

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 21, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

The 30th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has begun and we take this opportunity to ask that the United States retain a strong leadership role in promoting accountability, reconciliation and a political settlement to support a lasting peace in Sri Lanka.

The United States' leadership at the Council resulted in the adoption of Resolution 25/1 in March 2014, which led to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) investigation into human rights violations committed from 2002-2011 during Sri Lanka's civil war. On September 16, 2015, the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL) publicly released its report and recommendations on Sri Lanka to the international community.

Secretary Kerry, we ask that as the US consults with the Government of Sri Lanka on a new resolution to be presented to the Council during this session, that the US remain committed to its promises of supporting the recommendations that came from the OISL report. To that end, we believe a UNHRC resolution supported by the US must include the recommendation calling for an "*ad hoc hybrid special court, integrating international judges, prosecutors, lawyers and investigators, mandated to try war crimes and crimes against humanity.*" We believe this recommendation is central to achieving an impartial accountability process that can be trusted by all parties in Sri Lanka.

As you know, Sri Lanka continues to recover from a decades-long civil war. Over 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final months, most by government shelling, and as the OISL report notes, Sri Lankan security forces committed large-scale acts of sexual violence and extrajudicial killings. Sri Lanka's most recent attempt at accountability and reconciliation through the 2010 Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission failed to adequately

investigate abuses and hold perpetrators accountable for human rights violations. The US and the international community now have a critical role to play in ensuring that accountability efforts are successful, and the recommendations of the OISL report will be implemented.

We commend President Sirisena and Sri Lanka's parliament for the adoption of the nineteenth amendment and the return of one thousand acres of private land to families in the north, which are important beginning steps toward returning the rule of law and the creation of trust. In order to achieve true reconciliation and a lasting peace in Sri Lanka, the new government must commit itself to taking concrete steps toward the establishment of a credible and independent judicial mechanism for accountability, as well as full and timely implementation of the recommendations contained in the OISL report.


As the US concludes its tenure on the Council, we ask that America continue its leadership and present a new resolution on Sri Lanka which fully addresses and integrates all the recommendations of the OISL report and the undertakings given by Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Samaraweera in his address to the Council on September 14, 2015. We remain very optimistic regarding the government of President Sirisena and what the future holds for cooperation between the US and Sri Lanka. However, we must stand steadfast in our support for human rights around the world – the US has an obligation to ensure the atrocities that occurred are not repeated.

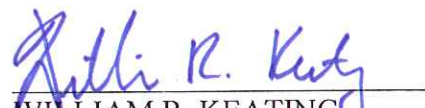
Sincerely,


BILL JOHNSON
Member of Congress


DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress


STEVE STIVERS
Member of Congress

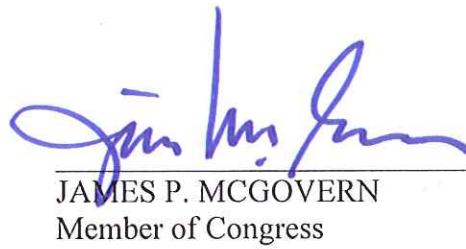

PATRICK J. TIBERI
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WILLIAM R. KEATING
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STEVE CHABOT
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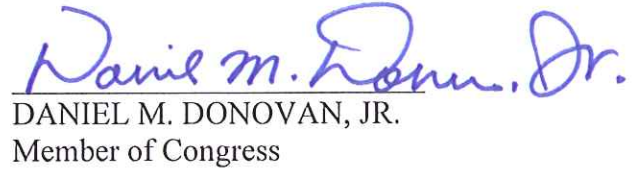
JIM RENACCI
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