



July 22, 2013

Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Congressman Smith,

In 2012 the U.S. government provided \$25 billion in security assistance to armed forces around the world.<sup>1</sup> A portion of this money was directed toward countries where members of the security forces are known to have engaged in grave and often predatory abuses against their civilian populations.

As you know, both the Foreign Assistance Act and annual DOD Appropriations Acts include “Leahy Law” language that prohibits assistance to specific security force units or individuals that the State Department believes have committed a gross violation of human rights with impunity. The State Department has interpreted “gross human rights violations” to mean a small number of the most heinous acts: murder of non-combatants, torture, “disappearing” people, and rape as a tactic.

By prohibiting U.S. assistance to units credibly alleged to have committed these serious crimes, we believe the Leahy Law both upholds the deepest values of the United States and serves U.S. long-term national interests.

Indeed, we view this law as a critical minimum bar for the provision of U.S. foreign assistance and as a vital tool for incentivizing basic professionalism in security forces receiving U.S. taxpayer funds. As the United States instructs other militaries, adherence to this minimum standard regarding the types of forces U.S. troops can and will associate with, sends an important message.

A recent New York Times [article](#) quoted U.S. military officials as saying that the law is a “complication” that has “restricted” their ability to train and equip foreign military units that they believe need to be trained. Yet the same article pointed out that less than one percent of all candidates for assistance were blocked by this law in 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of State, International Security Advisory Board, Report on Security Capacity Building, January 7, 2013

Undoubtedly, implementation of the Leahy Law can be improved. A clear, institutionalized, and fully-funded system for Leahy vetting would increase efficiency—allowing rapid approval of most requests while better identifying problematic units.

Given the Pentagon’s prominence in funding foreign security assistance, the Armed Services Committee now plays a crucial role in ensuring oversight. We appreciate your interest in the Leahy Law, as expressed in hearings this Spring and in House Report 113–102. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to provide our perspectives on the vital national interest being served by this law and to discuss ways to improve its effective application.

Sincerely,



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John C. Bradshaw  
Executive Director  
Enough Project



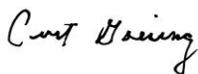
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