

June 12, 2014

Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: The Inclusion of the Nation of Brunei in the Trans-Pacific Partnership

Dear Mr. President,

The Government of Brunei Darussalam's recently adopted penal code threatens the human rights of minority groups including women, religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. Brunei's enactment of strict Sharia Law, which codifies into law the act of stoning its gay citizens, has placed that country outside the bounds of international standards for human rights. The undersigned are deeply concerned and ask that you direct the U.S. Trade Representative to insist that Brunei address their human rights violations before continuing further Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade negotiations.

In 2012, then-Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton delivered a speech to the United Nations stating that the U.S. government would use every means at its disposal to protect the basic human rights of LGBT people around the world. Indeed, both you and Vice President Biden have spoken passionately about protecting LGBT rights around the world. It would be inconsistent with U.S. human rights policy to enter into a preferential trade agreement with a nation that so flagrantly violates the human rights of its citizens.

As former Secretary Clinton said in her speech, "In all countries, there are costs to not protecting these rights, in both gay and straight lives lost to disease and violence and the silencing of voices and views that would strengthen communities and ideas never pursued by entrepreneurs who happen to be gay. Costs are incurred whenever any group is treated as lesser or the other whether they are women, racial or religious minorities or the LGBT."

It would be a mistake to enter into preferential trade agreements with countries that flagrantly flout human rights norms. The United States should speak with clarity. Therefore, according to applicable laws and regulations, we ask that the United States require Brunei to address its human rights violations in advance of further TPP trade negotiations.

Sincerely,

Shane Larson
Co-President
Pride at Work, AFL-CIO

Rev. Darlene Nipper
Deputy Executive Director
National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

Chad Griffin
President
Human Rights Campaign

Mara Keisling
Executive Director
National Center for Transgender Equality