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

JOHN LEWIS
Member of Congress

ROBIN KELLY
Member of Congress

RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress

LLOYD DOGGETT
Member of Congress

JANICE HAHN
Member of Congress

BETO O’ROURKE
Member of Congress

PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress

MARK POCAN
Member of Congress

MICHAEL MICHAUD
Member of Congress

CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress

NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress

JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress

SAM FARR
Member of Congress
Tulsi Gabbard  
TULSI GABBARD  
Member of Congress

Rush Holt  
RUSH HOLT  
Member of Congress

Jim McGovern  
JIM MCDERMOTT  
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson  
EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON  
Member of Congress

George Miller  
GEORGE MILLER  
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT  
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur  
MARCY KAPTUR  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
JAMES P. MCGOVERN  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver  
EMANUEL CLEAVER  
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson-Lee  
SHEILA JACKSON-LEE  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
SUZANNE BONAMICI  
Member of Congress

Jose E. Serrano  
JOSE E. SERRANO  
Member of Congress

Donna F. Edwards  
DONNA F. EDWARDS  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
STEVE COHEN  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
ALCEE L. HASTINGS  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
DANNY K. DAVIS  
Member of Congress
MARCIA L. FUDGE
Member of Congress

JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

BOBBY RUSH
Member of Congress

DAVE LOEBSACK
Member of Congress

JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress

YVETTE CLARKE
Member of Congress

RICK NOLAN
Member of Congress

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress

CHARLES RANGEL
Member of Congress

ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress

DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN
Member of Congress

CAROLYN MALONEY
Member of Congress

HENRY WAXMAN
Member of Congress

DIANA DEGETTE
Member of Congress

KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress

NIKI TSONGAS
Member of Congress
JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress

GRACE MENG
Member of Congress

DAVID SCOTT
Member of Congress

MICHAEL CAPUANO
Member of Congress

JOHN CONYERS
Member of Congress

LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

JOHN YARMUTH
Member of Congress

JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

GREGORIO SABLAN
Member of Congress