

JAMES P. MCGOVERN, Massachusetts
Co-Chairman



JOSEPH R. PITTS, Pennsylvania
Co-Chairman

One Hundred and Fourteenth Congress
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

April 20, 2016

The Honorable Mr. Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

During your upcoming trip to Saudi Arabia, we write to strongly urge you to meet with representatives of civil society and human rights advocates, including those who may be currently in prison or their families, or take similar action to help raise the public profile of human rights concerns.

You are surely well aware, as are we, of the continuing record of grave human rights abuses committed by the Saudi government against its citizens, as documented every year by the State Department. We understand that the U.S. government must engage with the Saudi government on issues where our interests coincide, in particular security, just as the U.S. government engages with many countries with poor records of respect for basic human rights.

We firmly believe that U.S. engagement with the Saudi government should actively include engagement with Saudi human rights advocates. Indeed, we are hopeful that public U.S. engagement with Saudi human rights advocates will be a form of modest U.S. pressure on the Saudi government over human rights issues, and will provide a measure of protection by publicizing the situation of Saudi human rights advocates who are subject to government repression and under increasing threat.

During your recent trip to Cuba, you met not only with Cuban government officials, but also with representatives of Cuban civil society, including Cuban human rights advocates. Those meetings were profoundly important, not only for the individuals and groups with whom you met personally, but for Cuban society as a whole. It sent a clear message to the international community that meetings with members of civil

P: 202.225.3599

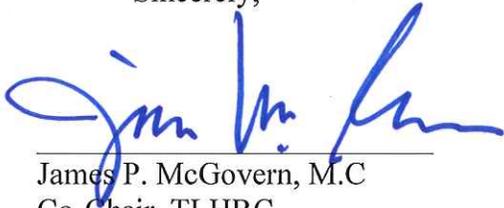
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society, including political dissidents, are an important and indispensable element of engagement with non-democratic regimes, friends and foes alike. We believe Saudi civil society merits the same regard.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and recommendations.

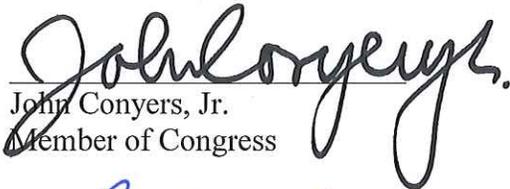
Sincerely,



James P. McGovern, M.C.
Co-Chair, TLHRC



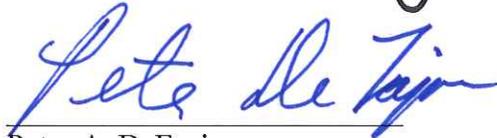
Joseph R. Pitts, M.C.
Co-Chair, TLHRC



John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



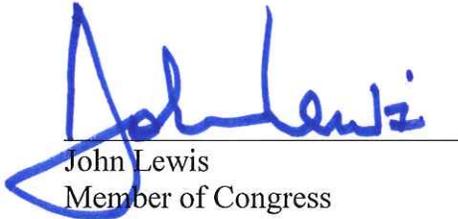
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress



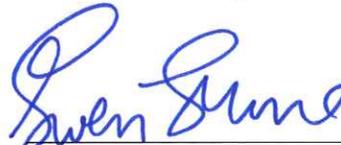
John Lewis
Member of Congress



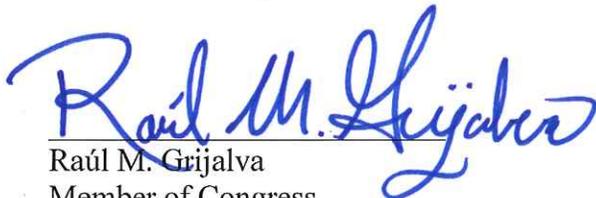
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



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