

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 7, 2003

Secretary Colin Powell  
Department of State  
2201 C St., NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Powell,

We are writing to express our concern over a string of violent murders of young women that has taken place over the past ten years in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and ask that you address this issue with the Mexican government during your upcoming Bi-national Summit on November 12, 2003.

In 1993, the bodies of young women – showing signs of rape, beatings, and mutilation – were found in the desert on the outskirts of Juárez, Mexico. This was the beginning of an epidemic of brutal rape and murder aimed at Juárez's young, poor women. In the decade since, more than 370 women have been killed in that city. Nearly one hundred of the murders are suspected to be the work of one or more serial killers who prey on young female students, store clerks, and assembly-plant workers. Only one suspect has been convicted of any of the rape-murders, and only in one case. Women's mangled bodies continue to appear around Juárez, and the pattern of rape-killings has spread to Chihuahua City, 250 miles south.

The plight of Ciudad Juárez's women has been taken up worldwide as an international humanitarian crisis. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations, Amnesty International, and countless other organizations are working to document this tragedy and push for justice.

It is imperative that this issue be discussed at the bi-national summit, because it is a bi-national issue. Not only is this a strong human rights violation happening right outside our border, but US citizens have also been affected by these murders to various degrees. U.S. citizens have been arrested for the murders, have been victims to the murders, and have lost loved ones to the murders.

From October 11 to 13, 2003, four Members of Congress visited Ciudad Juárez to investigate these murders and find ways to help end this chapter in Juárez's history. The delegation met with victims' families, toured the areas where many of the affected families live and where the bodies of young women have been found, and met with federal, state, and municipal government officials to discuss the actions they are carrying out to investigate and prevent crimes against women. The delegation was also briefed by the FBI on their efforts in training Mexican law enforcement authorities. In response to this trip we urge you to address these issues in your upcoming meeting with Mexican officials.

- ***Encourage the Mexican government to take concrete steps that will resolve these crimes, and to exert the political will necessary to achieve these goals.*** While government officials detailed a range of programs to address these crimes to the delegation, few of these efforts provided adequate solutions towards investigating and punishing the perpetrators. The Mexican government has appointed Maria Guadalupe Morfin to lead a commission that will work to ending the murders of women in Ciudad

Juárez. We believe the creation of the Commission is a strong step towards ending the murders, but much more still needs to be done.

- ***Ask the Mexican government to investigate the sources of threats against family members and justice advocates, and prosecute those responsible for intimidation and attacks.*** Victims' families and non-governmental organizations have complained of being harassed and intimidated by both government officials and unknown actors. Family members seeking justice for their daughters have also claimed to have been harassed, refused access to their daughters' cases, and even physically attacked in the past years.
- ***Offer full US cooperation in setting up a DNA database under international auspices that would collect DNA samples from the victims' bodies and from families of disappeared women, to enable the positive identification of the victims.*** Victims' families also complained they struggle with authorities to positively identify the remains of their daughters. In many cases to date, the bodies found often carry identifying marks of various individuals – one woman wearing the clothing of another. In some cases the government has often refused family access to corpses, and has refused to conduct DNA testing.
- ***Condemn the use of torture as a means of investigation into these murders, and to encourage the Mexican government to ensure fair trials based on the available evidence for these detainees.*** We are concerned about the use of torture to extract confessions to these murders. The responsible authorities have conducted a number of round-ups shortly after highly publicized murders in an attempt to quell public discontent. Almost all of the accused have credible claims of torture, and almost all their cases lack any evidence of their guilt beyond their tortured confessions. One of the most recent cases of torture involves a US citizen and her Mexican husband, Cynthia Kiecker and Ulises Perzabal, who are accused of the murder of Viviana Rayas. Because of these circumstances, and because the murders continue, the victims' families consider these accused to also be victims of the Juárez tragedy.

We recognize that the Chihuahua State's tragedy is only one of many issues that are of importance to our bi-national agenda with Mexico. However, we feel that the Chihuahua state murders must begin to take a more prominent place in these discussions. We ask that you dedicate time at the meeting on November 12, 2003, to express these concerns and discuss ways that the U.S. government can support the investigations into these crimes. Thank you for your willingness to address our concerns with the Mexican government during the upcoming bi-national meeting.

Sincerely,



HILDA L. SOLIS

Democratic Vice Chair of the Caucus  
On Women's Issues



LOUISE MCINTOSH SLAUGHTER

Democratic Chair of the Caucus  
On Women's Issues



ROBERT MENENDEZ

Democratic Caucus Chair

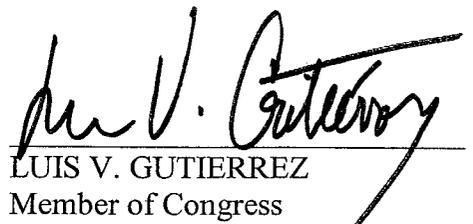


NANCY PELOSI

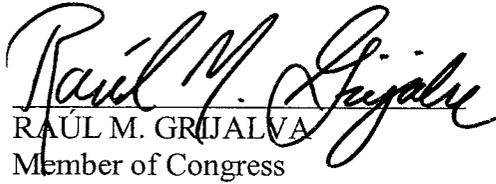
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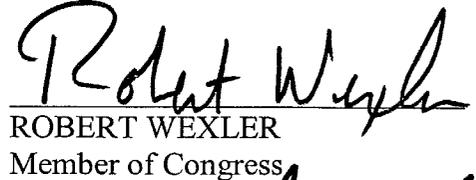
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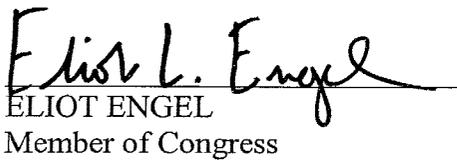
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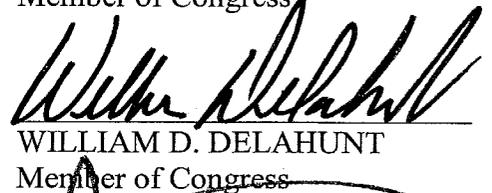
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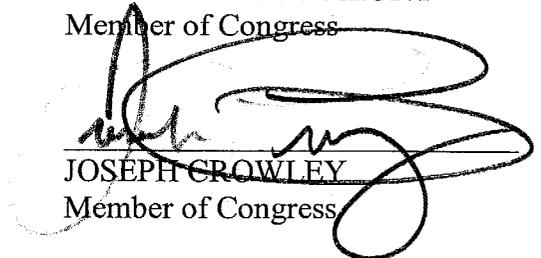
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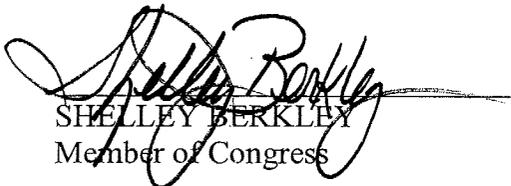
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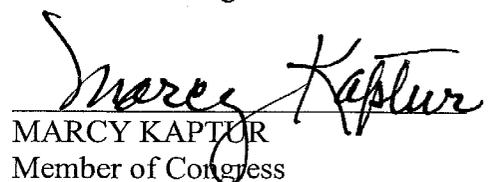
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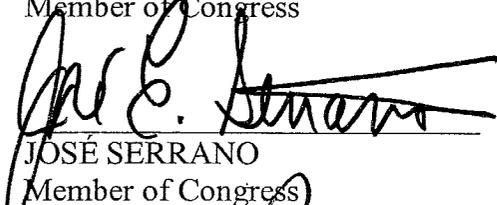
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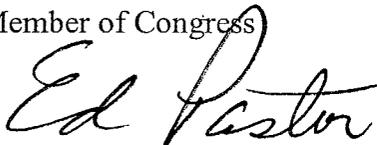
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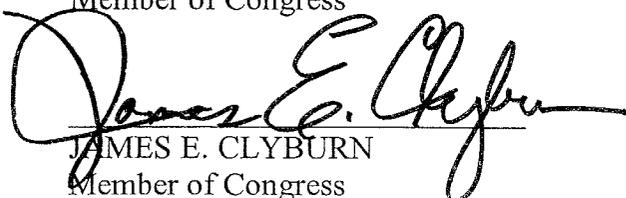
  
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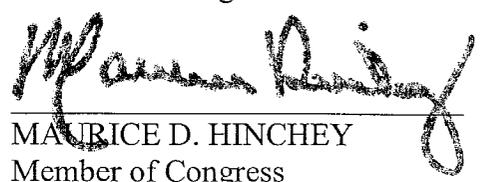
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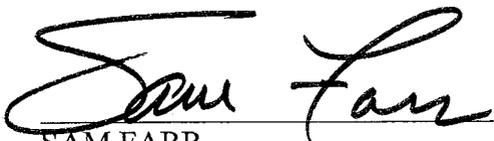
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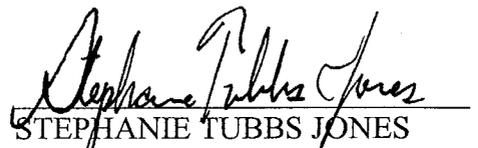
  
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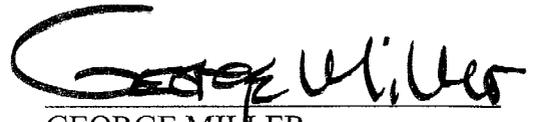
  
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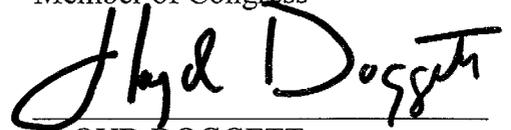
  
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