

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.
4TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA

COMMITTEES:

JUDICIARY

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-1004

SUBCOMMITTEES:
RANKING MEMBER,
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ANTITRUST LAW
HIGHWAY AND TRANSIT
AVIATION
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC
BUILDINGS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Ambassador Luis E. Arreaga
U.S. Embassy Guatemala City
Avenida La Reforma
7-01 Zone 10
Guatemala City, Guatemala

July 11, 2018

Dear Ambassador Luis Arreaga,

We write you today to express our concern regarding the role of the Guatemalan judicial system in the upheaval of indigenous and Afro-Latino communities and in the repression of those who attempt to defend their fundamental rights. On May 3, Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales announced María Consuelo Porras Argueta as his selection for the country's new Attorney General and head of the Public Prosecutor's Office. Judge Porras Argueta is expected to serve in office for four years and was sworn in on May 17, 2018. This decision is one of utmost importance, as we know that justice for the people of Guatemala has deteriorated.

As a beacon of hope, the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), has led the charge to expose and prosecute corruption where it's found in the Guatemalan government. Because of efforts championed by CICIG and Attorney General Porras' predecessors, top tier and lower-ranking government officials have been exposed for corruption, including former Guatemalan President, Otto Pérez Molina. Additionally, corruption in both land and justice administration continue to be uncovered—in November, the Guatemala's Agrarian Affairs Secretariat reported 1,424 land disputes, affecting almost 1.5 million people. The accomplishments led by CICIG are prominent, but we are remiss if we neglect the work there is left to be done.

On May 9, as reported by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, concluded her 10-day visit to Guatemala and noted that the "escalating incidence of forced evictions" and "criminal proceedings against indigenous peoples who seek to defend their lands" continue to be of grave concern. She continued, "The criminalization of indigenous leaders who seek specific and legal solutions to land disputes will only increase tensions in society." On her trip, Ms. Tauli-Corpuz visited imprisoned human rights defenders and indigenous authorities, including Abelino Chub and Bernardo Caal, who are internationally recognized for their efforts to defend indigenous communities' land and water.

In the days following Ms. Tauli-Corpuz's statement, three human rights defenders were killed—Luis Arturo Marroquin, Jose Can Xol, and Mateo Chaman Paau. As is common following the murders of human rights defenders, no one has been arrested. These murders frequently go

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uninvestigated in today's Guatemala, and inaction from authorities is just another example of their complicity in these events. Congress will not stand idly by as human rights violations go unpunished, and we trust that Attorney General Porras will deliver justice for the people of Guatemala.

We will closely monitor Attorney General Porras's progress as she fights wrongful prosecution, sanctions prosecutors who engage in such prosecutions, exposes corruption in the justice system, protects land rights of small farming and Afro-Latino and indigenous communities, and prosecutes human rights violators. We also support the admirable work of CICIG and note that it should be encouraged to continue to seek justice for the rights of the indigenous and Afro-Latino communities in Guatemala. Please communicate to Attorney General Porras that Members of Congress are paying keen attention to these matters and will continue to do so as we anticipate the dawn of a fair and inclusive justice system for all of the people of Guatemala.

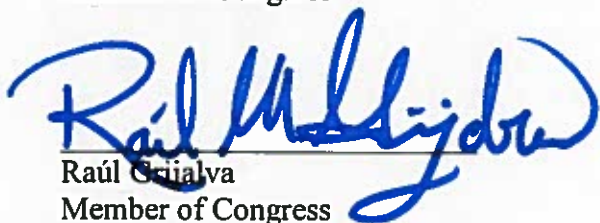
Sincerely,



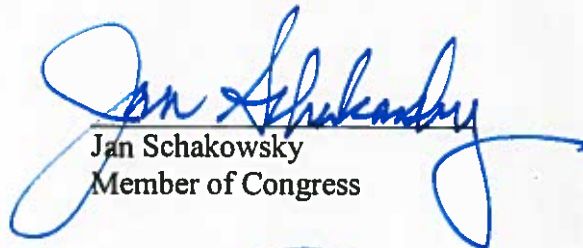
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Member of Congress



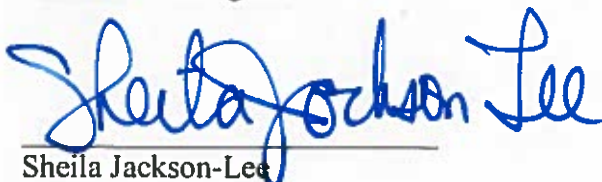
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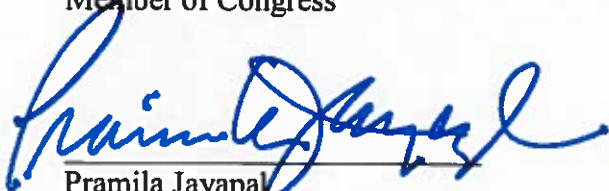

Ro Khanna
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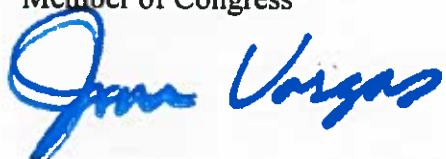

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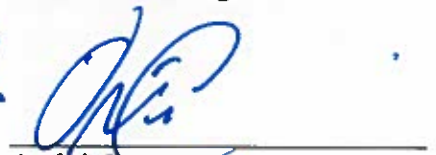

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Matt Cartwright
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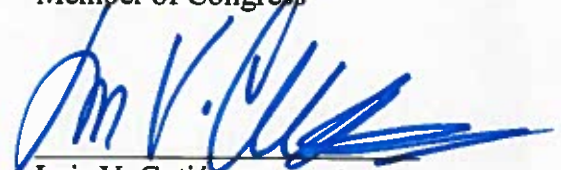

André Carson
Member of Congress

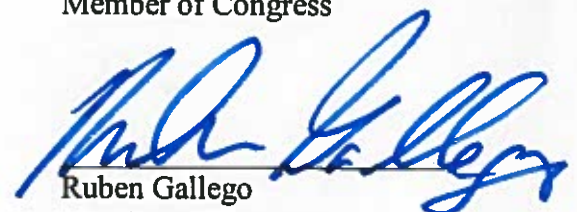

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