

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 5, 2008

The Honorable Michael Mukasey  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

**RE: Investigation No. 50-41-113**

Dear Attorney General Mukasey:

As Members of Congress who share your commitment to ending modern day slavery and helping survivors of severe forms of human trafficking who cooperate with United States law enforcement, we urge you to immediately grant continued presence under Section 107(c) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act to the guestworkers trafficked from India to the United States on H-2B visas for work in the shipyards of Signal International, LLC (Signal). Certifying these workers as survivors of severe forms of human trafficking, including taking steps necessary for their continued presence in the U.S. during the investigation, is critical to ensuring the integrity of DOJ's ongoing investigation into this example of modern day slavery.

These guestworkers came to the United States to help rebuild the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The workers credibly allege that Signal International obtained their labor through a fraudulent, coercive, and threatening recruitment process facilitated by Signal's agents, including recruiters in the United States and India and a U.S. immigration lawyer who visited India multiple times over several years. The workers have stated publicly to the U.S. and Indian governments that based on these false promises, workers risked their families' futures-- sacrificing current jobs as guestworkers in the Middle East, selling their homes and family heirlooms, and incurring significant debts. Guestworker Sabulal Vijayan has testified before the Domestic Policy Subcommittee of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee that after the workers arrived in the U.S. in a condition of virtual debt servitude, Signal and its agents then manipulated their indebtedness, through instilling fear and enforcing isolation, reasonably convincing workers they would face serious harm, restraint and abuse of the legal process if they did not continue working for Signal. Furthermore, when workers organized to collectively assert their rights, the trafficking ring again conspired, with the involvement of armed private security, in the forcible restraint and attempted deportation of the organizers while simultaneously quashing any resistance to the existing involuntary servitude and forced labor. The workers have also filed a civil lawsuit alleging these and other specific facts, David v. Signal et al., No. 08-1220, U.S. Dist. Ct., E.D. La.


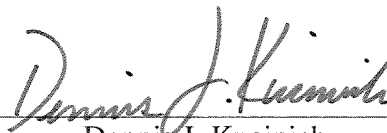
The trafficking survivors risked their futures again when they escaped the Signal labor camps and reported themselves as survivors of human trafficking to DOJ, volunteering to cooperate with a federal criminal investigation of the traffickers. Instead of being protected as crime victims under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), the guestworkers have faced delay in DOJ's decision regarding certification and have meanwhile been subject to continuing harassment by covert surveillance that has still not been explained or disavowed by Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE).

Recognizing that our enforcement agencies needed special tools to combat new and sophisticated transnational human trafficking like the criminal activities highlighted in this case, we enacted the TVPA. Because the U.S. government should protect survivors of human trafficking both as crime victims and as critical witnesses to federal crimes, the TVPA authorizes USDOJ to request continued presence for survivors of human trafficking from the beginning of their cooperation with DOJ's investigation. Continued presence provides safety, security, and stability to trafficking survivors made vulnerable by their traffickers. This is particularly important in cases, as with these trafficked Indian guestworkers, where the traffickers use ongoing threats of deportation and fraudulent immigration promises to effect the trafficking and because these workers faced past covert ICE surveillance even after they reported themselves to DOJ.

We urge you to take the steps necessary to ensure the workers' continued presence so that DOJ can continue this important investigation of modern day slavery, human trafficking, and forced labor and bring these traffickers to justice. Additionally, we would like you to provide us with a briefing on this matter.

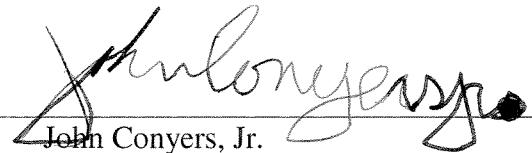
We request that you respond to this request as soon as possible, but in no case later than **5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 13, 2008.**

Sincerely,

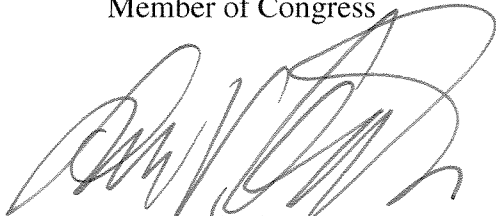


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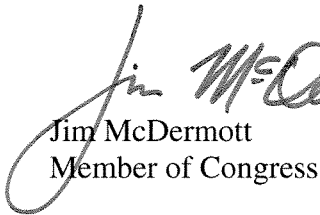



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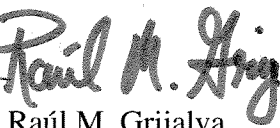
  
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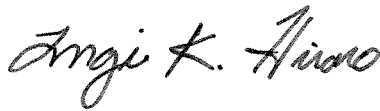
  
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