehensive information regarding U.S. bilateral and multilateral assistance for Honduras.
- Work with the Department of the Treasury to oppose investments by International Financial Institutions in Honduran industries credibly implicated in human rights violations.
- Urge the Honduran government to take vigorous steps to eradicate corruption; ensure the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous communities affected by extractive projects; protect human rights defenders and environmental activists; and end impunity for human rights violations.
- Express strong and consistent support for the legitimate and important role of Honduran civil society organizations in Honduras.

Thank you for your serious attention and consideration of these urgent matters. We look forward to your response and working together on these issues.

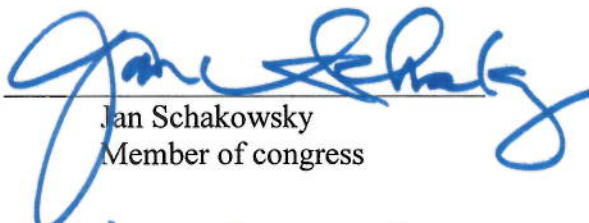
Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



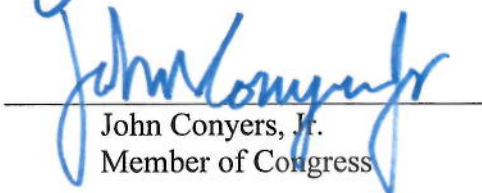
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



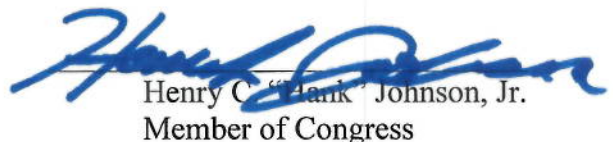
Jan Schakowsky
Member of congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

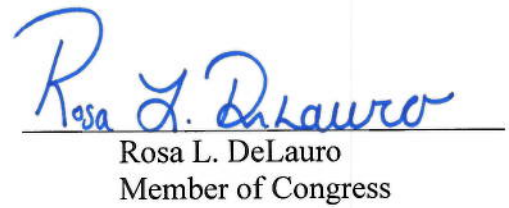


John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

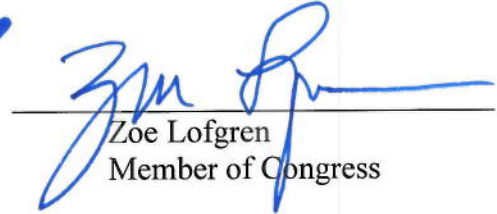


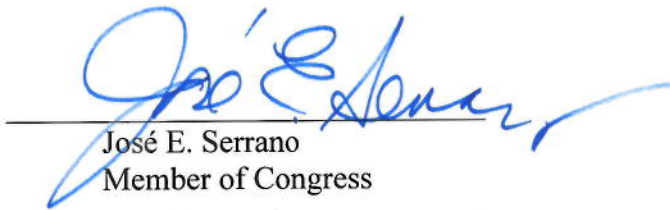
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

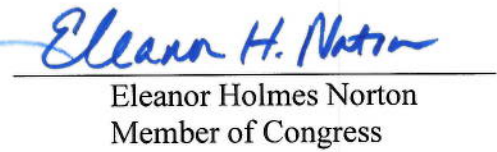

John Lewis
Member of Congress

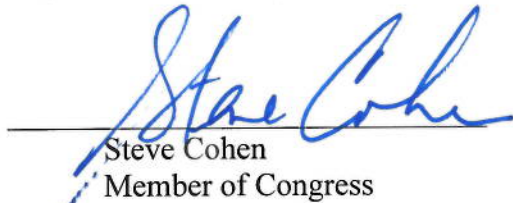

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress


Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress

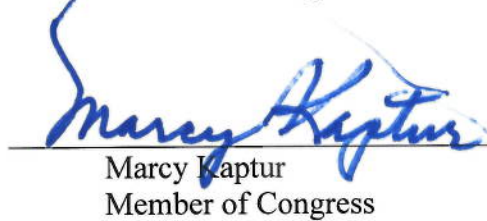

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

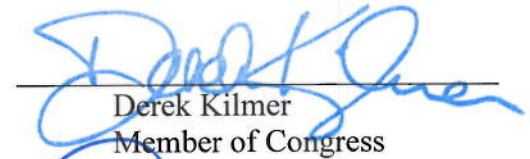

José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

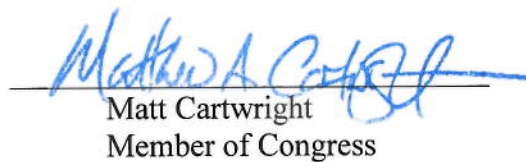

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

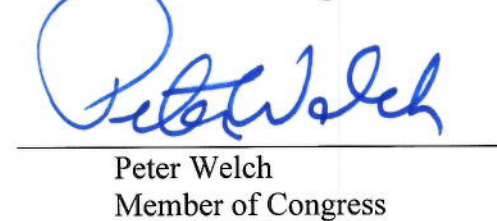

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

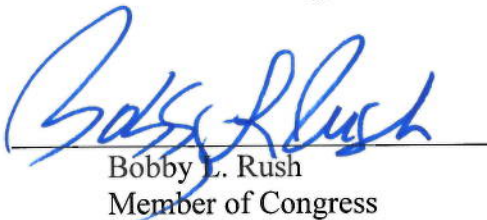

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

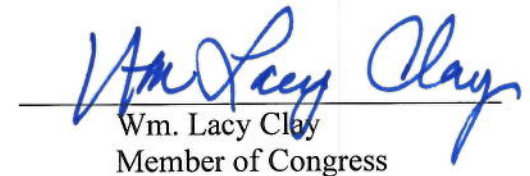

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

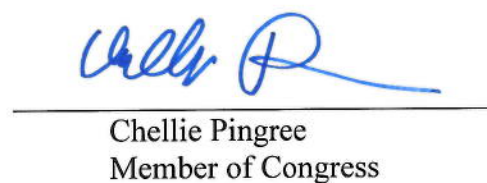

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress


Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

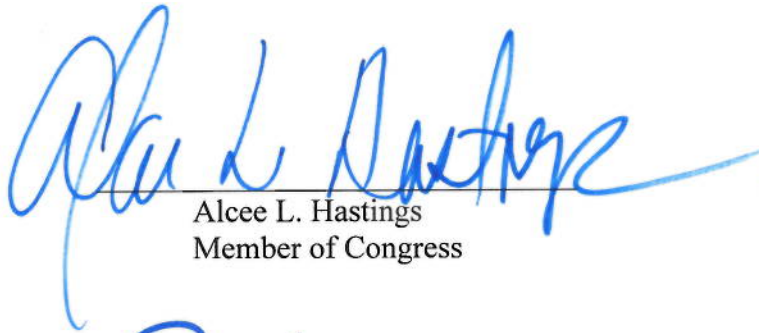

Peter Welch
Member of Congress


Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

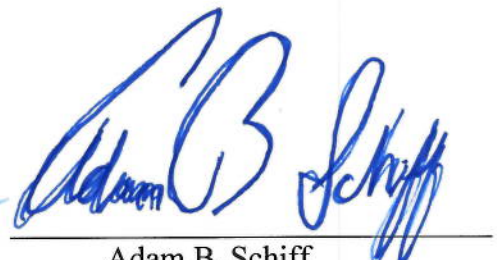

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress


Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



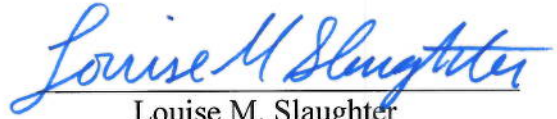
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



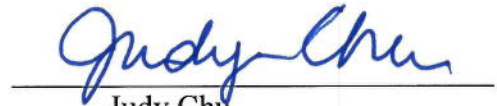
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



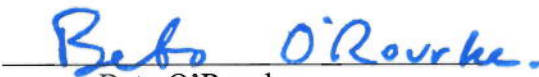
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



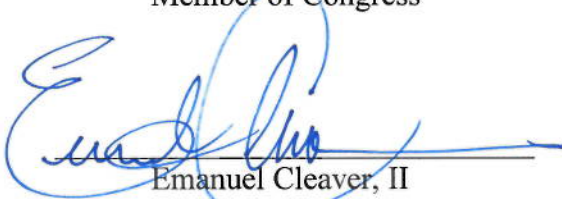
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



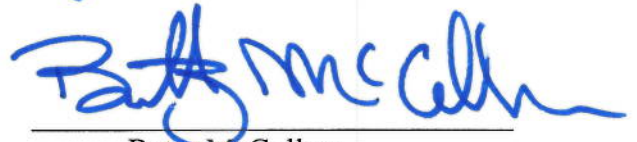
Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



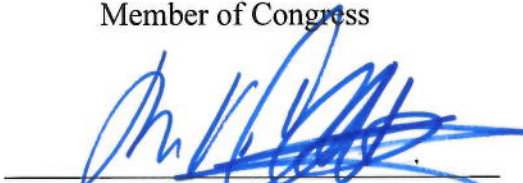
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



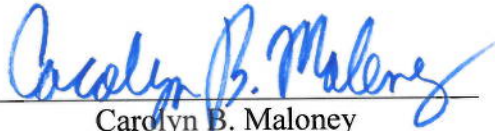
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



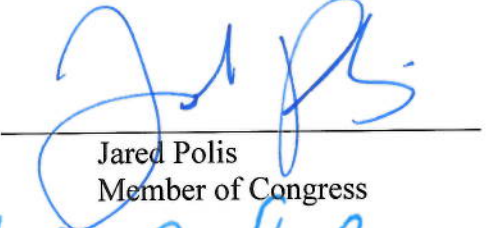
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



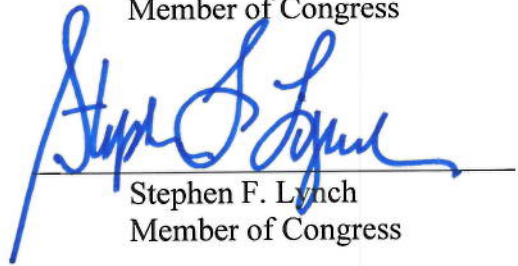
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



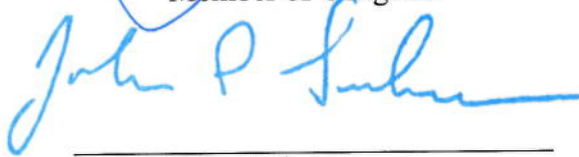
Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



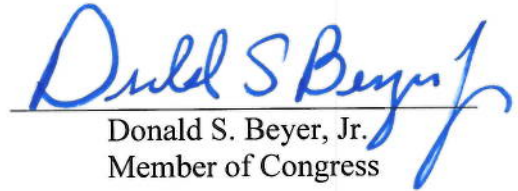
Jared Polis
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Stephen F. Lynch
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John P. Sarbanes
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Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
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Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



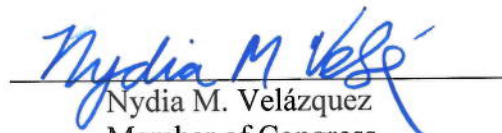
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



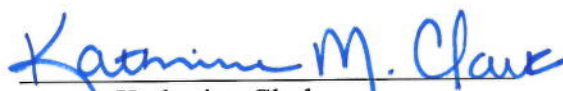
Carol Shea-Porter
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Katherine Clark
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Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



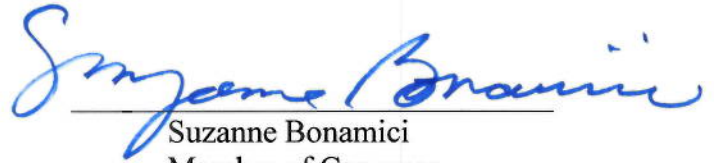
William R. Keating
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Danny K. Davis
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David E. Price
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Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress