June 12, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Michael Froman
U.S. Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Secretary Kerry and Ambassador Froman:

We write to express our concern over the Government of Brunei Darussalam’s recently adopted penal code, which threatens the human rights of minority groups including women, religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, and urge you to insist that Brunei address these human rights violations as a condition of the United States participating with them in any further Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade negotiations.

As Members of Congress, we believe that protecting fundamental human rights is a cornerstone of American values and must always be a priority in our relations, both diplomatic and economic, with foreign countries. The United States is committed to protecting the rights of religious minorities, LGBT individuals and women across the globe. Moreover, time and again, the United States has spoken out against anti-LGBT activity and discriminatory laws in countries like Nigeria and Uganda and against unequal protection of women, in countries such as Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, and against the persecution of religious minorities in the Central African Republic, China, and Pakistan.

Brunei’s adoption of the revised penal code legalizes violence against its citizens, constituting torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment. The United States must make it clear that we will not tolerate such abuses. International trade partners have much to gain from an
economic relationship with the United States, and our trade agreements should insist that participating countries adhere to internationally recognized civil, political, and human rights standards. Targeting LGBT individuals or religious minorities and opening the door for discrimination and violence against women is a threat we cannot overlook, and should trade agreements like the TPP go into effect with the participation of human rights violators, the United States would lose its leverage to provide economic pressure on countries to reverse unacceptable policies.

As the world’s largest economy, the United States holds a significant place in world affairs and must use this position to address human rights atrocities in countries like Brunei. According with all applicable rules and regulations, we urge you to insist that Brunei address these human rights violations as a condition before the United States enter into any trade negotiations.

Sincerely,

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

Louise McIntosh Slaughter
Member of Congress

Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress
Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Xavier Becerra
Member of Congress

Ami Bera
Member of Congress

Tim Bishop
Member of Congress

Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress

Bruce Braley
Member of Congress

Corrine Brown
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Lois Capps
Member of Congress

Michael Capuano
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress
Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Juliá Bl. Chávez  
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress

David Cicilline  
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Elijah Cummings  
Member of Congress

Theodore E. Deutch  
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

John Dingell  
Member of Congress
Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

Tammy Duckworth
Member of Congress

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Eliot Engel
Member of Congress

William Enyart
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Joe Garcia
Member of Congress
Alan Grayson  
Member of Congress

Gene Green  
Member of Congress

Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress

Janice Hahn  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

Rush Holt  
Member of Congress

Mike Honda  
Member of Congress

Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

Steve Israel  
Member of Congress
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

Hank Johnson
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Dan Kildee
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress

Dan Maffei
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

Jim McGovern
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Nita Lowey
Member of Congress

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress

Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Mike Michaud
Member of Congress
George Miller  
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

Patrick Murphy  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Gloria Negrete McLeod  
Member of Congress

Richard M. Nolan  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Beto O’Rourke  
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone  
Member of Congress

Gary C. Peters  
Member of Congress

Collin Peterson  
Member of Congress
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Raul Ruiz
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Linda Sánchez
Member of Congress

Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Adam Schiff
Member of Congress

Allyson Schwartz
Member of Congress

Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Member of Congress