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One Hundred Fifteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
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November 28, 2018

The Honorable John Bolton  
National Security Advisor  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ambassador Bolton:

We understand that you will be traveling to Brazil this week to meet with President-elect Jair Bolsonaro. In your announcement of the meeting on Twitter, you noted that the United States and Brazil “share many bilateral interests and will work closely on expanding freedom and prosperity throughout the Western Hemisphere.” The Miami Herald reported that your meeting with the President will include discussions of “a regional strategy in confronting Cuba and Venezuela.” A multilateral approach to human rights in Venezuela and Cuba is essential. At the same time, we ask that you urge President-elect Bolsonaro to adopt a comprehensive approach to human rights that includes all marginalized populations.

President-elect Bolsonaro’s deeply offensive remarks on Afro-Brazilians, women and the LGBT community have not gone unnoticed. In 2014, he told a female lawmaker, “I would not rape you, because you are not worthy of it.” The President-elect also said, “Because women get more labor rights than men, meaning they get maternity leave, the employer prefers to hire men...I would not employ [women equally]. But there are a lot of competent women out there.” In 2013, Mr. Bolsonaro stated that he was “proud to be homophobic,” and would “rather have a son who is an addict than a son who is gay.” Two years earlier, he said he would “rather his son die in a car accident than be gay.” And in April 2017, the President-elect described his visit to Afro-Brazilian communities using extremely disturbing terms. He called attention to the weight of the community members using the word “arrobas” – which is a unit used to weigh cattle and agricultural products – and said, “The lightest Afro-descendant there weighed seven ‘arrobas’. They don’t do anything. They are not even good for procreation.”

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The voters of Brazil have spoken, and we believe the United States must work with President-elect Bolsonaro in our many areas of shared interest. At the same time, governments throughout the Americas – including the United States – and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights must closely monitor the human rights climate in Brazil in the coming years to ensure that the President-elect's rhetoric does not lead to further abuses of marginalized communities.

A strong U.S. – Brazil relationship will depend on strong commitments to human rights from both of our governments. We urge you to implore President-elect Bolsonaro to uphold the human rights of all of his citizens.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial issue.

Sincerely,



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House Foreign Affairs Committee



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House Western Hemisphere Subcommittee



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