

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

November 4, 2015

Chairman Hal Rogers  
House Committee on Appropriations

Ranking Member Nita Lowey  
House Committee on Appropriations

Chairman Thad Cochran  
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Vice Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski  
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Dear Appropriations Leadership,

We write to you to express strong support for maintaining human rights conditions on U.S. security sector assistance for Colombia, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, in the final FY 2016 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill. With bipartisan support, the Congress exercised its authority in past foreign assistance processes by establishing and updating these conditions over the past several years, and the Senate has included such conditions in its FY 2016 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill. These conditions have proven useful in advancing respect for human rights and democracy in the Americas.

There are critical human rights challenges facing many of our allies in the Western Hemisphere. Colombia is pursuing a historic peace process to end the 50-year conflict between the government and the FARC, and issues of human rights and accountability are a key topic in the negotiations. Conditions linked to security assistance in previous years reportedly helped slow a wave of extrajudicial executions allegedly carried out by members of the armed forces in Colombia; however, of the cases involving over 4,000 such killings, the vast majority remain unpunished.

In Mexico, the forced disappearance of 43 students in September 2014 and the extrajudicial killing of at least 12 individuals by soldiers in the town of Tlatlaya in June 2014 have brought international attention to the country's alarming human rights situation. The whereabouts of more than 25,000 individuals who have gone missing since 2007 remain unknown, according to a government database. High-level corruption scandals in Guatemala and Honduras have led to massive protests and the resignation of the President of Guatemala. Long-standing impunity for abuses by security forces remains a serious concern in both countries.

Given these challenges, this is not the moment for the United States to backtrack on its public commitment to human rights.

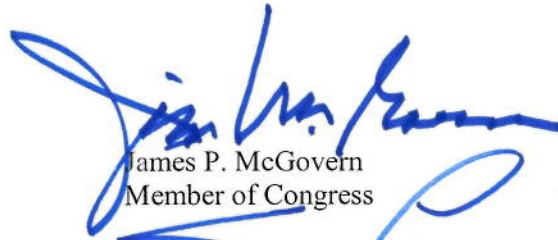
Congressionally established human rights requirements are an important tool of diplomacy. They support reformers in allied governments and armed forces as they seek to address longstanding human rights issues. They send a message to brave prosecutors, judges, journalists, human rights defenders, priests, and nuns who risk their lives to make their countries a better place. They give our diplomats powerful leverage as they seek to address sensitive issues with counterparts. They advance the cause of democracy in the Western Hemisphere.

For these reasons, as House and Senate negotiators work toward final agreement, we hope that you will again include human rights conditions that are tied to a portion of security sector assistance to Colombia, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in the final version of the FY2016 bill.

Sincerely,



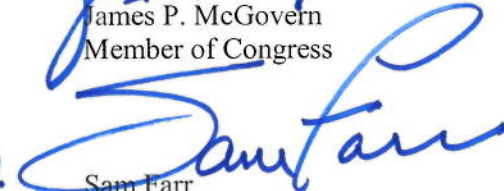
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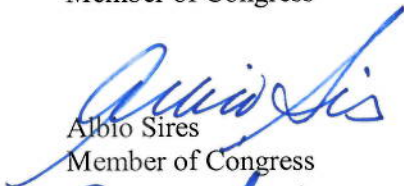
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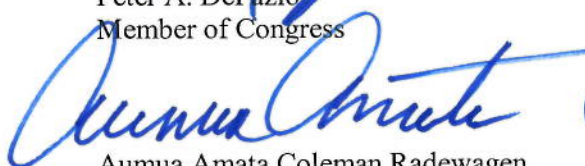
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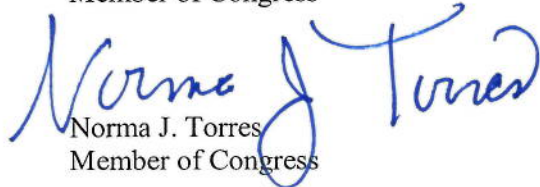
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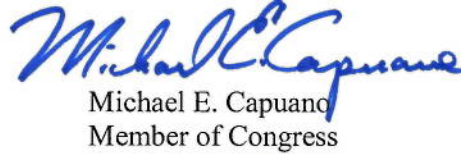
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