

Rights Action
May 20, 2011

U.S. Congressional Sign-On Letter About Military Aid Suspension In Honduras

ACTION NEEDED

BELOW:

- Updated info about a U.S. Congressional Sign-On Letter. PLEASE SEE if your member has signed. IF NOT, please work locally to ensure that your member signs.
- A U.S. trade union letter in support of the U.S. Congressional sign-on letter

COMMENT:

The situation of human rights violations and repression, committed by the military-backed regime in Honduras, has not changed at all. It remains dire. Please work to have your Congress member sign on this letter. Please send copies of this letter to your media, other folks and organizations you know of.

MORE INFORMATION:

Annie Bird, annie@rightsaction.org
Karen Spring (in Tegucigalpa), spring.kj@gmail.com
Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

- Please re-distribute and re-post this information all around
- To get on/off Rights Action's listserv: www.rightsaction.org
- Rights Action's Facebook group:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Rights-Action/176850879028427?ref=ts>
- What to do: see below

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On Behalf Of: hvoss@soaw.org

Subject: Honduras - Congressional Action Alert: 37 RepsNow
onMcGovern Letter - Call Your Rep!

CONGRESSIONAL URGENT ACTION

Please call your U.S. Representative to join in signing this Congressional letter on Honduras! (Full letter, below)

We need your help. In light of the renewed violent repression against teachers, students and members of the civilian Resistance movement in Honduras, Reps. James McGovern (D-MA), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), and Sam Farr (D-CA) are circulating a Congressional sign-on letter (below) to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Honduras (Read the letter.), which:

expresses great concern for “the threats and violence directed against human rights defenders, activists, opposition leaders, members of the LGBT community and journalists in Honduras”;

calls for the U.S. Embassy to denounce violence and threats against human rights defenders and activists that has occurred with total impunity;

urges the State Department and U.S. Embassy “to vigorously press the Honduran government to take concrete steps to end abuses by official security forces by suspending, investigating and prosecuting those implicated in human rights violations”;

calls for the suspension of U.S. assistance to the Honduran military and police because of the lack of accountability for violations.

TO FIND THE NAME OF YOUR REPRESENTATIVE IN THE U.S. CONGRESS

Go to <http://www.house.gov/> to get info for your member of Congress, and call: 202-224-3121 (You will be connected directly with

your Rep's office in Washington, DC).

Once connected, please ask to speak with the "foreign policy aide". If the aide is unavailable, get his or her name. Then ask for his/her voice mail, leaving a message noting who you are and the town that you live in. Then ask for your Rep "to sign the McGovern letter to Secretary Clinton in support of human rights in Honduras, and suspension of military aid to Honduras until human rights violations end."

Leave your phone number, asking the staffer to call you about when a decision by your Rep will be made on this request. Your Representative can sign on by contacting office of Rep. McGovern.

The deadline by which to sign on is Wednesday, May 25.

CURRENT LIST OF SIGNERS TO MCGOVERN-SCHAKOWSKY-FARR "DEAR COLLEAGUE" LETTER ON HONDURAS:

1. James P. McGovern (MA)
2. Janice D. Schakowsky (IL)
3. Sam Farr (CA)
4. Maurice d. Hinchey (NY)
5. John Lewis (GA)
6. John Conyers, Jr. (MI)
7. Sheila Jackson Lee (TX)
8. Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (IL)
9. Anna G. Eshoo (CA)
10. Danny K. Davis (IL)
11. Jim McDermott (WA)
12. Lynn Woolsey (CA)
13. Raul Grijalva (AZ)
14. Betty Sutton (OH)
15. Peter Welch (VT)
16. George Miller (CA)
17. Maxine Waters (CA)
18. Hank Johnson (GA)

19. John Garamendi (CA)
20. Barbara Lee (CA)
21. Michael Michaud (ME)
22. Mike Capuano (MA)
23. Dennis Kucinich (OH)
24. Louise Slaughter (NY)
25. Zoe Lofgren (CA)
26. Peter Stark (CA)
27. John Olver (MA)
28. Mike Honda (CA)
29. Mike Quigley (IL)
30. Tammy Baldwin (WI)
31. Steve Cohen (TN)
32. Peter DeFazio (OR)
33. Alcee Hastings (FL)
34. Donna Edwards (MD)
35. Jackie Speier (CA)
36. Bobby Rush (IL)
37. Lacy Clay (MO)

HIGH PRIORITY TARGETS:

29 REMAINING REPS WHO SIGNED PREVIOUS CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS ON HONDURAS, BUT NOT YET THIS ONE:

1. Cummings (MD)
2. DeLauro (CT)
3. Ellison^ (MN)
4. Fattah (PA)
5. Filner (CA)
6. Gutierrez (IL)
7. Honda (CA)
8. Lynch (MA)
9. Markey (MA)
10. McCollum (MN)
11. Moore (WI)
12. Moran (VA)
13. Neal (MA)

14. Payne (NJ)
15. Pingree (ME)
16. Richardson (CA)
17. Linda Sanchez (CA)
18. Serrano (NY)
19. Tierney (MA)
20. Bishop (GA)
21. Blumenauer (OR)
22. Dicks (WA)
23. Frank (MA)
24. Kaptur (OH)
25. Kilpatrick (MI)
26. Meeks (NJ)
27. Price (NC)
28. Visclosky (IN)
29. Walz (MN)

19 PROMISING PROSPECTS WHO HAVE TAKEN NO PREVIOUS CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON HONDURAS:

1. Jared Polis (D-CO), PC, LGBT-CoChair, SOA
2. Judy Chu (D-CA), PC-Vice Chair, LGBT, SOA
3. Xavier Becerra (D-CA), PC, HR, LGBT-Vice Chair
4. Henry Waxman (D-CA), PC, HR, LGBT-Vice Chair, SOA
5. Lucile Roybal-Allard* (D-CA), PC, LGBT
6. Yvette Clarke (D-NY), CBC, PC, LGBT-Vice Chair, SOA
7. David Cicilline (D-RI), new member, PC, LGBT-CoChair
8. Adam Schiff (D-CA), Appropriations-Foreign
9. Russ Carnahan (D-MO), SOA, Foreign Affairs-Human Rights
10. Bobby Scott (D-VA), CBC
11. Mike Doyle (D-PA), LGBT, SOA
12. Emmanuel Cleaver (D-MO), CBC, PC, HR
13. Jerry Nadler (D-NY), PC, LGBT-Vice Chair, SOA
14. Nita Lowey (D-NY). Appropriations-Foreign Ops Ranking Dem, LGBT
15. Karen Bass (D-CA), CBC, new member
16. Frederica Wilson (D-FL), CBC, new member (rep for North Miami)
17. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), PC, HR

18. James Langevin* (D-RI), HR

CBC= Congressional Black Caucus

PC=Progressive Caucus

HR=Human Rights Caucus

SOA=Cosponsored Legislation to close SOA

LGBT=Congressional Gay & Lesbian Rights Caucus

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THE LETTER

May XX, 2011

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

Dear Secretary of State Clinton,

We write to express our deep and continuing concerns about the protection of human rights, freedom of expression and the rule of law in Honduras. We urge you to ensure that U.S. policy towards Honduras is based on a more vigorous U.S. response in support of human rights. We share the concerns expressed by the Inter -American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in March 2011 regarding "the disproportionate use of force to quell public demonstrations against the policies of the current government, the lack of an independent judiciary and the situation of human rights defenders."

We are greatly concerned about the threats and violence directed against human rights defenders, activists, opposition leaders, members of the LGBT community and journalists in Honduras. State institutions dramatically fail to take action to defend those at risk. As you are aware, the IACHR singled out Honduras in its 2010 Annual Report,

released on April 15th, as one of four countries in the hemisphere whose human rights situation warrants special attention. Precautionary measures issued by the IACHR are generally not being implemented by Honduran authorities. Moreover, members of the security forces are implicated in many incidences of threats, harassment, attacks and extrajudicial executions.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) cites ten journalists killed since March 2010 in total impunity. Frank La Rue, the U.N. Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion also expressed concern about the role of the Honduran government in attacking community radio. The International Federation of Journalists reported that 10 of 29 journalists killed in Latin America in 2010 were in Honduras, and along with CPJ, has named Honduras one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist. According to Human Rights Watch, the violent attacks on journalists and political opponents have a “profound chilling effect on basic freedoms.”

In March, nationwide protests by teachers, parents and students in reaction to proposed budget cuts and withholding of teachers' pension funds were met with excessive use of force by police. Widespread use of tear gas affected teachers, students, journalists and bystanders, and the Honduran human rights group COFADEH reported that tear gas canisters were being fired directly at protestors and that police used live bullets. On March 17, 2011, teacher and human rights leader Ilse Ivania Velasquez died after being struck by a tear gas canister fired by police and then subsequently run over by a truck. Internationally known leader of the Garifuna community, Miriam Miranda, was injured by tear gas burns, threatened and detained.

Renowned human rights defender, former national Ombudsman and former IACHR president Leo Valladares has received threatening phone calls, been followed and had his home monitored, following a television appearance in which he questioned the growing power of the Honduran military. The non-governmental Commission of Truth, which is documenting human rights abuses perpetrated since the

June 2009 coup, has been the target of several attacks during March and April, including the severe beating by police of one of its staff. The IACHR documents 34 killings of members of the LGBT community since June 2009. In the Aguán valley, violence and forced evictions against campesino farmers continue unabated. The Honduran non-governmental human rights group COFADEH reports 237 death threats during the first year of President Lobo's term in office (January 2010-January 2011), 133 directed at human rights defenders; 36 politically motivated killings; and 36 people fleeing the country into exile after having received threats. In a December 2010 report, Human Rights Watch noted that "no one has been held criminally responsible for the human rights violations and abuses of power committed after the coup," and observed little evidence of progress in human rights violations committed since the Lobo Administration took office in January 2010.

We strongly urge the State Department and U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa to vigorously press the Honduran government to take concrete steps to end abuses by official security forces by suspending, investigating and prosecuting those implicated in human rights violations. The State Department's own 2010 human rights report notes the lack of progress in investigating human rights crimes. We further urge you, Madam Secretary, to suspend U.S. assistance to the military and police, due to the lack of mechanisms in place to ensure security forces are held accountable for abuses.

It is essential that the United States require the Honduran government to respect its citizens' rights to freedom of expression and assembly, including an end to excessive use of force in response to protests. Importantly, the Honduran government must be pressed to vigorously implement the measures recommended by the IACHR to protect human rights defenders and journalists. We ask the U.S. Embassy to publicly denounce violence and threats against defenders and activists. It is vital that the Embassy denounce attacks against the staff of the non-governmental Commission of Truth and urge the government to ensure that the Commission can carry out its functions safely and that victims and witnesses are protected from intimidation

and abuse. It would also be helpful to encourage reinstatement of three judges and a magistrate who were inappropriately removed from their posts for simply expressing opposition to the coup. Finally, to end the cycle of abuses and repair the deteriorated rule of law in Honduras, human rights abuses that have occurred since the June 2009 coup must be brought to justice.

Thank you for your serious consideration of these requests regarding strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law in Honduras. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss them further with you and look forward to your response to these critical matters.

Sincerely,
Members of Congress

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TRADE UNION LETTER IN SUPPORT OF CONGRESSIONAL LETTER

USLEAP is circulating a U.S. trade union letter in support of the Dear Colleague on Honduras. All in all, 8 U.S. unions signed on, representing more than 7 million members. I have attached a PDF version, or you can find a copy of the letter on our website here. Please feel free to use this when lobbying your representatives.

Rebecca Van Horn
www.usleap.org

U.S. Trade Union Letter in Support of Dear Colleague on Honduras
18 May 2011

Dear Representative:

We, the undersigned United States trade unions, representing more than seven million members, write to draw your attention to a Dear Colleague letter initiated by Representative James McGovern, Janice

Schakowsky, and Sam Farr focusing on the systemic, continuing human and labor rights violations in Honduras. The letter calls on Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to suspend all U.S. police and military aid to Honduras until the Lobo Administration investigates and prosecutes those responsible for human and labor rights violations, respects the right of freedom of expression and assembly, and fully implements the measures recommended by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

We are profoundly concerned by the violence and intimidation directed towards the trade union movement in Honduras. The United Federation of Honduran Workers (FUTH) has denounced what it is calling the targeted extermination of unions, led by the Lobo Administration, and the Union of Beverage Workers has made similar denunciations. The targeting includes months of violence directed at teachers' unions, culminating in March during which police and military shot tear gas canisters and live ammunition directly at protesting teachers and supporters. At least two unionists were killed.

Violence is not limited to the trade union movement. The 2010 Annual Report released by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights included Honduras in the list of four countries in the hemisphere that required special attention paid to its human rights situation. Ten out of the twenty-nine journalists killed in Latin America were based in Honduras, earning Honduras the status of one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which to be a journalist, and rampant violence against the LGBT and indigenous communities continues.

We condemn the unrelenting, systemic violence and ask you to sign the letter initiated by Representative James McGovern, Janice Schakowsky, and Sam Farr calling on Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to demand an end to state-sponsored and state-condoned abuse of human rights and labor leaders in Honduras.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,

Communications Workers of America (CWA)
International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)
National Education Association (NEA)
United Auto Workers (UAW)
UNITE HERE
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)
United Steelworkers (USW)

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WHAT TO DO - DONATE FUNDS

Since 1995, Rights Action has been funding the community development, environmental justice and human rights defense work of community based organizations in Guatemala and Honduras that are resisting harms and violations caused by Goldcorp's mines in both countries.

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS: Make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: <http://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>

DELEGATION to Guatemala (JULY 3-10, 2011)

"ELECTIONS; NO DEMOCRACY"

Join a Rights Action delegation to Guatemala from July 3 to 10, 2011. This pre-elections delegation will speak with human rights and social movement organizations struggling to create conditions for truly democratic processes, and limit the control organized crime and big business hold over the state through illegal networks of influence.

INFORMATION: Annie Bird; (202) 680-3002, annie@rightsaction.org

MORE INFORMATION:

Annie Bird, annie@rightsaction.org

Karen Spring (in Tegucigalpa), spring.kj@gmail.com
Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

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