

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We join you and the international community in expressing unequivocal condemnation over the news that chemical weapons were reportedly used by the government of Syria.

While we understand that as Commander in Chief you have a constitutional obligation to protect our national interests from direct attack, Congress has the constitutional obligation and power to approve military force, even if the United States or its direct interests (such as its embassies) have not been attacked or threatened with an attack. As such, we strongly urge you to seek an affirmative decision of Congress prior to committing any U.S. military engagement to this complex crisis.

While the ongoing human rights violations and continued loss of life are horrific, they should not draw us into an unwise war—especially without adhering to our own constitutional requirements. We strongly support the work within the United Nations Security Council to build international consensus condemning the alleged use of chemical weapons and preparing an appropriate response; we should also allow the U.N. inspectors the space and time necessary to do their jobs, which are so crucial to ensuring accountability.

As elected officials, we have a duty to represent the will and priorities of our constituents, consistent with the Constitution we all swore to uphold and defend. Before weighing the use of military force, Congress must fully debate and consider the facts and every alternative, as well as determine how best to end the violence and protect civilians. We stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,



BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress



MICHAEL HONDA
Member of Congress



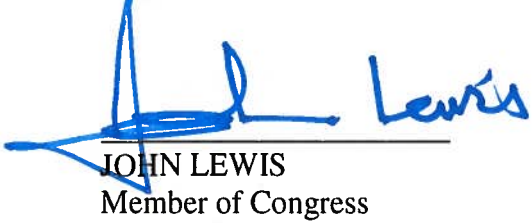
ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress



JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress



BETO O'ROURKE
Member of Congress



JOHN LEWIS
Member of Congress



PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress



ROBIN KELLY
Member of Congress



MARK POCAN
Member of Congress



RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



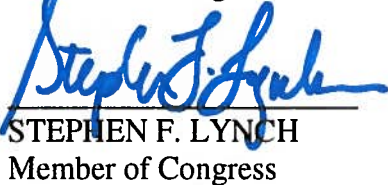
MICHAEL MICHAUD
Member of Congress



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress



STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress



NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress



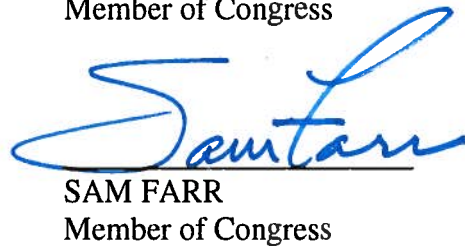
LLOYD DOGGETT
Member of Congress



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress



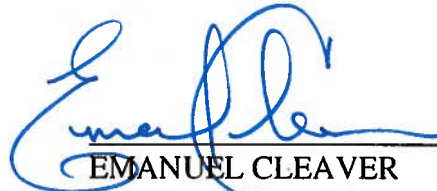
JANICE HAHN
Member of Congress



SAM FARR
Member of Congress




TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress



EMANUEL CLEAVER
Member of Congress



RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress



SHEILA JACKSON-LEE
Member of Congress



JIM MCDERMOTT
Member of Congress



SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress



EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
Member of Congress



JOSE E. SERRANO
Member of Congress



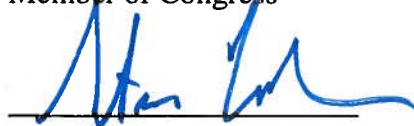
GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress



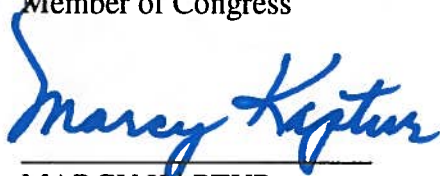
DONNA F. EDWARDS
Member of Congress



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress



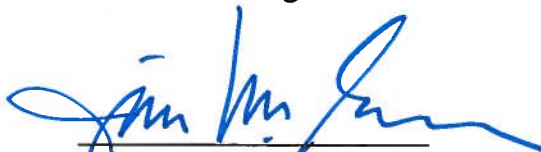
STEVE COHEN
Member of Congress



MARCY KAPTUR
Member of Congress



ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress



JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress



DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge

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Judy Chu

JUDY CHU
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Bobby Rush

BOBBY RUSH
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Alan Lowenthal

ALAN LOWENTHAL
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DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN
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Henry Waxman

HENRY WAXMAN
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Diana DeGette

DIANA DEGETTE
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison

KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas

NIKI TSONGAS
Member of Congress



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



GRACE MENG
Member of Congress



DAVID SCOTT
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MICHAEL CAPUANO
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LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
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JOHN YARMUTH
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JULIA BROWNLEY
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GREGORIO SABLAN
Member of Congress