

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 13, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We write to express our greatest sense of urgency and extreme concern regarding the escalation of murders, threats and attacks against Colombian human rights defenders, trade unionists, LGBT and women activists, land rights advocates, and community, campesino, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous leaders.

We know that you share our concern. For this reason, we urge you to press and work with the Colombian government to publicly condemn this violence in the strongest possible terms, increase and expand mechanisms designed to prevent such attacks from being carried out, and provide defenders and social leaders protection so that they may continue exercising their invaluable leadership and work. Such actions must be done repeatedly and consistently, in all regions and at all levels of government. We also strongly recommend that protection measures be designed in close consultation with vulnerable communities, individuals and organizations in order to strengthen their effectiveness.

We emphatically condemn these murders and the intimidation of social leaders and activists. They are the very human capital that Colombia requires as it now faces the challenges of implementing the peace accords, promoting development and political participation, and providing guarantees for truth, justice, reparations and an end to violence. Colombia does not need more victims; it needs community, regional and national leaders willing to take on these challenges.

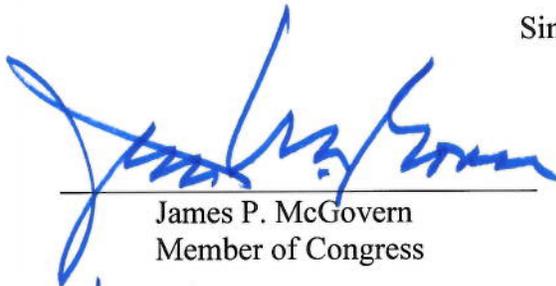
In June, U.S. Ambassador Kevin Whitaker joined the ambassadors from Sweden, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Norway and Canada and denounced the killings of Colombian human rights defenders and pledged to work on behalf of defenders at risk. We strongly encourage you to direct Ambassador Whitaker and this diplomatic group to visit areas where defenders are most threatened and vulnerable, denounce the violence perpetrated against these defenders and activists, and provide mechanisms of protection.

At the same time, we urge you, Mr. Secretary, to work with the appropriate authorities in Colombia to ensure the prompt implementation of point 3.4 of the Peace Accord in its entirety, which includes a fully functioning High Level Commission on Security Guarantees and an active Special Investigation Unit within the Public Prosecutor's Office, along with point 5.2., which commits the government to establishing policies and strategies of protection for human rights

defenders, in particular those who are victims of paramilitary and official authorities. Given the spike in killings and assaults, it is imperative that these mandates are achieved rapidly and vigorously. It is also notable that neither of these points was raised as a matter of controversy by opponents of the accords.

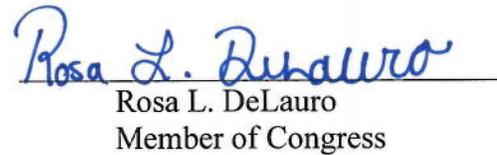
Please know, Mr. Secretary, that we stand ready to provide whatever support we can to protect these defenders and activists and advance their role in building and consolidating a just and lasting peace in Colombia.

Sincerely,



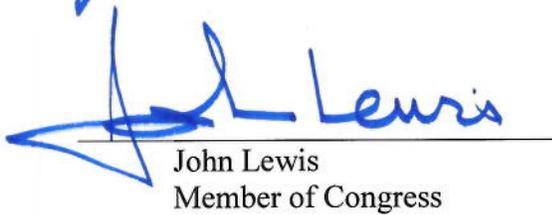
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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



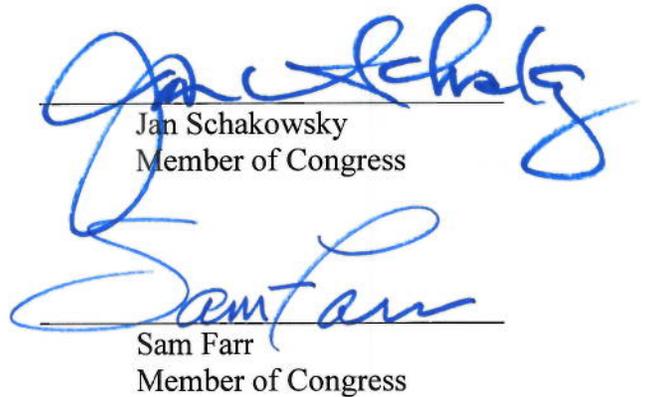
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Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress



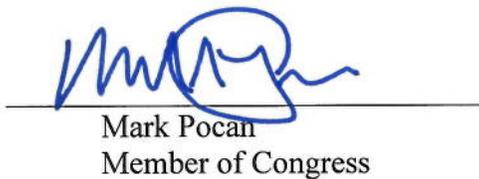
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John Lewis  
Member of Congress



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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



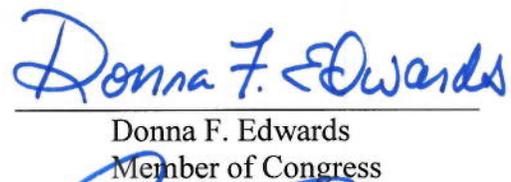
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Sam Farr  
Member of Congress



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Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress



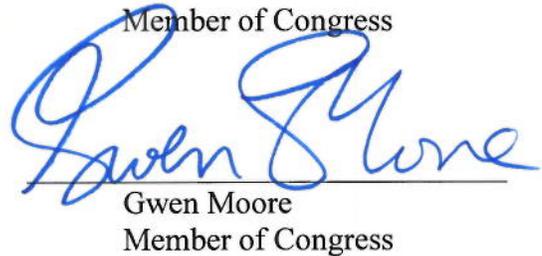
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Donna F. Edwards  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress



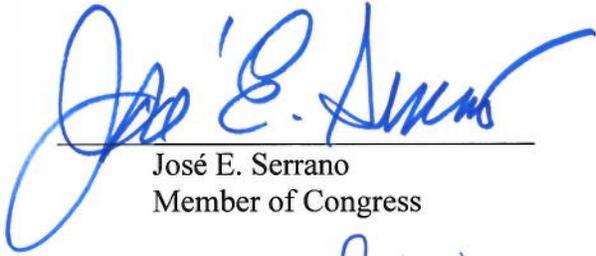
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Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



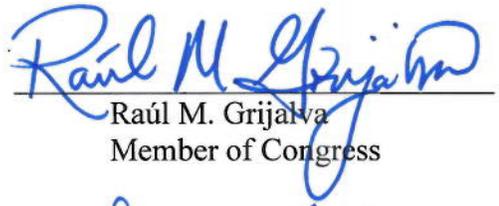
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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress



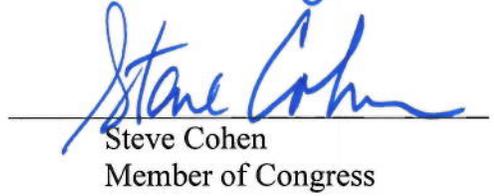
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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



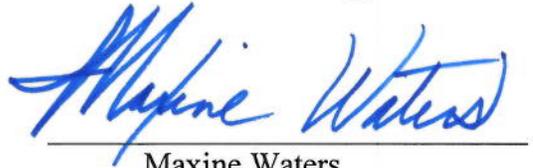
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David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress



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Alan Grayson  
Member of Congress



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Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



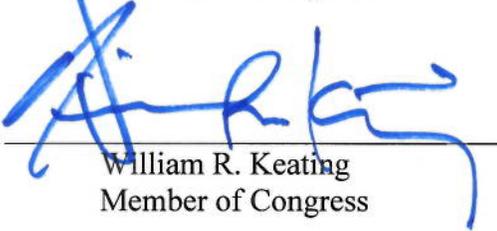
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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



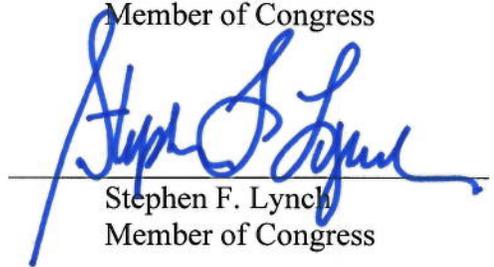
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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



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Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress



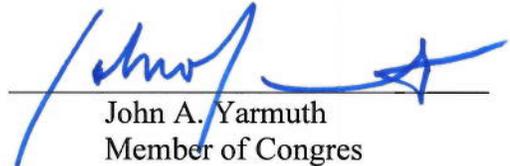
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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Beto O'Rourke  
Member of Congress

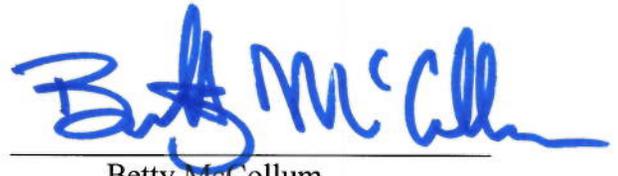


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John A. Yarmuth  
Member of Congress



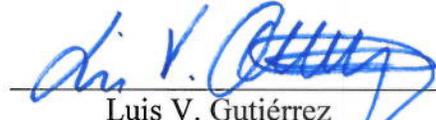
Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



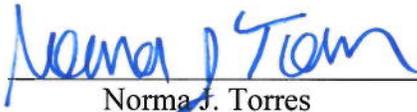
Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



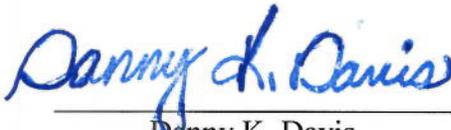
Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



David E. Price  
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

