



September 30, 2009

Melanne Verveer
Ambassador-At-Large for Global Womens' Issues
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: Violence Against Women In Honduras

Dear Ambassador Verveer:

Thank you for your prompt letter of response, dated September 11, 2009, to the Women of Steel's correspondence to Secretary of State Clinton about the growing violence against women following the coup in Honduras on June 28, 2009.

We wish to reiterate our concerns about the situation confronting women in Honduras and about the threat to women's rights, and human rights in general, posed by the current coup regime in that country – a threat which is growing ever more serious every day.

In your letter, you note that the U.S. has demonstrated its opposition to the coup government in that it has terminated assistance to Honduras following the coup. While this is true, and while we appreciate this action, it is also true that the U.S. is still providing 75% of the aid it had provided Honduras before the coup; the U.S. is still keeping hundreds of troops in-country alongside the Honduran military which is repressing the Honduran people; and, while numerous other countries have pulled their ambassadors from Honduras, the U.S. continues its ambassador in place. In short, there is much more the U.S. could do to show its unequivocal opposition to the coup government, and we urge it to do so immediately.

Further, you appear to downplay the concern expressed by the Women of Steel about violence against women in Honduras following the coup, saying that you know of only one case of a woman being gang raped by police. This ignores the findings of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights which, in its report of August 21, 2009, found numerous cases of violence perpetrated against women by the coup regime.

As this report noted, “in the context of the demonstrations and the repression and detentions carried out by police officers and members of the military, **women were especially subject to acts of violence and humiliation because of their gender.** The Commission confirmed that, while they were under the direct control of members of the police and Army, many women were subject to abusive and denigrating treatment that included having their breasts and vagina groped. In other cases, the Commission received information that some of the women had had their legs spread open and their

genitals touched with police truncheons.” In other words, even as of August 21 – i.e., over one month ago -- their appeared to be a wide-spread and systemic attack upon women because of their gender. And, this situation has only worsened in recent weeks.

We call upon the U.S. State Department to recognize this egregious situation facing women in Honduras – a situation recognized by an international body of which the U.S. itself is a member; to take more affirmative steps to show its opposition to the coup regime which has given rise to this situation; and to ensure the immediate reinstatement of Manuel Zelaya to his rightful position of President of Honduras.

Sincerely,

Leeann Anderson, Assistant to President Gerard
Ann Flener, Director Women of Steel
And The USW National Women’s Committee of the United States

Cc: President Obama
First Lady Michelle Obama
Vice President Biden
Secretary of State Clinton
USW President Leo W. Gerard
Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Maria Cantwell
Senator Susan M. Collins
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
Senator Kay R. Hagan
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Mary L. Landrieu
Senator Blanche L. Lincoln
Senator Claire McCaskill
Senator Barbara A. Mikulski
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Olympia J. Snowe
Senator Debbie Stabenow
Senator John F. Kerry, Chair Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Senator Christopher J. Dodd, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Chair
Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps and Narcotics Affairs Subcommittee
Representative Howard L. Berman Chair House Foreign Affairs Committee
Representative Eliot L. Engle, Chair Western Hemisphere Subcommittee,
Foreign Affairs
USW International Executive Board
USW Legislative Director Holly Hart
USW Women of Steel Activists