

Rights Action
April 29, 2014
info@rightsaction.org

U.S. Congressional Letter to Secretary of State John Kerry:

"Egregious violations of human rights continue" in Honduras 5 years after the June 2009 military coup

- Americans: Please urge your U.S. Congress Member to sign this letter
- Deadline: Friday, May 9, 2014, 5:00pm

Below:

- Instructions
- Letter from Rep. Janice Schakowsky (D-IL)
- Letter to Sec. State John Kerry

Please share this all across the land ...

IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED

Contact the Foreign Policy Staffer in the Washington DC Office of Your U.S. Rep in Congress!

On Monday, April 28, 2014, Rep. Janice Schakowsky (D-IL) began circulating a sign-on "Dear Colleague" letter in the U.S. House of Representatives to Secretary of State John Kerry addressing Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Honduras. Reps. Sam Farr (D-CA), Hank Johnson (D-GA), George Miller (D-CA) and Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) have joined as initial co-signers.

Your help is needed to secure the signature of your Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Only members of the House can sign the letter. To sign on to the letter (or if the staffer wishes an official copy of the letter), your Rep's staffer must contact Andrew Goczkowski (Andrew.Goczkowski@mail.house.gov) in Schakowsky's office.

- Deadline to sign: Friday, May 9, 2014, 5:00pm
- Call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121, give them the name of your Rep, then ask to be connected. (If you do not know the name of your Rep, please go to <http://www.house.gov/> and enter in your zip code at the upper right).

TALKING POINTS

When you call, 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 the aide's email address so that you can forward a copy of the letter. If the foreign policy aide is not available, ask to leave a message on his or her voice mail. Be sure to get the name foreign policy staffer so you can follow up.

"My name is _____. I am a constituent from (town / city) in (your state). I am calling to ask Congressperson _____ to sign the Jan Schakowsky letter on Human Rights and the Rule of Law

in Honduras. Has Representative ___ seen this letter? Can I count on him/her to sign on? Please call me this week at (_your phone number_) to let me know if you have seen the letter, and if Representative _____ will sign it.”

In your phone conversation, you might highlight why this letter is important to you, especially if you have travelled to Honduras or heard a Honduran speak in your community.

FOLLOW-UP

It's useful to follow up with an email to the aide. You can ask whoever answers the phone what their email is and/or use this formula if you know how to spell their name correctly (the person who first answer the phone can spell it for you): Firstname.Lastname@mail.house.gov, e.g. Jane.Doe@mail.house.gov. In an email, you can just ask them to sign the letter, and then if you like send some information.

BACKGROUND ARTICLES

1. <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/02/honduras-the-thugocracy-ext-door-103883.html>
2. <http://sojo.net/magazine/2014/04/crucible-courage>
3. <http://mcgovern.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/statement-by-reps-mcgovern-farr-and-schakowsky-on-the-murder-in-honduras>

If you learn that your Congressman has agreed to sign, please notify Gary Cozette (cozettelada@ameritech.net) so we can confirm the signature with Rep. Schakowsky. Please contact Gary Cozette if you want to know if your representative has signed on. Gary will circulate updated lists of signers whenever we receive them from Rep. Schakowsky's office.

NOTE: Please DO NOT send the letter to the media in either the US or Honduras until the letter has secured all signers and is formally delivered to the State Department with all signers and a press release. Also once again, please do not contact Schakowsky's staff yourself, but ask your rep's staffer to do to become a signer.

Gary L. Cozette
Honduras Solidarity Network – Congressional Working Group
C: 773.350.3518

JOINT LETTER TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT Urging Action to Protect Human Rights in Honduras

April 28, 2014

Current Signers: Jan Schakowsky, George Miller, Sam Farr, Henry C "Hank" Johnson, Raul Grijalva

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in signing the attached letter to Secretary of State John Kerry urging action on the ongoing human rights situation in Honduras. While a new Administration has recently been sworn in, grave concerns remain over the human rights situation. Vulnerable groups continue to be targets of intimidation and violence, military forces continue to be utilized for policing, and human rights abusers continue to operate with impunity in the region. The 2013 elections in Honduras were preceded by the assassination of several opposition candidates, and questions remain about discrepancies in the vote.

We hope you will join us in writing to Secretary Kerry to ensure that the State Department continues to urge the Honduran government to protect fundamental human rights in the region, end the use of military forces for law enforcement, investigate and prosecute abuses, and restore the rule of law.

If you have any questions, or would like to sign onto the letter, please contact Andrew Goczkowski in Rep. Schakowsky's office at 202-225-2111, or by emailing Andrew.Goczkowski@mail.house.gov.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
Member of Congress

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

LETTER TO JOHN KERRY

May XX, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to express concern about the ongoing human rights situation in Honduras. As a new President and Congress have recently taken office, we ask the State Department to use its leverage to urge the Honduran government to protect the fundamental human rights of its citizens, end the use of military forces for law enforcement, investigate and prosecute abuses, and, more broadly, restore the rule of law.

Almost five years after the 2009 coup ousting President Zelaya, egregious violations of human rights continue. The Associated Press has documented ongoing death-squad style killings by Honduran police. Independent media and human rights organizations continue to report that vulnerable groups, including members of the LGBT community and indigenous and campesino activists, are being targeted and killed. Basic labor rights are routinely violated and union leaders have received increased death threats in recent months.

Instead of implementing reforms to address those pervasive problems, the Honduran government adopted policies that threaten to make the human rights situation even worse. The former and current administrations have promoted the militarization of police forces and use their armed forces for

domestic law enforcement. In August 2012, a new Military Police was created, with a projected size of at least 5,000. That force has committed human rights abuses while engaged in policing, such as the October 2013 raid on the home of opposition activist Edwin Espinal. Members of the armed forces are also implicated in the killing of Tomás García in July 2013. Because of a continuing record of human rights abuses by the Honduran police and military, Members of Congress have repeatedly called for a cessation of U.S. aid to the country's security forces.

Those and other human rights abuses have not been effectively investigated or prosecuted in recent years. According to the National Commissioner for Human Rights, during the last administration, dozens of lawyers and journalists were killed and 97 percent of cases regarding these suspected human rights abuses remain unpunished. The non-governmental group Rights Action cites allegations of almost 100 killings of land rights activists in the area of Bajo Aguán. According to a Human Rights Watch study, there is "virtually complete impunity for crimes" believed to be associated with land conflicts in that region of the country.

We are also concerned about recent developments impeding Hondurans' freedom of speech and association. In the first two months of 2014, the Honduran government published a new decree revoking the legal status of over ten thousand non-profit organizations, including a wide range of opposition groups. Those groups include women's and environmental organizations, a prominent group that regularly reports on press freedom issues, and schools.

Finally, we are concerned about reports that last year's election in Honduras was not free and fair. The human rights group COFADEH reports that at least 18 members of the leading opposition party LIBRE were assassinated in the lead-up to the election, with an additional six LIBRE-affiliated individuals and a well-known progressive journalist killed in the weeks after. Election observers documented widespread vote-buying activities, acts of intimidation, and cases of citizens' names being eliminated from voting rolls. Challenges by opposition parties regarding discrepancies in the vote were not transparently addressed by the Supreme Electoral Council.

We ask that you pay close attention to those issues, strictly evaluating U.S. support and training for the Honduran police and military in accordance with human rights conditions placed in the 2014 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations law. We also ask that you fully enforce the Leahy Law, which prohibits assistance to individuals or units of any foreign military or police body that commit gross human rights abuses with impunity. The State Department, along with our embassy in Honduras, must take a consistent and public stance supporting those threatened with human rights abuses, and strongly encourage the investigation and prosecution of those perpetuating crimes, including state agents.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Members of Congress

Honduras – Murder Capital of the World

Americans / Canadians: Keep on, keep on, keep on sending copies of this information, and your own letters, to your politicians (MPs, Congress members and Senators). Since the June 2009 military coup, that ousted the last democratically elected government, Honduras has become the 'Murder Capital of the world'. Repression has reached the levels of the worst years of the 1980s.

Since 2009, the U.S. and Canadian governments have legitimized a succession of illegitimate and repressive regimes. North American companies and investors, and "development" banks (World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank) have increased business activities in African palm production, maquiladora sweatshops, privatized "model cities", tourism and mining. The Honduran regime remains in power due in large part to its political, economic and military relations with the U.S. and Canada and the "development" banks. Across Honduras, community based organizations in the pro-democracy movement need considerably more human rights accompaniment, funding, media attention on the harms and violations and education and activism in Canada and the U.S.

Contact:

- Member Of Parliament:
<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>
- Congress: <http://www.house.gov/> to get info for your member of Congress, and call: 202-224-3121
- Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/> to get contact for your Senator, and call: 202-224-3121

Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)

To support civil society groups in Honduras, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- United States: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

Credit-Card Donations (Canada & U.S.): <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

Comments / Questions: info@rightsaction.org

Get on/off our listserv: www.rightsaction.org

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