

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

March 26, 2014

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to publicly address Saudi Arabia's serious human rights violations during your upcoming trip to the country. The government of Saudi Arabia has repeatedly engaged in systematic human rights violations targeting women, religious minorities, and peaceful political reformers. Your meetings with King Abdullah and other officials will be an opportunity to publicly integrate human rights concerns, as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, into the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

A successful trip to Saudi Arabia will be one that combines both important symbolic gestures in support of advocates of fundamental human rights, as well as advocacy for specific reforms. Today in Saudi Arabia, those who advocate for human rights take serious risks and often pay a heavy price. This is why we urge you to seek a meeting with women activists in Saudi Arabia who are challenging the country's ban on women drivers – the only such ban in the world. We also urge you to meet with the family members of prominent peaceful human rights advocates who are imprisoned. Saudi Arabian authorities have harassed, intimidated, and imprisoned almost all of the country's leading independent human rights activists. Two examples are Mohammad al-Qahtani and Abdullah al-Hamid, founders of a local human rights organization who are currently imprisoned on the basis of their peaceful criticism of the government.

In addition to public meetings, we urge you to address specific human rights reforms in your direct meetings with King Abdullah and other officials. Religious freedom is a major concern in the country and, as you mentioned during your keynote address at the National Prayer Breakfast on February 6, 2014, "promoting religious freedom is a key objective of U.S. foreign policy." Saudi Arabia does not tolerate public worship by adherents of religions other than Islam, and the government also systematically discriminates against followers of minority Muslim faiths. For example, in May 2012, the Saudi government detained two Saudis, Sultan Hamid Marzooq al-Enezi and Saud Falih Awad al-Enezi, for becoming members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. They have been charged with apostasy, and their current whereabouts and status are unknown; if convicted, they could face the death penalty. Further, in December 2011, authorities raided a private Christian prayer gathering of approximately 35 Ethiopians in Jeddah and deported them in August 2012 for "illicit mingling." In another instance of ongoing oppression, Raif Badawi, the founder and editor of the *Free Saudi Liberals* website, which

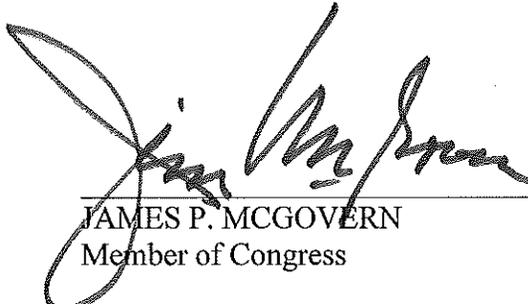
encourages religious and political debate, was sentenced by the court to 600 lashes, seven years in prison and his website was ordered to close. Although his conviction and sentence have recently been overturned on appeal, Raif Badawi remains in jail and could still be tried again.

The Government of Saudi Arabia must end its ban on public gatherings, lift restrictions on social media, stop the use of torture, and reform the new so-called "anti-terror" laws that practically criminalize all forms of peaceful dissent. The government must enact a law for associations so that local human rights organizations are formally recognized. Finally, oppressive treatment of women and religious minorities must also end.

If your administration has previously raised such concerns through private channels, the Government of Saudi Arabia's grave human rights record reveals its willingness to ignore such advice. Consequently, we urge you to combine symbolic actions with direct advocacy for human rights reforms. It is time to publicly demonstrate U.S. support for those in Saudi Arabia who are willing to take such risks to advance fundamental rights in their society.

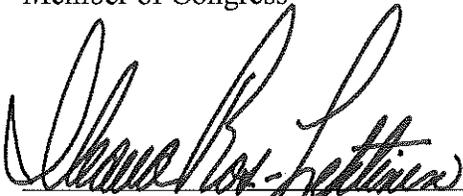
Sincerely,

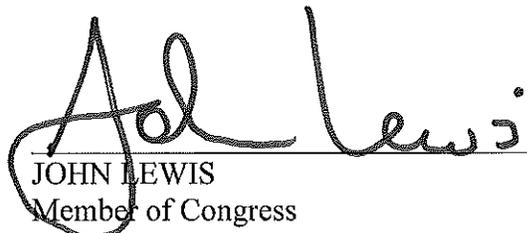

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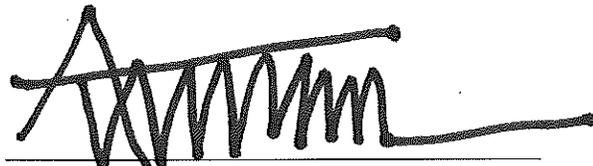

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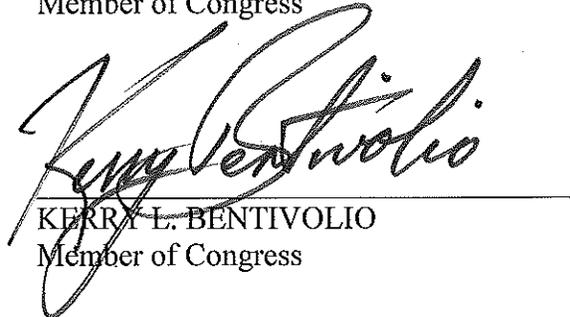

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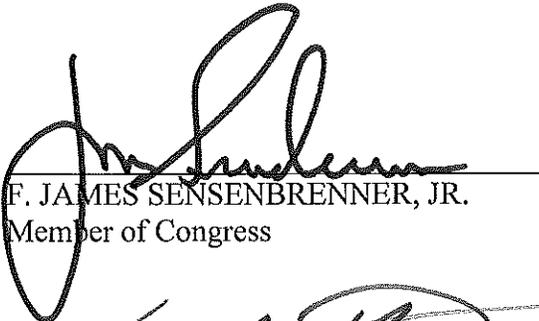

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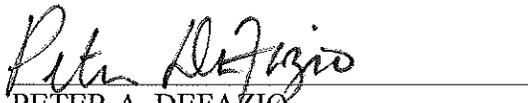

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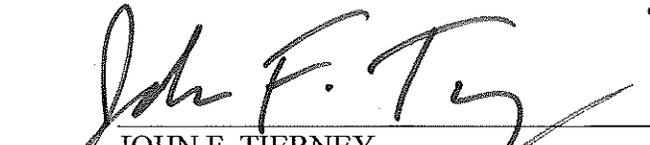

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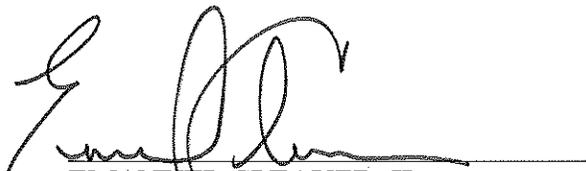

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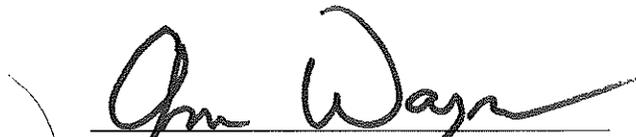

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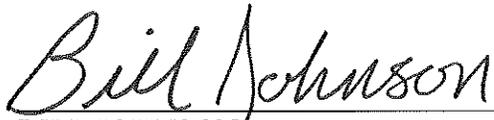

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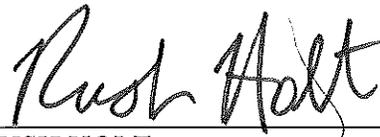

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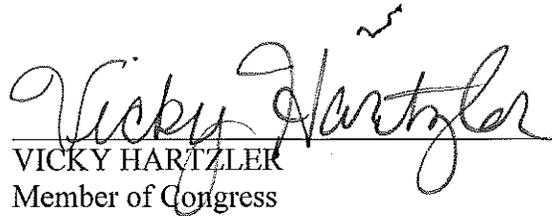
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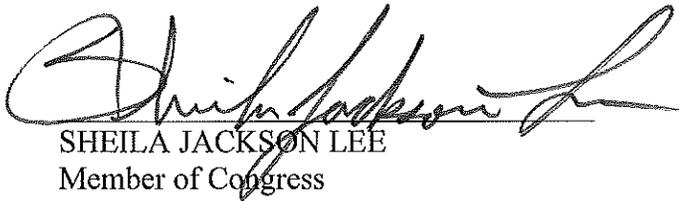
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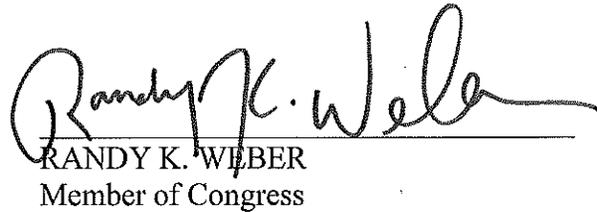
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SCOTT E. RIGELL
Member of Congress



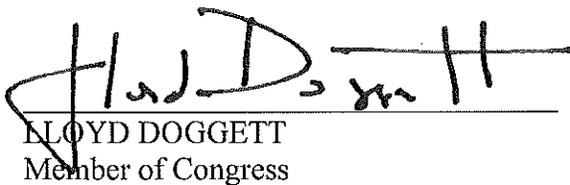
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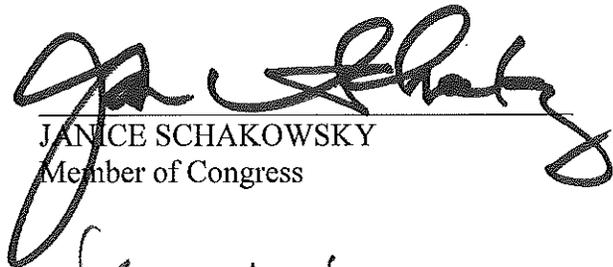
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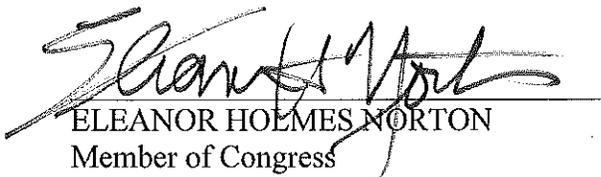
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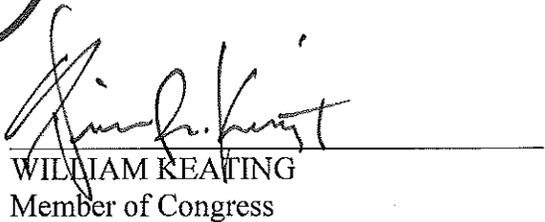
LLOYD DOGGETT
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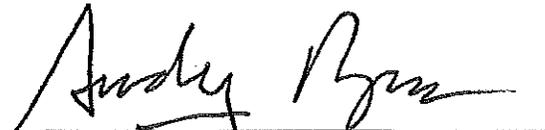
JANICE SCHAKOWSKY
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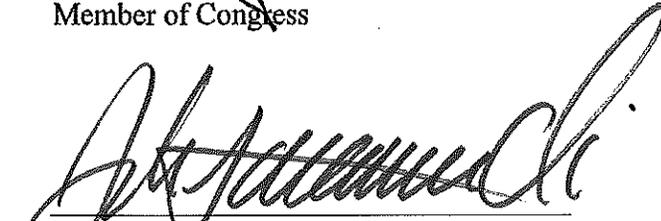
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Member of Congress

Cc'd: The Honorable John Kerry, United States Secretary of State