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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 13, 2017

CO-CHAIR, DEMOCRATIC POLICY AND
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
REGULATORY REFORM, COMMERCIAL
AND ANTITRUST LAW

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EUROPE, EURASIA, AND EMERGING THREATS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As Members of Congress dedicated to the promotion of fundamental human rights across the globe, we urge you to immediately publicly condemn the ongoing abuses of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) and perceived to be LGBT individuals in Chechnya, and to raise this issue at the highest levels with members of the Russian government. The lives of hundreds of Chechens are at stake and it is vital that the U.S. uses its full leverage to pressure Russian authorities to end these atrocities, conduct a fair and open investigation and prosecution of these crimes, and swiftly work to provide a safe haven for the marginalized.

Credible reports have indicated that since early March, the Chechen government has conducted a coordinated campaign of arrest, torture, and murder targeting gay and bisexual men and women. According to international human rights groups and local activists, this campaign also includes beatings, torture with electric shocks, and purposely outing victims to their families, with the intention of inciting 'honor killings.' Additionally, the UK Conservative Minister of State for the Foreign Office Sir Alan Duncan confirmed reports that the leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, stated that he intended to eliminate the Chechen gay community. There are also reports that the Chechen government has forced the families of suspected LGBT men and women to commit "honor killings," with the threat that entire families or communities could become targets for authorities if they do not cooperate.

Despite widespread acknowledgement of the accuracy of these reports, the Chechen government continues to deny those allegations. Disturbingly, a spokesman for the Chechen government responded to initial reports by saying, "you cannot arrest and repress those who simply aren't in the republic" and that "if such people existed in Chechnya, law enforcement would not have to worry about them, as their own relatives would have sent them to where they could never return." The central Russian government has had a conflicting reaction to these reports, on the one hand denying that any atrocities are taking place, while also recommending that victims report grievances to the very local authorities accused of carrying out the attacks. Russia also prematurely ended an investigation with the claim that the multiple reports have little credence.

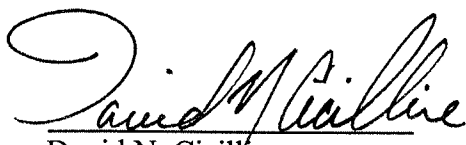
Furthermore, we urge you to assign to the appropriate agencies in your Administration, and work with our allies, to help find a safe refuge for the Chechens who have managed to escape this horrifying situation.

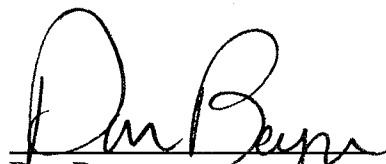
We appreciate that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson agreed that the “Russian government must protect the lives and safety of all its citizens, including the LGBT community” when he appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on June 14, 2017. But we are concerned that he indicated that this issue has not been raised with senior Russian officials, including President Putin or Foreign Minister Lavrov, by senior American representatives.

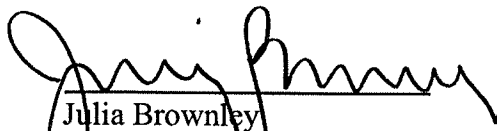
The United States stands as a beacon of hope for marginalized people across the world and has a commitment to protect and promote the human rights and dignity of all persons. When the President speaks out against human rights atrocities, or chooses to stay silent, the world pays attention.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and we await your timely response.


Sincerely,


David N. Cicilline


Don Beyer


Julia Brownley

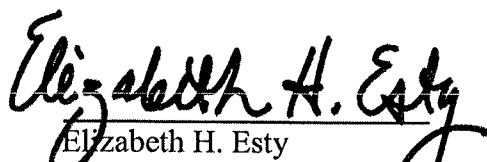

Gerald E. Connolly



Joe Courtney


Charlie Crist


Theodore E. Deutch


Eliot L. Engel


Elizabeth H. Esty


Colleen Hanabusa

Alcee Hastings

Alcee Hastings

Brian Higgins

Brian Higgins

Pramila Jaypal

Pramila Jaypal

William R. Keating

William R. Keating

Raja Krishnamoorthi

Raja Krishnamoorthi

Barbara Lee

Barbara Lee

Sander M. Levin

Sander M. Levin

Ted W. Lieu

Ted W. Lieu

Daniel Lipinski

Daniel Lipinski

Alan Lowenthal

Alan Lowenthal

Sean Patrick Maloney

Sean Patrick Maloney

A. Donald McEachin

A. Donald McEachin

James P. McGovern

James P. McGovern

Gregory Meeks

Gregory Meeks

Grace Meng

Grace Meng

Gwen Moore

Gwen Moore

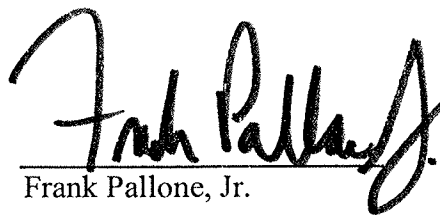
Jerold Nadler

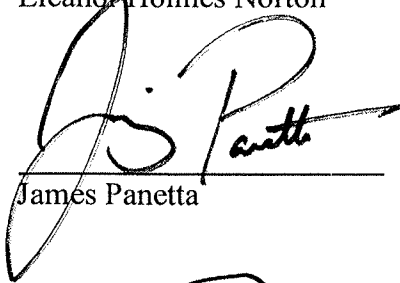
Jerold Nadler

Donald Norcross

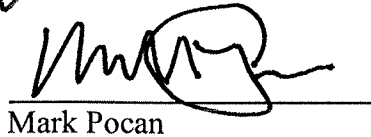
Donald Norcross

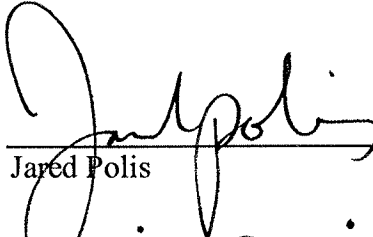

Eleanor Holmes Norton


Frank Pallone, Jr.

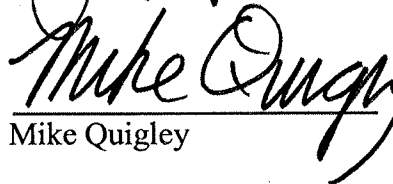

James Panetta



Chellie Pingree


Mark Pocan


Jared Polis


David Price


Mike Quigley

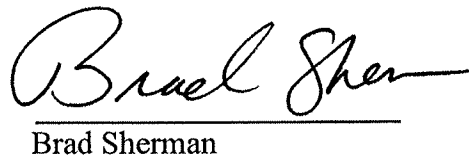

Jamie Raskin


Kathleen Rice


Illeana Ros-Lehtinen


Brad Schneider

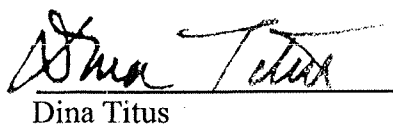

Carol Shea-Porter

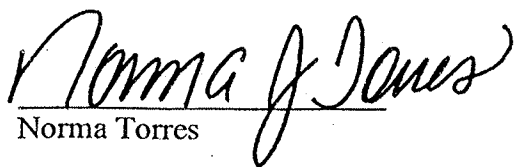

Brad Sherman

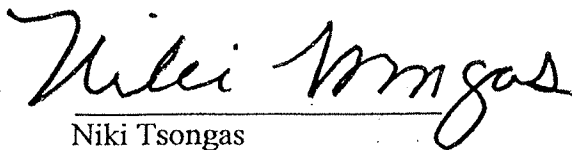

Albio Sires

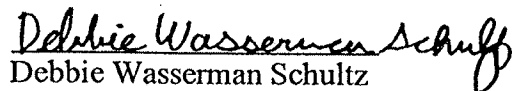

Eric Swalwell

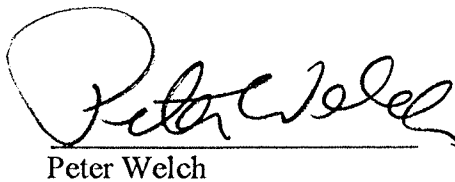

Mark Takano

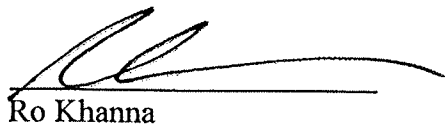

Dina Titus

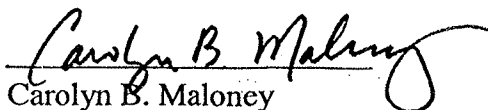

Norma Torres

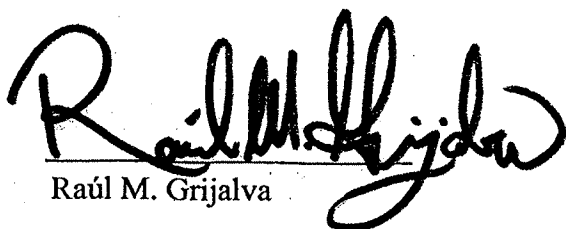

Niki Tsongas


Debbie Wasserman Schultz


Peter Welch


Ro Khanna


Carolyn B. Maloney


Raúl M. Grijalva

CC: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson