

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 30, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:


We understand that during the 3rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) currently taking place in Geneva, the delegation from Norway, on behalf of a cross-regional grouping of States, will be delivering an oral statement on human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We strongly urge the Administration to support the statement.

The Norwegian Statement, consisting of three brief, straight-forward paragraphs, urges the Human Rights Council to “pay due attention to human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity,” and requests the President of the Council to “provide an opportunity, at an appropriate future session of the Council, for a discussion of these important human rights issues.” It acknowledges the work of UN Special Procedures and treaty bodies in identifying and presenting extensive evidence of human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity, including “deprivation of the rights to life, freedom from violence and torture.” Overall the Statement reaffirms the mission of the Human Rights Council in promoting universal respect for the protection of *all* human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is imperative that the United States, one of the world’s foremost champions of universal human rights, support the clear anti-violence focus of the Norwegian Statement and demonstrate its commitment to human rights regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

As you may recall, during the September 2006 session of the UNHRC, Nigeria, a Member State of the Council, spoke in favor of the death penalty by stoning against gays and lesbians, stating that it is a form of “appropriate and just punishment” for “unnatural sexual acts” such as homosexuality and lesbianism. The past year also marked a sharp rise in extreme, state-sponsored violence against gays and lesbians, as countries such as Iran, Iraq, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia executed their own nationals for engaging in homosexual sex. The Special Procedures and treaty bodies has identified use of the death penalty, torture, beatings, rape, police harassment and disappearances against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals. The Norwegian Statement provides a timely opportunity for countries apprehensive about such violations of human rights to publicly state their concern and urge greater action from the Council.

The United States has opposed the creation of the new Human Rights Council based in part on concerns that the criteria for membership are not strong enough to keep human rights abusers off the Council. Given its dedication to genuine human rights protection within the UN regime, the Administration should support the Norwegian Statement, not only as a declaration of our nation's respect for principles of universality and non-discrimination as they apply to human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity, but also as an opportunity to help shape the direction of this nascent institution. We applaud the Administration's strong condemnation earlier this year of the Nigerian legislation criminalizing same-sex relationships and outlaw any clubs, organizations, or meetings that support or advocate for the rights of lesbian and gay people. We also commend the State Department for forcefully condemning the arrest of gay men in the United Arab Emirates and increased anti-gay killings in Iraq. We strongly urge you to join the Norwegian Statement recognizing human rights violations based on sexual orientation, and we look forward to your favorable response.

Sincerely,



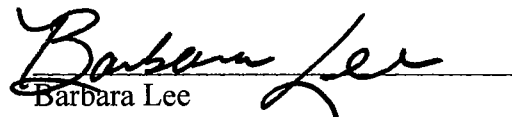
Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



Tom Lantos
Member of Congress



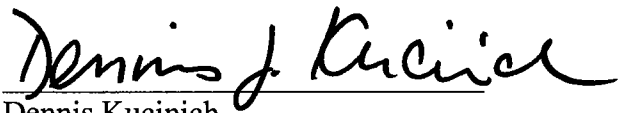
Barney Frank
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



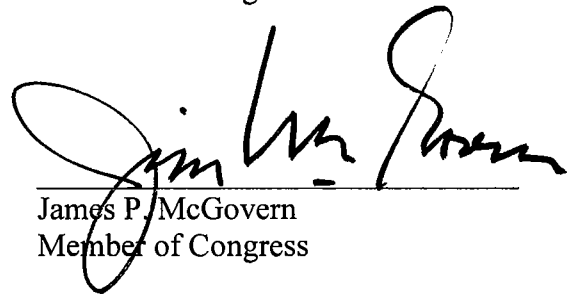
Al Green
Member of Congress



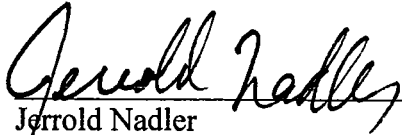
Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress



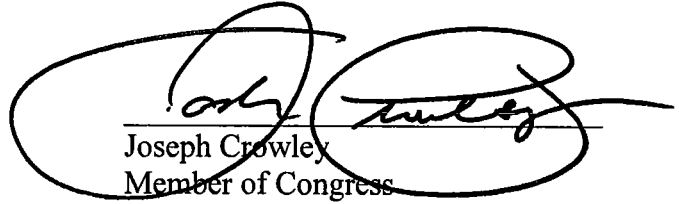
Raul Grijalva
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