

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

August 12, 2013

African Studies Scholars  
c/o Carl LeVan  
School of International Service, American University  
SIS-343  
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20016-8071

Dear African Studies Scholars:

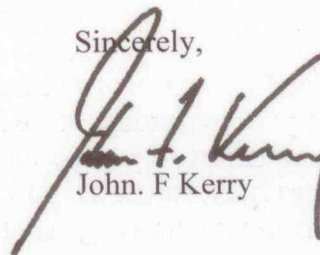
Thank you for writing to express your strong support for the Leahy laws and concern over calls to weaken the Leahy vetting process. I strongly support the Leahy laws for precisely the reasons you cited: They are an important mechanism for achieving our political, security, and human rights goals. The Department of State employs a rigorous human rights vetting process pursuant to the Leahy laws so assistance does not benefit individuals or units when there is credible information of gross human rights violations.

As your letter noted, the Leahy laws provide much more than an instrument for denying assistance to abusive individuals and units. They also serve as a strategic tool for partnering with African governments and militaries to professionalize their security forces, hold human rights violators accountable, and strengthen the internal investigative and legal structures needed to ensure accountability and the rule of law. Implementation of the Leahy vetting process has helped us shape African partners' approach to security cooperation and assistance by highlighting the importance of good security sector governance. The Leahy laws also strengthen our ability to combat terrorism and instability in Africa by directing U.S. security assistance to professional forces respectful of human rights norms.

Support for the rule of law and accountability are cornerstones of U.S. policy toward Africa, and the Leahy laws will continue to be essential tools for advancing them. Your support for these principles in your exchanges with African partners will help the Department of State better explain how the Leahy laws can be a constructive force for positive change.

I thank you for your constructive engagement on these critical issues.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry