

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 14, 2011

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In 2010, on the eve of your last trip to Indonesia, 50 Members of Congress urged you to make West Papua a top priority and we renew this call on the eve of your 2011 trip to Bali where you will discuss common economic and security interests with other heads of State at the ASEAN-US Summit.

We especially want to bring to your attention our concerns about human rights abuses in the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua in hopes that you will raise these issues with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Three weeks ago, on October 19, thousands of people gathered at the Third Papuan People's Congress, where they peacefully aired political aspirations. Delegates expressed frustration with Indonesia's failed Special Autonomy package and voiced their aspirations for economic, social, as well as political rights. The people of West Papua asked the Indonesian government for meaningful democratic choices at the ballot box. They demanded a referendum on the issue of independence.

While we do not support independence, we also do not support what happened next. As people were speaking, some 500 heavily-armed police and military personnel surrounded the unarmed Congress with a cordon of armored cars. When the event was over, people remained in the field where the meeting had taken place to talk and socialize. As the delegates attempted to go home past the security cordon, Indonesian forces opened fire with military assault weapons over the crowd and into the air. During this violent crack-down by Indonesian troops, at least three indigenous Papuans were killed and dozens were injured. Witnesses said several had gunshot wounds. Many other delegates to the Congress were pistol whipped and some were beaten with rattan canes.

Three-hundred people were initially detained following this assault. All of these detainees were released, except for six men, five of whom were charged with "treason" and "incitement." Forkorus Yaboisembut, the newly elected President of the Republic Federal State of West Papua,

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is among the men still in prison. He joins Filep Karma, an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience who is now serving a 15-year jail term for raising a flag in 2004. Given that these political prisoners called for independence out of sheer frustration in response to the ongoing human rights abuses perpetuated by the Indonesian military against the people of West Papua, we urge you to seek their release, and Amnesty International is joining us in this effort as is the West Papua Advocacy Team (WPAT) and the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN).

Also, before further U.S. funds are expended in training Indonesian Security forces, it is our sincere hope that you will call upon the Indonesian government to accelerate dialogue with the Papuan people and immediately act on the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission's (Komnas HAM) findings that human rights violations were committed by Indonesian security forces at the Third Papuan Peoples' Congress on 19 October 2011. Failure to prosecute those responsible for unlawful killings and failure to bring about justice for those being detained is a violation of the rights to life and to freedom from torture and other ill-treatment, both of which are non-derogable under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Indonesia is a state party.

We trust that your awareness of our concerns will aid you as you seek justice for and on behalf of the people of West Papua.

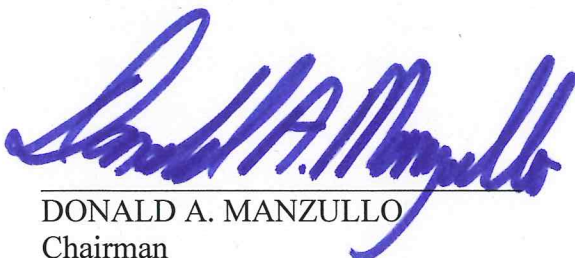
Sincerely,



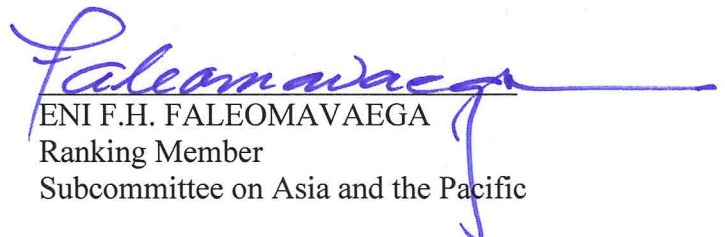
HOWARD L. BERMAN
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs



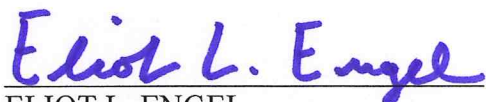
DONALD M. PAYNE
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health,
and Human Rights



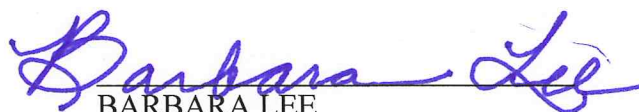
DONALD A. MANZULLO
Chairman
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific



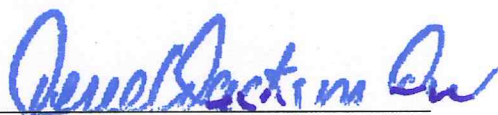
ENI F.H. FALEOMAVEGA
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Member of Congress



BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



JESSE L. JACKSON, JR.
Member of Congress



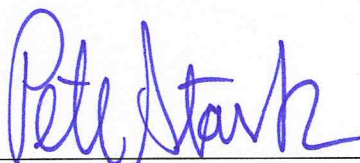
RUSS CARNAHAN
Member of Congress



GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN
Member of Congress



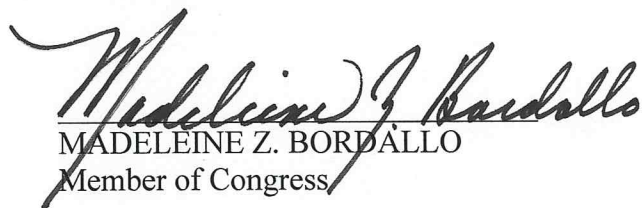
DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN
Member of Congress



PETE STARK
Member of Congress



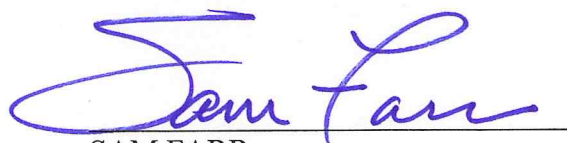
MICHAEL M. HONDA
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SAM FARR
Member of Congress