

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The Honorable Loretta Lynch  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Vanita Gupta  
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Civil Rights Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue,  
NW Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Lynch and Deputy Assistant Gupta:

We write to follow up on our June 4<sup>th</sup> letter requesting a Department of Justice investigation into whether armed demonstrators outside of mosques violates the First Amendment rights of worshipers and 18 U.S. Code § 248, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act.

In May, nearly 250 anti-Muslim protestors, many armed with assault rifles, surrounded a mosque in Phoenix. This was the second armed demonstration at the mosque. The first instilled so much fear and intimidation that the mosque was forced to cancel religious services.

The group responsible for these hate-filled demonstrations has kept its pledge to expand demonstrations to other parts of the country. Scheduled for October 10<sup>th</sup>, current and former members from a hate group called the Oath Keepers have scheduled a "Global Rally for Humanity" in 20 cities where thousands are predicted to gather to stoke public prejudice and intimidate Muslim worshipers. Organizers have called on protesters to be armed. Members from the Oath Keepers recently went to Ferguson, Missouri to protest a vigil for the one-year anniversary of the shooting of Michael Brown.

The presence of assault weapons coupled with deep seeded bigotry and hate speech creates a clear and present danger to worshipers and threatens lawless action. Beyond the safety concerns the conduct of these demonstrators impedes the First Amendment rights of worshipers.

These demonstrators argue that they are exercising their First Amendment rights. Freedom of Speech and the Freedom to Assemble are bedrock principles that distinguish free societies from tyrannical regimes. These freedoms, however, are not absolute. The constitution does not protect behavior that prevents the free exercise of religion or causes the incitement of violence or prejudice against protected groups.

Armed protestors intimidating worshipers at churches, synagogues, mosques, or any religious place of worship seems to be exactly the behavior that Congress sought to outlaw when it passed the FACE Act, which prohibits the use of “force or threat of force or by physical obstruction, intentionally injures, intimidates or interferes with or attempts to injure, intimidate or interfere with any person lawfully exercising or seeking to exercise the First Amendment right of religious freedom at a place of religious worship.”<sup>1</sup>

Enforcement of the law should not vary based on the religious affiliation of those being intimidated.

The activity of these armed anti-Muslim demonstrators comes at a time when anti-Muslim hate crimes are on the rise and people are seeking to capitalize anti-Muslim fearmongering.

As gun violence and bigotry sweep across the country, we must do everything we can to prevent further tragedy and discrimination.

Sincerely,



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Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress



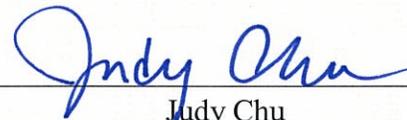
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André Carson  
Member of Congress



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G. K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress



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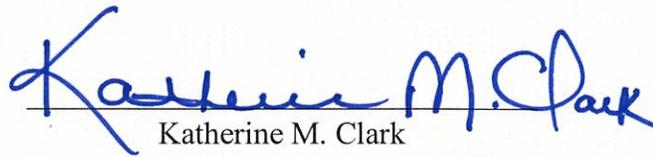
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

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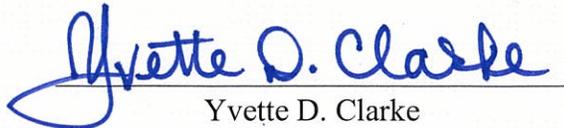
<sup>1</sup> 18 U.S.C § 248



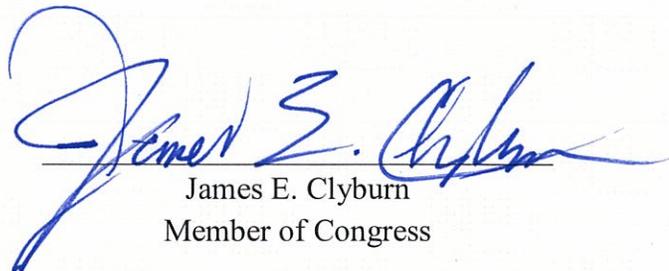
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress



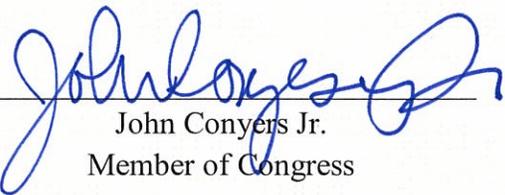
Katherine M. Clark  
Member of Congress



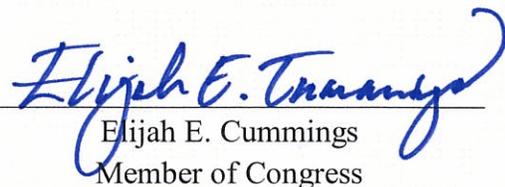
Yvette D. Clarke  
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James E. Clyburn  
Member of Congress



John Conyers Jr.  
Member of Congress



Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell  
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Sam Farr  
Member of Congress



Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



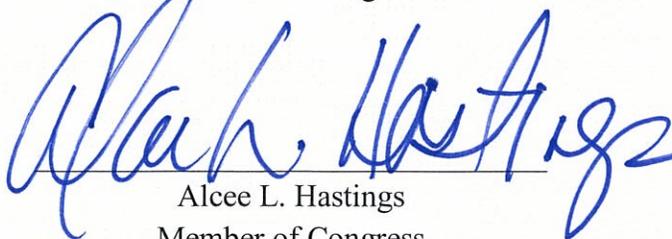
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress



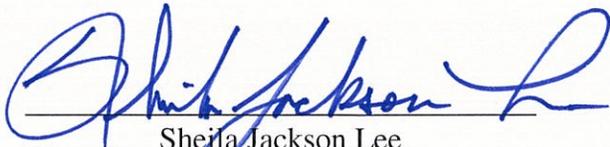
Janice Hahn  
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



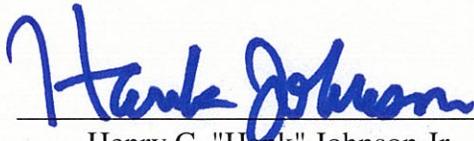
Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



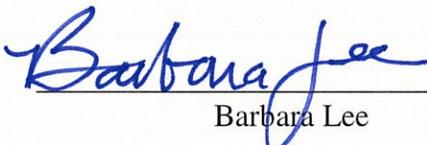
Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress



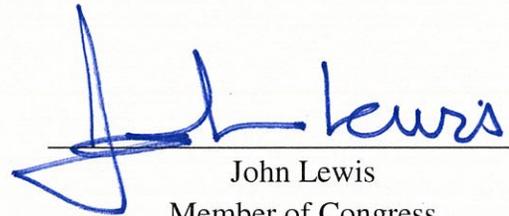
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.  
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



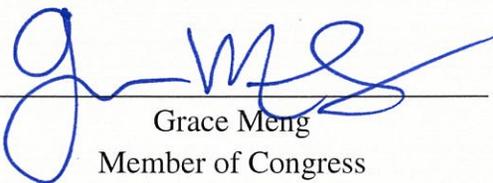
John Lewis  
Member of Congress



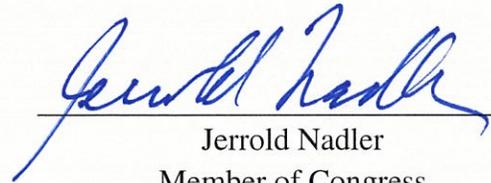
Ted Lieu  
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



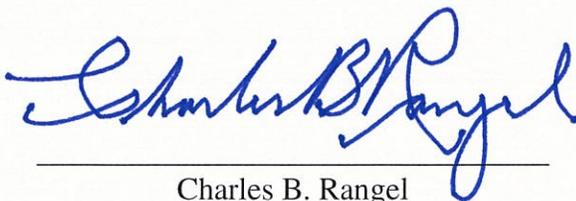
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



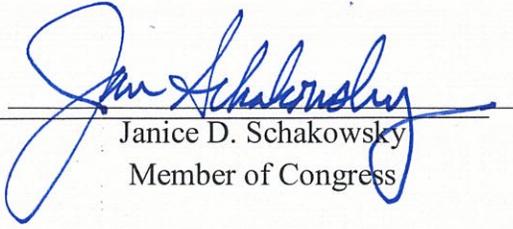
Ed Perlmutter  
Member of Congress



Charles B. Rangel  
Member of Congress

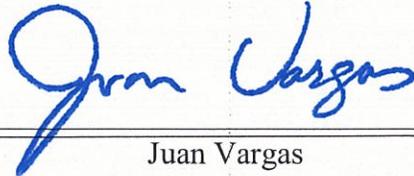


Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress



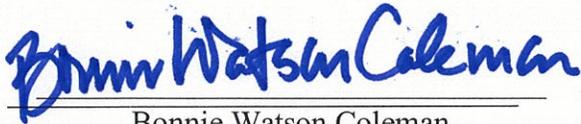
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Janice D. Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



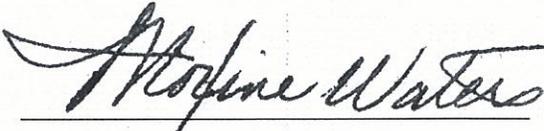
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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



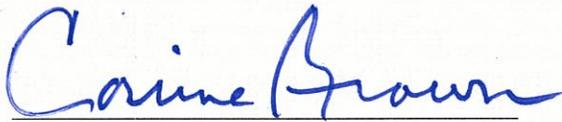
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



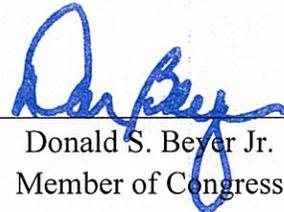
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Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



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Corrine Brown  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress