

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

October 27, 2009

President Barack Obama  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20502

Dear President Obama,

We are writing to you regarding an urgent situation where lives are at stake and action on your part may prevent further tragedy.

Since the return to Honduras of President Manuel Zelaya, the de facto regime has taken further repressive measures, in addition to the previous violations of basic rights and civil liberties which have been recognized and denounced by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and all of the key Honduran human rights NGOs, among others.

According to reports from the media and rights organizations, the coup regime violently dispersed a gathering of Hondurans in front of the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa with tear gas, clubs and rubber bullets, resulting in numerous casualties, including several reported fatalities.

While the siege of the Embassy is a serious violation of the Vienna Convention, more disturbing is the broad assault against the Honduran people unleashed by the coup regime.

On September 22, the Americas director at Human Rights Watch, Jose Miguel Vivanco, stated that “given the reports we have received, and the poor track record of the security forces since the coup, we fear that conditions could deteriorate drastically in the coming days.” That same day, the Americas Director for the London-based rights organization Amnesty International, Susan Lee, has stated that “the attacks against human rights defenders, suspension of news outlets, beating of demonstrators by the police and ever increasing reports of mass arrests indicate that human rights and the rule of law in Honduras are at grave risk.”

The international community has also spoken out regarding the worsening human rights situation in Honduras. On September 22nd, Mexico released a statement in the name of 23-member Rio Group demanding that the de facto government stop carrying out “acts of repression and violation of human rights of all Hondurans.” The following day, the Presidency of the European Union seconded the Rio Group statement.

Mr. President, we were glad to hear State Department spokesman Ian Kelly on September 22 reaffirm the position of the Administration that Manuel Zelaya is the “democratically elected and constitutional leader of Honduras.” But unfortunately, the mixed messages that have characterized the Administration’s response persist.

The head of the US delegation to the Organization of American States Lewis Amselem represented our nation in that body by saying “Zelaya’s return to Honduras is irresponsible and foolish and it doesn’t serve to the interest of the people nor those who seek the restoration of democratic order in Honduras [...] Everything will be better if all parties refrain from provoking and inciting violence.” Not content to place equal blame on both the victims of the violence and the perpetrators, he then chose to personally insult Mr. Zelaya, saying “The president should stop acting as though he were starring in an old Woody Allen movie.” State Department spokespersons have declined numerous opportunities to distance your administration from Amselem’s words.

We note that, unlike the coup leaders, President Zelaya has indicated his openness to dialogue and has accepted the San Jose agreement that emerged from the US-backed mediation process led by President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica.

The suspension of rights announced by the junta on September 27 in Executive Decree PCM-M-016-2009 was used to shut down independent media outlets like Radio Globo and Canal 36, which have only recently been able to resume broadcasting.

The decree was denounced by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as “a violation of international law,” containing “provisions [that] arbitrarily restrict fundamental human rights.”

ED PCM-M-016-2009 remained legally in effect and was enforced by the junta until Monday, October 19, when the rescission was finally published, only to be replaced by a decree from the junta’s Security Minister in which all planned public gatherings, rallies or marches, must be made known to the national police 24 hours in advance, including names of event organizers, start and end times, and any march routes.

Another, similar decree allowing authorities to suspend any media considered to be “fomenting social anarchy”, had already been issued on October 7. According to the organization Reporters Without Borders, the October 7 decree is “targeted at those that oppose the coup” and “constitutes a real threat to pluralism, an incentive to self-censorship and an additional mechanism for polarizing the media and public opinion.”

Free and fair elections cannot take place under these conditions.

Though we commend the administration for having strongly stated their support for the restoration of democracy in Honduras, we are concerned that neither you nor the Secretary of State has denounced these serious human rights abuses in a country where US influence could be decisive.

It is now more urgent than ever to break this silence. It is critical that your Administration immediately clearly and unequivocally reject and denounce the repression by this illegitimate regime. We can say sincerely and without hyperbole that this action on your part will save lives.

Furthermore, the vast majority of our neighbors in the region, including Brazil and Mexico, have clearly indicated that they will not recognize the results of elections held under the coup regime.

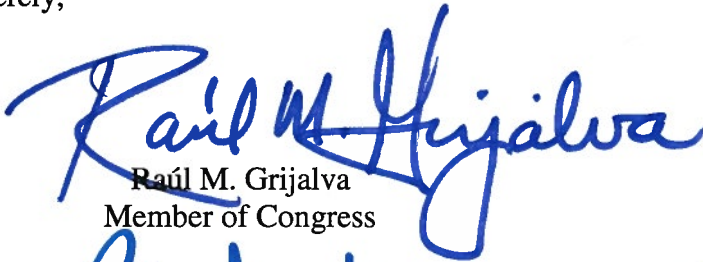
On September 29, Costa Rican President and US-appointed mediator Oscar Arias noted the regime's continued rejection of the San Jose accords, and warned that Honduran elections cannot be recognized by the international community without a restoration of constitutional order. Arias said, "the cost of failure of leaving a coup d'etat unpunished is setting up a bad precedent for the region. [...] You could have remembrances of a bad Latin American past, insisting on elections under these circumstances and overlooking items in the San Jose Accord."

It is time for the administration to join this growing hemispheric and international consensus and unambiguously state that elections organized by an undemocratic government that has denied critics of the regime the right to free speech, assembly, and movement, cannot and will not be considered free and fair by our government.

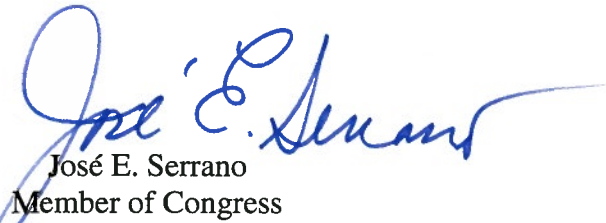
We feel it is imperative that the administration step up its efforts to bring about a prompt restoration of democracy in Honduras, together with other regional leaders.

We eagerly await your reply.

Sincerely,



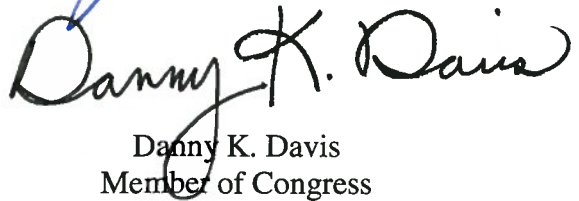
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



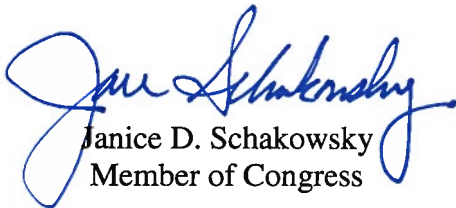
José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress



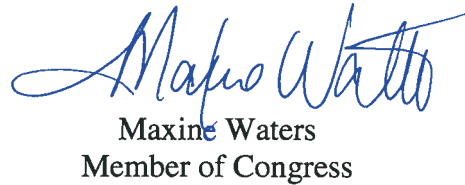
Fortney "Pete" Stark  
Member of Congress



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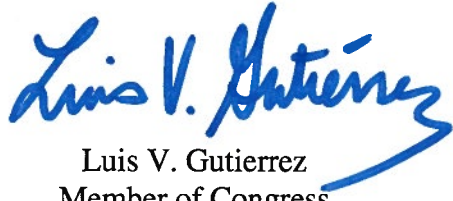
Maxine Waters  
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Barbara Lee  
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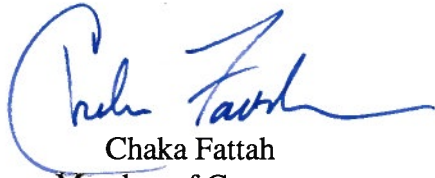
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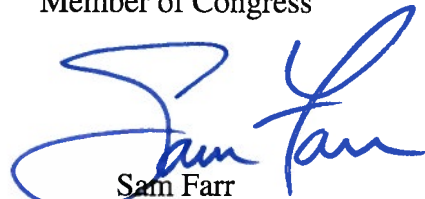
Chaka Fattah  
Member of Congress



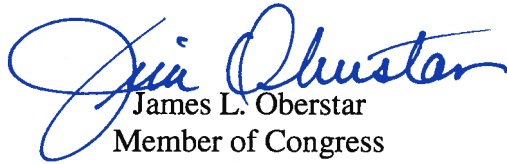
James P. Moran  
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Eddie Bernice Johnson  
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