

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

May 24, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 "C" Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write with grave concern about the implementation of the 2016 Colombian Peace Accords and the continuing escalation of murders and attacks against human rights defenders and social leaders. We strongly urge you to insist that the Colombian government fully implement the historic peace accords reached with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and to protect the country's human rights defenders, who remain in grave danger. Initiatives by the Colombian government to weaken or overturn accord commitments should be emphatically opposed.

The U.S.-backed peace process offers a unique opportunity to end nearly sixty years of violent conflict, during which more than 261,000 Colombians lost their lives, eight million people were internally displaced, and tens of thousands of people were disappeared. Initial implementation of the process successfully resulted in the disarmament and demobilization of over 13,000 FARC combatants. In 2017, the national homicide rate dropped to the lowest level in decades, and many areas of the countryside experienced the first taste of security.

Today, though, serious concerns are rising. On April 16<sup>th</sup>, the United Nations Security Council warned that "the peace process stands today at a critical juncture." Continued implementation of the accord is being hampered by bureaucracy and decisions by the Duque Administration to reduce funding and rewrite elements of the accord on transitional justice and the return of land to victims of displacement. The government has been slow to expand the civilian presence of the state into areas affected by the conflict. Programs to reintegrate former combatants into economic life are advancing, but too slowly.

Consolidating peace requires sustained attention and investment. The accord provides Colombia a roadmap to better serve its forgotten rural citizens, tackle illicit drug production and organized crime, and address the inequality that fueled the conflict. Unfortunately, the Colombian government has not dismantled other illegal armed groups, including paramilitary successor groups, nor investigated their links to corrupt security forces, local politicians or business interests. As a result, illegal armed groups are expanding their reach into areas from which the FARC had withdrawn, and some ex-combatants have lost faith in the peace process and rearmed.

The U.S. government has a major stake in the successful implementation of the Colombian peace accords. Full implementation of the chapters on rural development and illicit crops would reduce the susceptibility of vast territories to armed group activity and illicit drug production. Encouraging the Colombian government to fully carry out its comprehensive commitments to help small farmers

voluntarily eradicate and replace coca production is in the best interests of the United States and offers a far more sustainable solution than forced eradication or a return to aerial herbicide spraying. As civilian government presence expands, good governance extends to ungoverned spaces, and peace is consolidated, durable advances in reducing coca can occur.

We strongly urge you to communicate unwavering American support for the three elements of the transitional justice system – the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), the Truth Commission, and the Unit to Search for the Disappeared. U.S. pressure to modify elements of the JEP, after Colombia's Constitutional Court upheld its statutory law, has sent an unfortunate signal regarding the rule of law and threatens to unravel a key element of the accord. "In a climate of uncertainty," the UN's special representative in Colombia warned, "the greatest uncertainty would be to reopen core elements of the underlying peace agreement itself." We are disturbed, therefore, about reports that the United States revoked visas issued to magistrates of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court in what appears a punitive response to decisions that uphold the constitutionality of the peace accord.

We urge you, Mr. Secretary, to ensure coordinated, whole-of-government diplomacy with one central and consistent message: urging the Colombian government to fully implement the 2016 peace accord. In that regard, we welcome the recent remarks by U.S. Ambassador Jonathan Cohen before the U.N. Security Council. We further emphasize the vital importance of continuing USAID's carefully targeted programming to support accord implementation, protect the rights of victims of the conflict, and support local development and peacebuilding efforts by women, *campesino*, Afro-Colombian and indigenous organizations.

The accord's slow implementation is significantly and adversely affecting human rights defenders and social leaders leading the recovery in war-torn areas. According to Colombia's Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría*), 431 human rights defenders and community leaders were killed between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2018. Most of these leaders, including many Afro-Colombian and indigenous people, were urging their neighbors to eradicate coca, defending the rights of victims, and building peace in their communities. The accords included mechanisms designed specifically to protect such leaders. The government's failure to implement these protection measures is a key factor behind the increase in murders, threats, and attacks.

We therefore ask you to vigorously press the Colombian government to carry out the measures agreed to in the peace accord to protect defenders. This includes convening and granting sufficient powers to the National Security Guarantees Commission to develop and advance plans to dismantle illegal armed groups and protect human rights defenders; helping communities at risk develop and launch protection plans; and ensuring that the designated special unit in the Attorney General's office is effectively dismantling paramilitary successor and organized crime groups. The Colombian government should develop individual and collective protection and prevention measures for human rights defenders and community leaders in consultation and coordination with those defenders who are at risk.

In closing, we underscore the importance of the United States using every diplomatic channel to encourage the Colombian government to implement the accord's ethnic chapter to ensure protection and respect for the rights of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, with special attention to preserving their collective territories.


Mr. Secretary, recognizing that the long-term interests of the United States are best served by a stable, rights-respecting Colombia, we ask you to provide a unified and unifying message that the United States supports full implementation of the 2016 peace accord and stands by its partner in consolidating peace, promoting and respecting human rights, and advancing the rule of law.

Thank you for your consideration of these vital matters.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



John Lewis  
Member of Congress



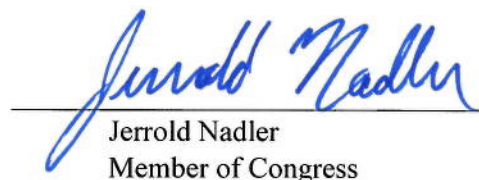
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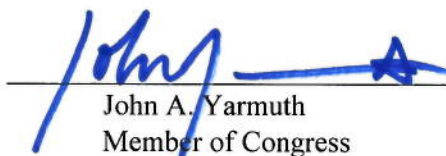
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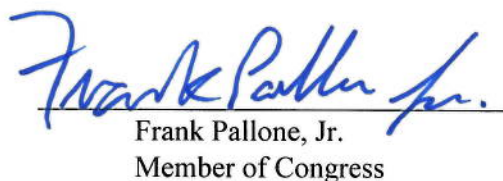
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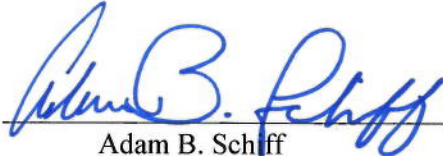


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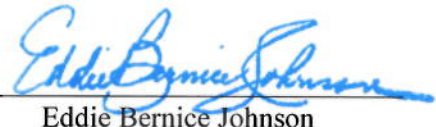


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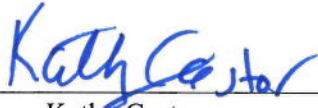




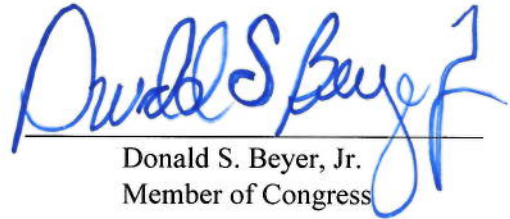
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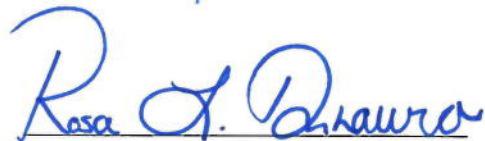
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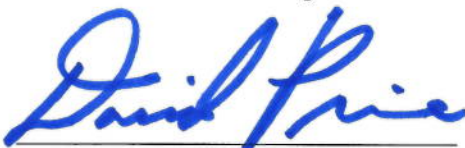
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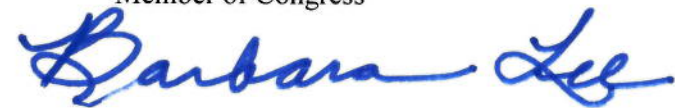
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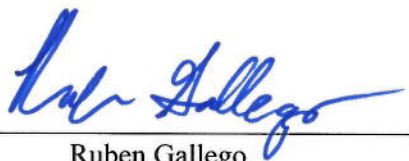
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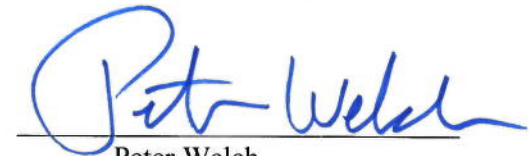
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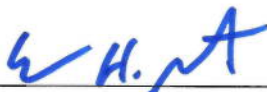
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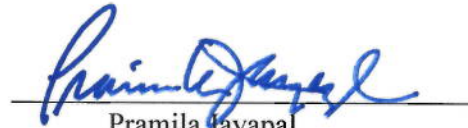
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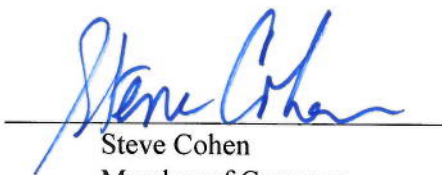
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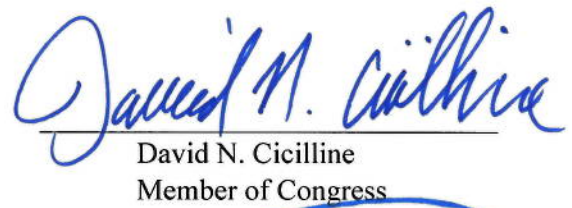
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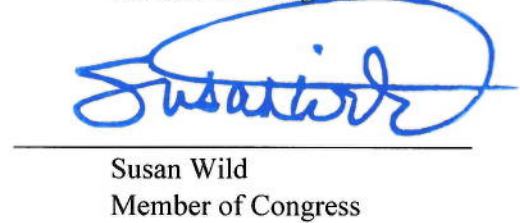
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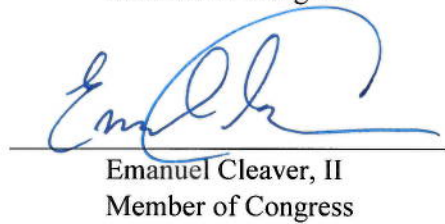
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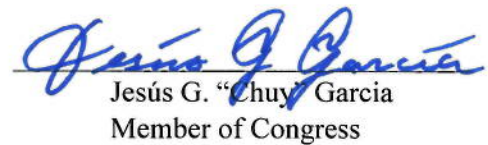
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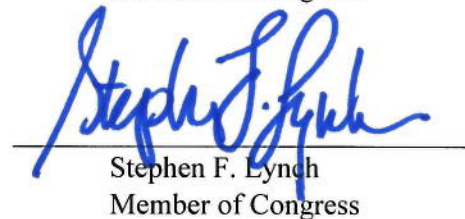
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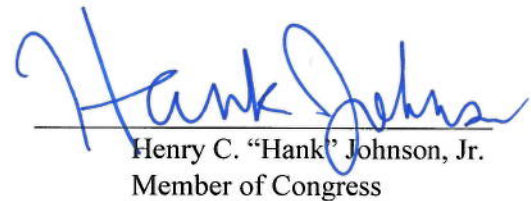
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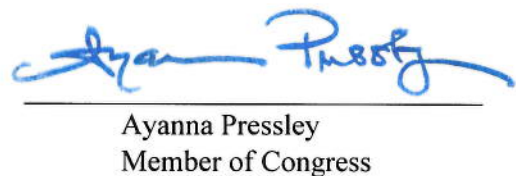
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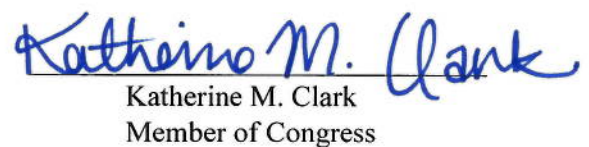
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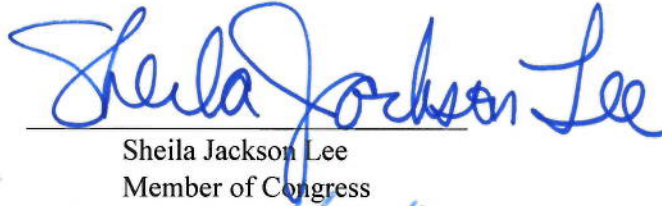


Katherine M. Clark  
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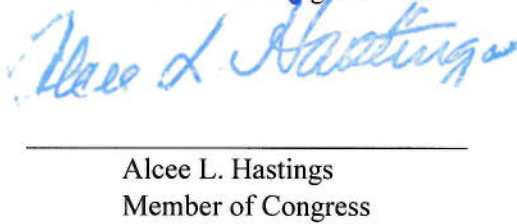


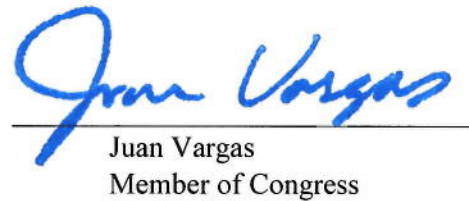
  
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Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
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Sheila Jackson Lee  
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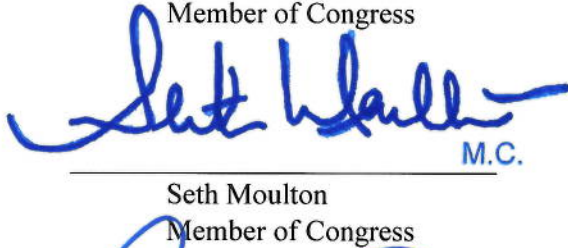
  
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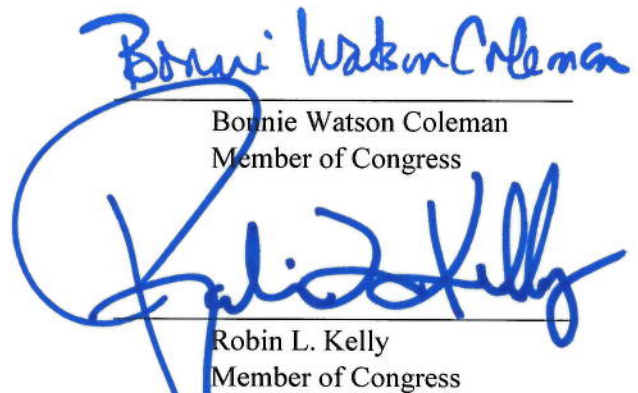
  
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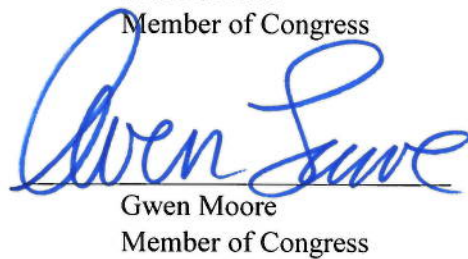
  
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André Carson  
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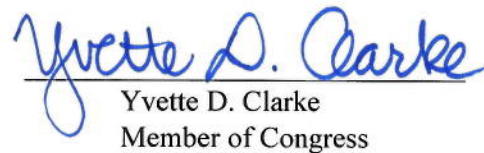
  
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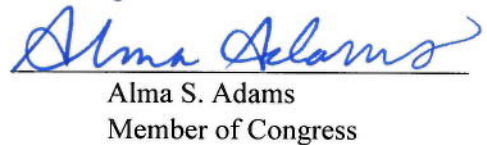
  
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
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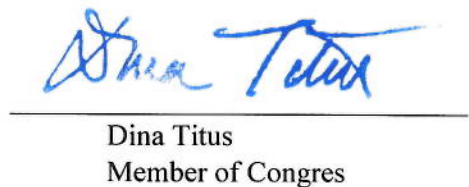
  
Gwen Moore  
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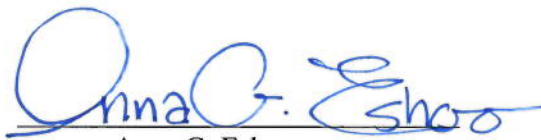
  
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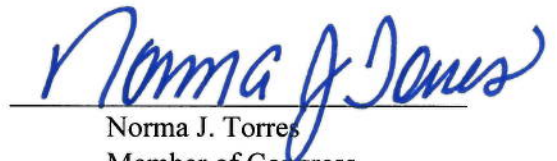
  
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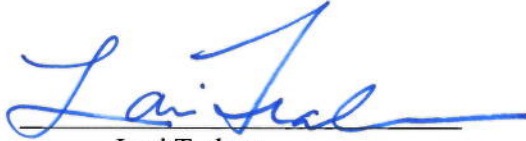
  
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