

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 2, 2016

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

Dear Secretary of State Kerry,

We write to urge the State Department to ensure that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) is actively involved in the investigation into the murder of acclaimed Honduran human rights activist Berta Cáceres.

We continue to mourn the March 3, 2016 murder of Ms. Cáceres and, less than two weeks later, the murder of her colleague Nelson Garcia. We are acutely aware that skepticism abounds regarding the willingness and capacity of Honduran authorities to carry out an effective investigation in this case. Such skepticism has been expressed not only among Ms. Cáceres' colleagues and family members, but also by members of the international community, including Members of the United States Congress.

In this context, the family of Ms. Cáceres and the organization that she led, COPINH, have requested the involvement of the IACHR. Given the high profile of this case and the degree of skepticism toward the official investigation, we believe that IACHR involvement is warranted. Therefore, we respectfully ask that you encourage the Government of Honduras to work with the IACHR and with the family and legal representatives of Ms. Cáceres to enter an agreement that would provide for active IACHR involvement in this case.

We know that U.S. authorities have been providing some technical assistance to Honduran authorities in this investigation. Furthermore, we understand that the government of Honduras has requested the assistance of the Honduras office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as well as the Organization of American States-sponsored Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH). However, neither the OHCHR Honduras office nor the MACCIH are fully operational yet. Moreover, while the Organization of American States has approved the MACCIH's involvement in aspects of the case pertaining to corruption, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro has made very clear that the human rights aspects of the case are within the jurisdiction of the IACHR.

The Secretary of State

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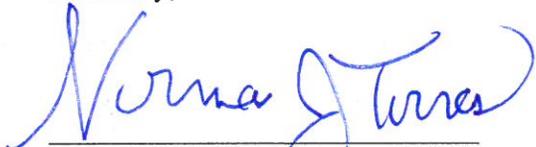
May 2, 2016

Additionally, there is a compelling precedent for IACHR involvement in an active criminal investigation. Following the September 26, 2014 disappearance of 43 students in Iguala, Mexico, the Government of Mexico, along with the families and legal representatives of the disappeared students, entered into agreement with the IACHR to create a Group of Experts. That group, which consisted of internationally-recognized prosecutors and criminal justice experts, was tasked with assisting the Government of Mexico in searching for the students, investigating the circumstances of their disappearance, and assisting the Government of Mexico in developing policies related to enforced disappearance.

The work of the Group of Experts has been widely acclaimed, and Members of the United States Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, have been strongly supportive of the Group. Their work has also given hope to the families of the victims and to the human rights community in Mexico. While the circumstances of Ms. Cáceres' murder are in many ways distinct from the circumstances of the disappearance of the 43 students in Mexico, we absolutely believe the U.S. government should press for robust IACHR involvement in the investigation of the Berta Cáceres case. Honduras deserves the same fidelity to the rule of law.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

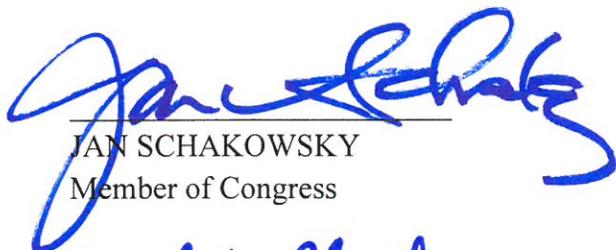
Sincerely,



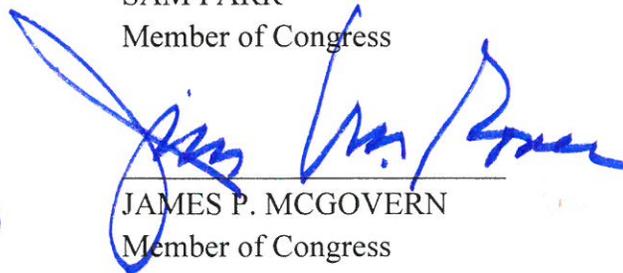
NORMA J. TORRES
Member of Congress



SAM FARR
Member of Congress



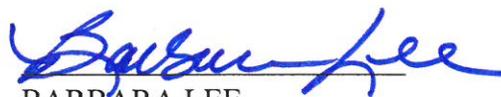
JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress



JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress



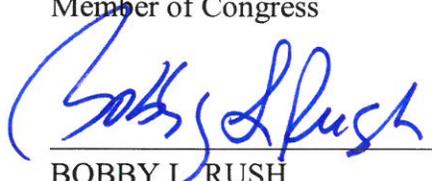
RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

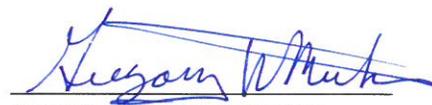


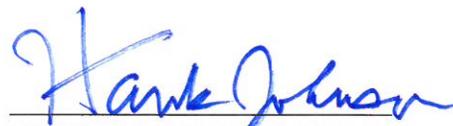
BARBARA LEE
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JERROLD NADLER
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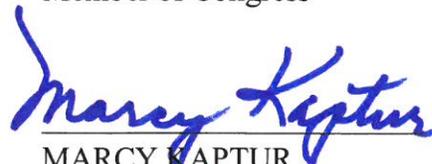

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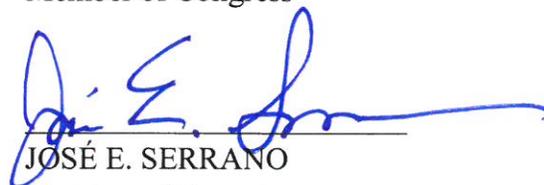

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Member of Congress

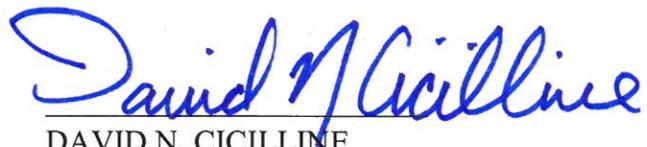

KEITH ELLISON
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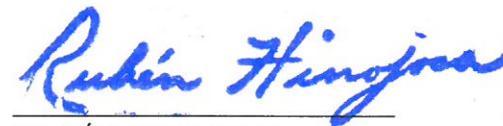

CHELLIE PINGREE
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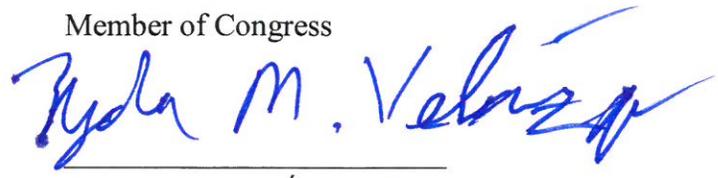

MARCY KAPTUR
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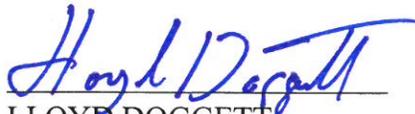

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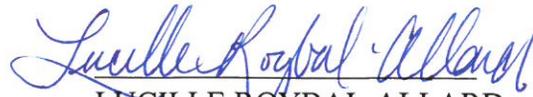

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Member of Congress

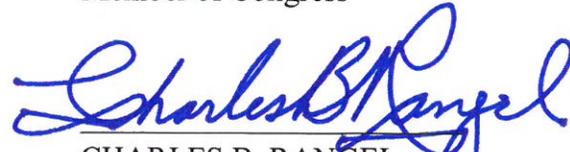

RUBÉN HINOJOSA
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NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress


LLOYD DOGGETT
Member of Congress


LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

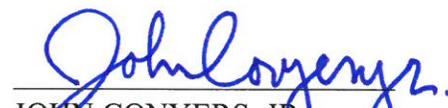

YVETTE D. CLARKE
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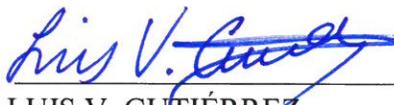

CHARLES B. RANGEL
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Member of Congress

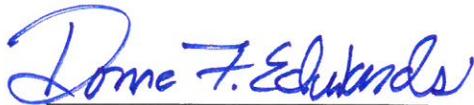

RICHARD M. NOLAN
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JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

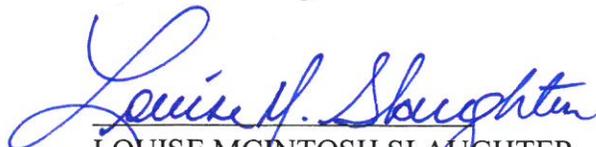

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Member of Congress


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Member of Congress


ADAM B. SCHIFF
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PAUL D. TONKO
Member of Congress


LOUISE MCINTOSH SLAUGHTER
Member of Congress


JIM MCDERMOTT
Member of Congress



RUBEN GALLEGO
Member of Congress



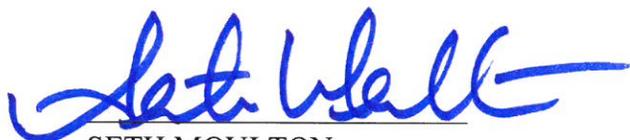
BILL FOSTER
Member of Congress



BETO O'ROURKE
Member of Congress



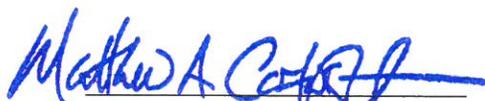
ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress



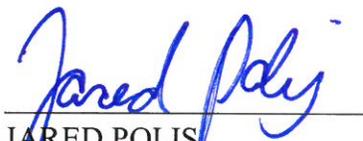
SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress



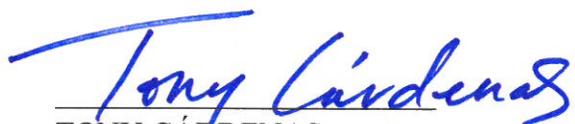
MICHAEL E. CAPUANO
Member of Congress



MATT CARTWRIGHT
Member of Congress



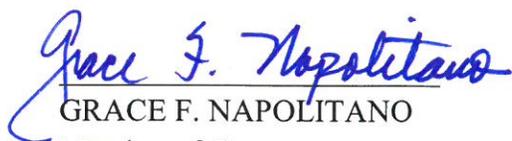
JARED POLIS
Member of Congress



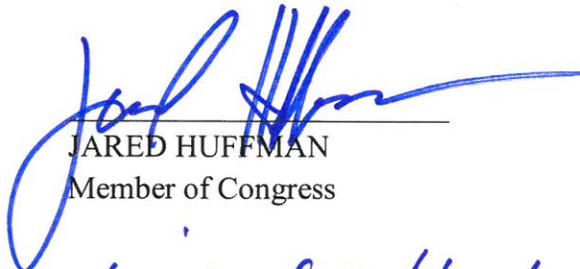
TONY CÁRDENAS
Member of Congress



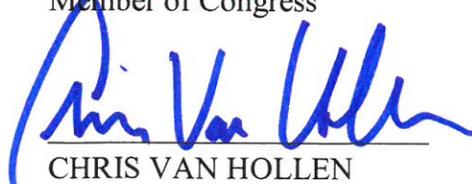
RON KIND
Member of Congress



GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress



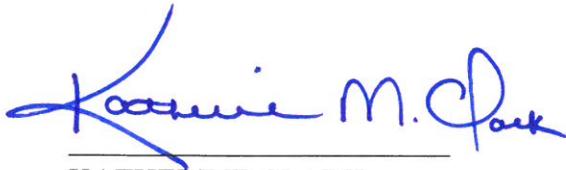
JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress



CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
Member of Congress



MICHAEL M. HONDA
Member of Congress



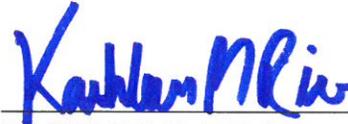
KATHERINE CLARK
Member of Congress



ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress



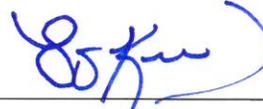
BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress



KATHLEEN M. RICE
Member of Congress



FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress



JOSEPH KENNEDY, JR. III
Member of Congress



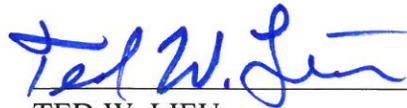
MARK POCAN
Member of Congress



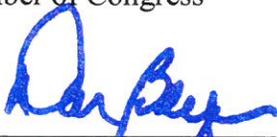
MARK DESAULNIER
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KAREN BASS
Member of Congress



TED W. LIEU
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DONALD S. BEYER, JR.
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