

Rights Action
June 11, 2012

**U.S. Congressional “Dear Colleague” Letter
about murders of 70 gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered
(LGBT) Hondurans since June 2009 coup**

Dear friends in the U.S., you have until Wednesday, June 20, to get your member of congress to sign on! Please write your own message, and send it – with a copy of this information, below, to your own Member of Congress, urging them to sign on this “Dear Colleague” letter.

- Please re-post and re-publish this information
- Get on-off Rights Action’s listserv: www.rightsaction.org
- Follow Rights Action on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org

**IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED!
Contact the Foreign Policy Staffer in Washington DC Office of Your
U.S. Representative!**

On Monday, June 11, 2012, U.S. Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO) began circulating a House sign-on “Dear Colleague” letter (found below) addressing the murders of 70 gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) Hondurans since the June 2009 coup, and seeking specific information on the case of LGBT leader Walter Trochez and 10 cases the Embassy in Honduras claims have been through the U.S. assisted Special Victims Unit in Honduras.

INITIAL SIGNERS OF THE LETTER INCLUDE: Reps. Polis (D-CO), Cicilline (D-RI), Frank (D-MA), Baldwin (D-WI), Berman (D-CA), and Schakowsky (D-IL).

DEADLINE - to sign on to this letter: Wednesday, June 20.

We need your help in securing the signature on this letter of your rep and reps from your state. If your rep is a member of the Equality Caucus in the House of Representative (see attachment) – even if they have never

signed a letter on Honduras – your rep will likely want to join in to sign on to this letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asking inquiring about the investigation and prosecution for the 70 murders of LGBT Hondurans since the coup.

Congressional Switchboard number: (202) 224- 3121

If you do NOT know your representative, type in your zip code this website (in the upper right corner): <http://www.house.gov/representatives>

Ask to speak with the aide who handles foreign policy. Use the script below in speaking with the aide. If the aide does not recall seeing the letter, ask for his or her email address so that you can send a copy of the letter (below). If the foreign policy aide is not available, ask to leave a message on his or her answering machine. Be sure to ask for the name foreign policy staffer so you can follow up.

SCRIPT:

“My name is _____. I am a constituent in (town / city neighborhood). I am calling to ask Rep. _____ to join in signing the Polis letter in seeking information from the State Department about the 70 murders of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Honduran since the 2009 military coup in Honduras. Has Rep. _____ seen this letter? Can I count on him/her to sign on? The deadline to sign on is March 20. Please call me this week at (your phone number) to let me know if you have seen the letter, and if Rep_____ will sign it.”

In your phone conversation or email request, you might briefly highlight why this letter is important to you personally. To sign on to the letter, your reps’ foreign policy staffer must email Rafael Reyneri in Rep. Polis office to inform him: Rafael.Reyneri@mail.house.gov.

Please contact the aide every few days until the deadline to make sure that the staffer has asked the Rep to sign on. Also, follow up after your initial contact by sending the Honduras Dec-Jan Incidents Memo (attached) released last week by the Center for Constitutional Rights, listing ongoing human rights abuses in Honduras since Congress set restrictions on aid to Honduras in December.

The Honduras Solidarity Network Congressional Action Team will receive an updated list of signers every few days. If your rep agrees to sign on, please notify Gary Cozette (cozettelada@ameritech.net) so we can confirm the signature against our lists. Please remember that this letter will not become official until Rep. Polis closes the letter with all signatures and sends it to Secretary Clinton on June 20, 2012.

Gary L. Cozette
Honduras Solidarity Network – Congressional Action Team
Program Director, Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)
773.350.3518 cell

**HELP ADDRESS VIOLENT CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST THE
LGBT COMMUNITY IN HONDURAS**

From: The Honorable Jared Polis
Date: 6/11/2012

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in sending the letter below to the State Department calling on them to urge the government of Honduras to take immediate steps to investigate and resolve cases of violent crime against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community in that country.

Since 2009, more than 70 LGBT individuals have been murdered, and many of these cases remain unresolved. The State Department's 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices found that the Honduran law enforcement has been complicit in human rights abuses, and that police officers had targeted vulnerable persons, including LGBT people. Given the level of U.S. support and assistance for the Honduran government, it is vital that we ensure they protect the human rights of all their citizens, especially vulnerable populations like the LGBT community.

The deadline for signing onto the letter is close of business Wednesday, June 20th. To sign onto the letter, please contact Rafael Reyneri at Rafael.Reyneri@mail.house.gov or 225-2161 in the office of Rep. Polis

Sincerely,

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Barney Frank
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

David Cicilline
Member of Congress

Howard Berman
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

June 20, 2012

LETTER TO The Honorable Hillary Clinton

Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madame Secretary,

We write to express our concern regarding the recent increase in violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals in Honduras. We have long supported your efforts to respond to human rights violations and abuses of LGBT persons around the world. As you have said, "this effort is one of the most urgent and important human rights struggles of all times." It appears, however, that our efforts in Honduras are failing.

Honduras is currently experiencing institutional breakdown, widespread drug trafficking, and judicial impunity, which have led to unprecedented levels of criminal violence. Of particular concern are recent reports which have indicated that members of the LGBT community have increasingly been victims of violent hate crimes. Therefore, we would like to know what steps you are taking to ensure that this violence will end, and what steps you are taking to ensure that the government of Honduras successfully resolves the cases of murdered LGBT individuals.

As the State Department's 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices reported, the Honduran law enforcement has been complicit in human rights abuses. The report states that "the Honduran police force had deep-seated and unaddressed corruption problems, and police officers targeted vulnerable persons, including LGBT people." These problems persist. According to human rights organizations in Honduras, 70 LGBT Hondurans have been murdered since the June 2009 coup. Many of these cases have not been effectively investigated and remain unsolved. For example the report cites the case of Walter Trochez, which has been unresolved since 2009. The fact that these crimes continue to occur with impunity leads us to question whether the government of Honduras has the will or the ability to bring these perpetrators to justice.

Therefore, we call on you to urge the government of Honduras to take immediate steps to investigate and resolve these crimes. Given the level of U.S. support and assistance for the Honduran government, it is vital that we ensure they protect the human rights of all their citizens, especially vulnerable populations like the LGBT community.

In addition, we would like detailed information about the steps being taken to resolve cases like Walter Trochez's. While we understand that the State Department has offered to aid the Special Victims Task Force—which was intended to bring to justice the perpetrators of these cases of egregious violence against the LGBT community in Honduras—targeted violence continues unabated. Just last month another national LGBT leader, Erick Martínez Ávila was beaten and strangled to death. Mr. Martínez Ávila was a radio journalist and the first ever openly gay candidate to run for Congress in Honduras.

Finally, we request information about the ten LGBT murder cases that U.S. investigative and prosecutorial advisors helped the Special Victims Unit close. It is essential to know the names of the victims whose cases have been closed, and the outcome in each case, in order to ensure accountability for the resources the U.S. has allocated for the Special Victims Unit and for the Honduran LGBT community to know that these cases are being effectively prosecuted with U.S. assistance.

Given the pervasive threat facing LGBT persons in Honduras we urge you to respond with haste, so that together we can measure the effectiveness of the government of Honduras in bringing accountability for

the murders of LGBT Hondurans. This will help to guarantee that President Obama's directive to ensure all U.S. government agencies engaged overseas "respond swiftly to abuses against LGBT persons" is rigorously implemented.

Sincerely,

WHAT TO DO

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS ... for courageous community-based organizations in Honduras working and struggling for the restoration of their democracy and for the re-founding of their State and society, 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 can be made (anonymously):

www.rightsaction.org

• In Canada:

<https://www.canadahelps.org/DonationDetails.aspx?cookieCheck=true>

• In USA:

<https://npo.networkforgood.org/Donate/Donate.aspx?npoSubscriptionId=488>

DONATIONS OF STOCK can be made (anonymously):

info@rightsaction.org

MORE INFORMATION / QUESTIONS

Annie Bird, annie@rightsaction.org

Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

- Please re-post and re-publish this information
- Get on-off Rights Action's listserv: www.rightsaction.org
- Follow Rights Action on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org

