

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 10, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to bring your attention to a serious and chronic problem in Guatemala—child sexual assault. As the Guatemalan government works to improve its response to this heinous crime, we urge you to ensure that child sexual assault—particularly capacity building for the Guatemalan police—is given greater attention in decisions regarding United States assistance to Guatemala.

Tragically, the crime of sexual assault is all too common in Guatemala. According to Human Rights Watch, “rapes and sexual assaults of women increased by 34 percent from 2008 to 2011, while in 9 of every 10 of these cases, those responsible are not punished.”

The prevalence of child sexual assault is especially troubling. A report by Doctors Without Borders in 2012 found that a quarter of all adolescent women and girls in Guatemala reported they had been a victim of sexual violence within the past year.

In the past, victims of sexual assault in Guatemala did not have adequate support, and police and prosecutors lacked both the will and the technical ability to confront this crime consistently and appropriately. However, recent efforts by the Guatemalan government—including to reform its police and enact recommendations of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)—demonstrate an increased commitment to address sexual violence.

We were particularly encouraged by the Guatemalan government’s decision in 2012 to designate a Special Unit for Sex Crimes within the National Civil Police to investigate cases of sexual assault. Unfortunately, the unit currently lacks the capacity to successfully combat the plague of child sexual assault in Guatemala. According to a baseline study conducted by the non-profit organization International Justice Mission (IJM), fewer than 6 percent of child sexual assault cases in Guatemala reach a verdict—and the majority of cases stalled in the investigations stage.

We appreciate that the United States has provided significant support to assist the Guatemalan government with its efforts to combat corruption, defend human rights, and strengthen the rule of law. As you make determinations regarding future U.S. assistance to Guatemala, we urge you to ensure that resources are provided to improve the National Civil Police’s Special Unit for Sex Crimes. We believe that with greater capacity and training, this unit could conduct prompt and professional investigations, coordinate effectively with prosecutors, and successfully locate and apprehend perpetrators of child sexual assault.

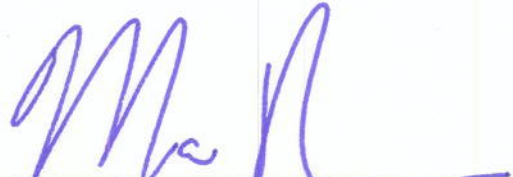
The Guatemalan government has taken some initial steps in its efforts to combat child sexual assault and the United States can be a partner as Guatemala works to make the country safer for women and girls.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

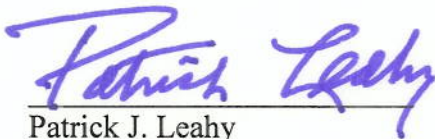
Sincerely,



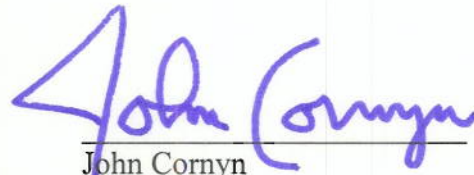
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



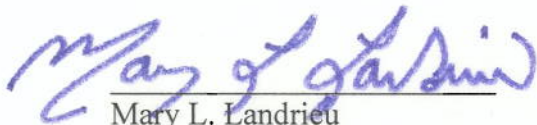
Marco Rubio
United States Senator



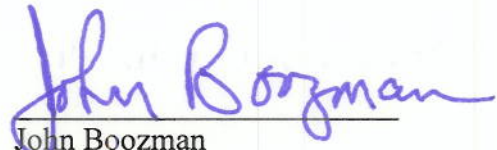
Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



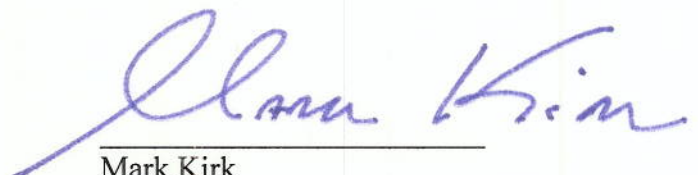
Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



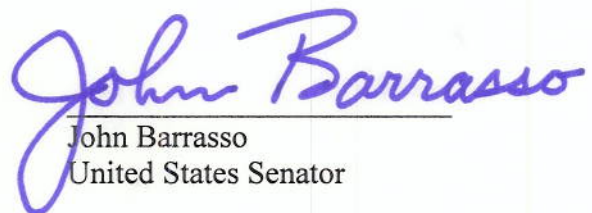
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



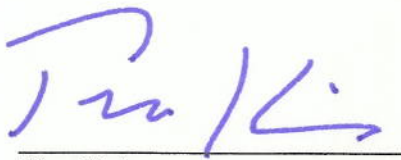
Mark Kirk
United States Senator




Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



John Barrasso
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



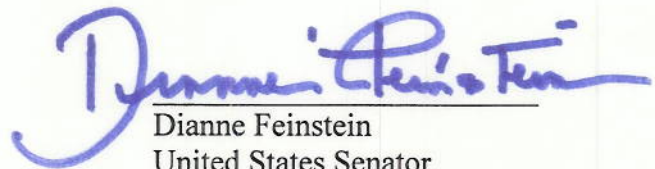
Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



Thad Cochran
United States Senator



Tom Harkin
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator