

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

Mr. George W. Bush  
The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

May 4, 2007

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you as members of Congress who are deeply concerned about humanitarian workers' access to millions of Darfurians whose lives depend on international assistance for food, health care, and other emergency services. As you are certainly aware, increasing attacks on aid workers and supplies as well as rising insecurity have already forced relief agencies to scale back their operations in a number of areas. Equally troublesome impediments to effective delivery of this desperately needed assistance, however, are created by the Sudanese government.

While we welcomed the signing on March 28 of the Joint Communiqué between the government of Sudan and the UN on the facilitation of humanitarian activities in Darfur, we are worried that the government's promise to "support, protect and facilitate humanitarian operations in Darfur" will not be effectively fulfilled or enforced.

Based on credible reports from a number of humanitarian organizations, both U.S.-based and international, it is clear that these groups continued to experience problems even after the Communiqué was signed. For example, aid workers have endured major delays in receiving travel visas and work permits, which significantly inhibits their ability to provide assistance in Darfur. Even after receiving short-term visas and permits, paperwork renewal is time-consuming and quite expensive, with the Sudanese Government charging fees in excess of US\$360 per person.

Last month's Communiqué specifically stated that:

- All visas and work permits would be extended;
- Applications for new visas and permits would be approved within 15 days; and
- Exit and re-entry visas would be granted within two days of application.

Unfortunately, with the exception of granting a few exit visas, the Sudanese Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC) continues to block these necessary papers. In addition, some humanitarian workers who recently left Sudan for a short-term period have received a stamp in their passport that says: "Cannot work in Darfur for six months." This represents a clear violation of both the spirit and the letter of the 48-hour turn-around requirement on re-entry visas detailed in the Communiqué.

Additionally, aid agencies have reported that while some Sudanese government agencies have accepted these less restrictive procedures, others have not. This discrepancy creates significant confusion and delays. For example, the Customs Department and the Ministry of Finance often refuse to issue exemptions for imported materials to humanitarian groups, even after full authorization has been obtained from the HAC. These problems suggest that despite the government's promise to reduce bureaucratic impediments, this commitment is not being well communicated or executed across all government agencies.

Finally, we are concerned by reports that the Sudanese Department of Labor has attempted to interfere in humanitarian groups' hiring processes, by refusing work permits and citing qualification requirements without producing any legitimate explanation when an application has been rejected. The Communiqué clearly states that, with the exception of practicing engineers and medical professionals: "[international NGOs] will recruit and deploy international staff according only to the selection criteria stipulated by individual organizations." Similarly, humanitarian field workers and technical staff who perform specialized job functions -- including safety, protection, policy and IDP camp coordination -- have experienced significantly more delays and impediments than other workers. This suggests that the government of Sudan may be selectively applying procedures to certain categories of workers - yet another practice that contradicts the goals of the recently agreed Joint Communiqué.

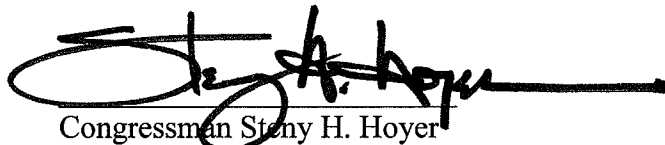
We urge you to deliver a clear and forceful message to the Sudanese government that the United States and the international community expect Sudan to follow through on all of its agreements, including the recent Joint Communiqué that deals with bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian access. In dealing with the Sudanese government, we implore you to use all possible tools of leverage at your disposal to ensure that all relief agencies and workers are treated equally, and that these humanitarian workers are able to access the more than two million Darfuris who are dependent on them for survival.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to your prompt response on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



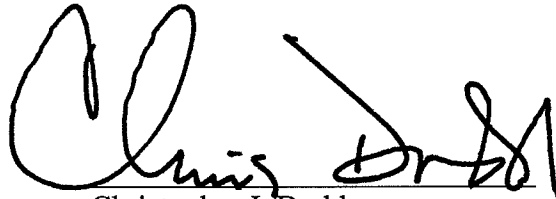
Senator Russell D. Feingold  
United States Senator



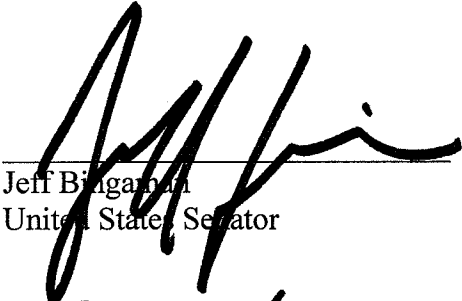
Congressman Steny H. Hoyer  
United States Representative



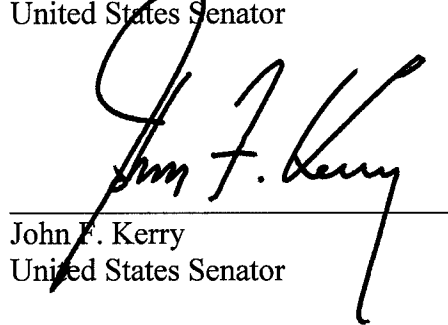
Carl Levin  
United States Senator



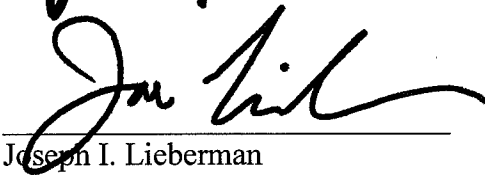
Christopher J. Dodd  
United States Senator



Jeff Bingaman  
United States Senator



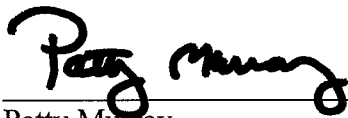
John F. Kerry  
United States Senator



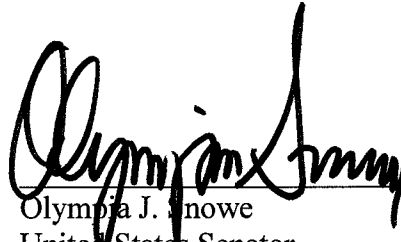
Joseph I. Lieberman  
United States Senator



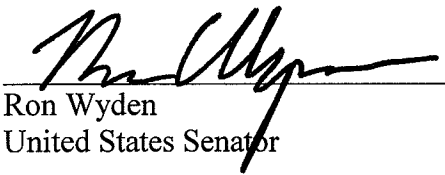
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Olympia J. Snowe  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Sam Brownback  
United States Senator



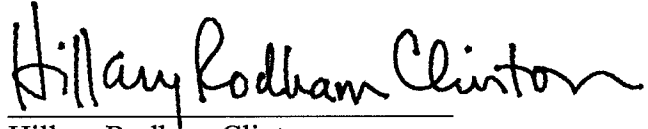
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



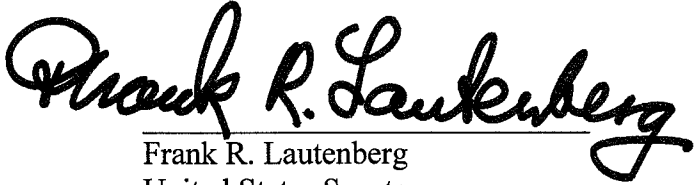
Mary L. Landrieu  
United States Senator



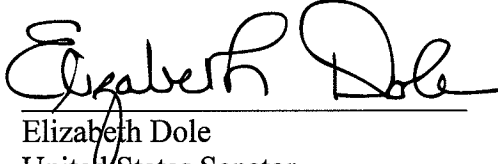
Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



Hillary Rodham Clinton  
United States Senator



Frank R. Lautenberg  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Dole  
United States Senator



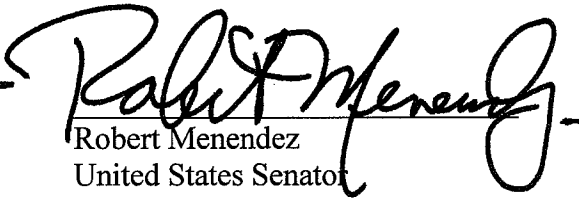
Norm Coleman  
United States Senator



Richard Burr  
United States Senator



Barack Obama  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Tom Lantos  
United States Representative



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
United States Representative



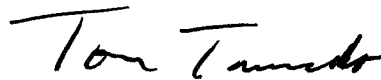
Donald M. Payne  
United States Representative



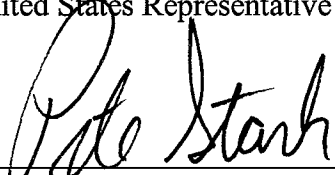
Michael E. Capuano  
United States Representative



Frank R. Wolf  
United States Representative



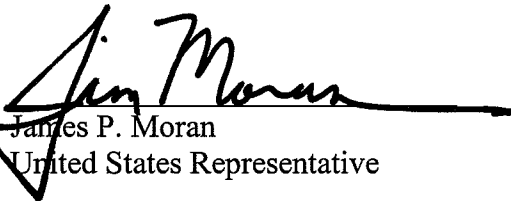
Tom Tancredo  
United States Representative



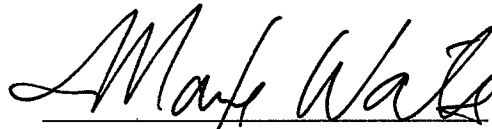
Pete Stark  
United States Representative



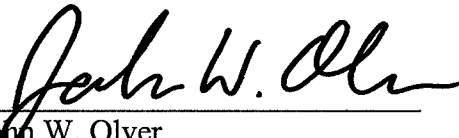
Michael R. McNulty  
United States Representative



James P. Moran  
United States Representative



Maxine Waters  
United States Representative



John W. Olver  
United States Representative



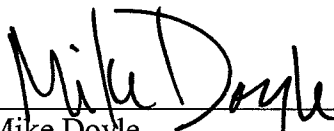
Bobby L. Rush  
United States Representative



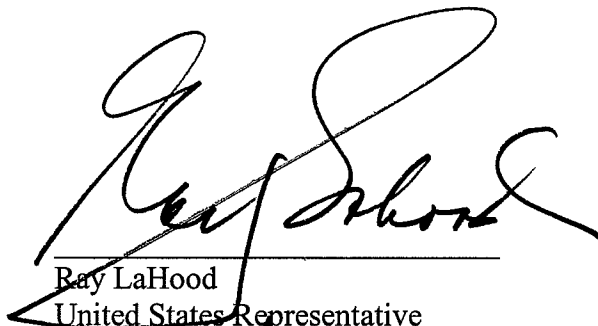
Robert W. Goodlatte  
United States Representative



Lloyd Doggett  
United States Representative



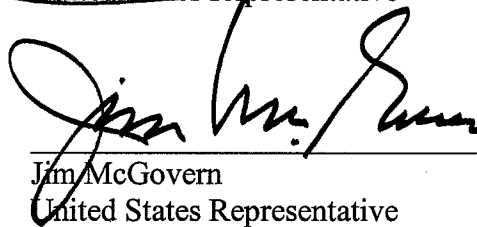
Mike Doyle  
United States Representative



Ray LaHood  
United States Representative



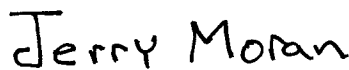
Tom Allen  
United States Representative



Jim McGovern  
United States Representative



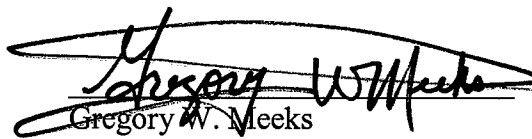
Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
United States Representative



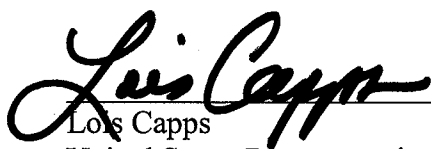
Jerry Moran  
United States Representative



Joseph R. Pitts  
United States Representative



Gregory W. Meeks  
United States Representative



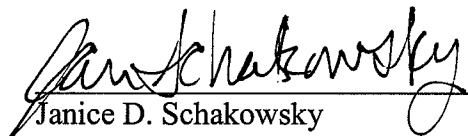
Lois Capps  
United States Representative



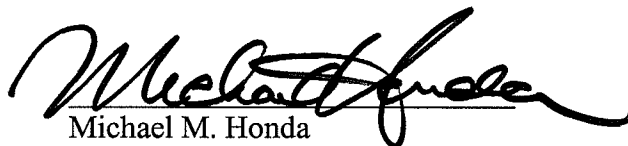
Barbara Lee  
United States Representative



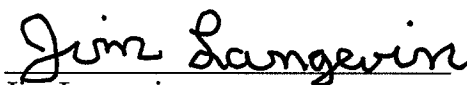
Rush D. Holt  
United States Representative



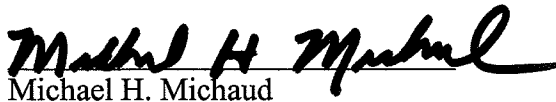
Janice D. Schakowsky  
United States Representative



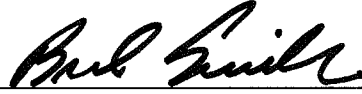
Michael M. Honda  
United States Representative



Jim Langevin  
United States Representative



Michael H. Michaud  
United States Representative



Brad Miller  
United States Representative



Trent Franks  
United States Representative



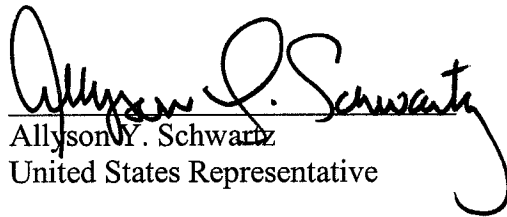
G.K. Butterfield  
United States Representative



John Barrow  
United States Representative



Jim Costa  
United States Representative



Allyson Y. Schwartz  
United States Representative



Dave Reichert  
United States Representative



Earl Blumenauer  
United States Representative