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July 2, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
US Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

As Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Stephen Rapp concludes his tenure, we write to urge you to nominate a successor who will benefit from comparable support, rank and access within the Administration.

Amb. Rapp came to the post after having served as the Chief of Prosecutions at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. His experience, ambassadorial rank, and independent office allowed him to effectively lead US policy on justice and accountability. He was able to forge relationships with key allies, partners and international organizations, mobilize interagency response on critical issues, and ensure proper focus and engagement on the most-needed situations. Moreover, the Office of Global Justice has ensured the necessary staffing and a robust focus on this narrow but critical area.

Amb. Rapp navigated complex terrain, including re-engagement by the US government at meetings of the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court, which is a central forum on justice for grave crimes committed in multiple country contexts. Amb. Rapp and the Office of Global Justice also took forward complex initiatives to promote specialized mixed chambers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Special Criminal Court in Central African Republic, and trials for serious crimes committed in Syria. In addition, they played a central role in mobilizing financial and political support on behalf of accountability for the victims of alleged crimes by Hissène Habré, the former dictator of Chad, whose trial will open on July 20 in Senegal.

Amb. Rapp's extensive travel—particularly in West Africa where he helped focus US government attention to the need for prosecutions of grave crimes committed in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea—meant that the US has been a real leader and force for positive change in a variety of different circumstances.

US efforts on justice and accountability have benefitted immensely from Amb. Rapp's tenure. A successor who is similarly situated will be best

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placed to continue this important work to promote accountability for grave international crimes.

Sincerely,



Sarah Margon  
Washington Director  
Human Rights Watch



Elise Keppler  
Acting Director, International Justice Program  
Human Rights Watch

cc:

Sarah Sewall, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights