

July 9, 2018

Senator Inhofe, Acting Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee

Rep. Mac Thornberry, Chairman
House Armed Services Committee

Senator Jack Reed, Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee

Rep. Adam Smith, Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee

Dear Acting Chairman Inhofe and Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Members Reed and Smith,
and Conferees,

The undersigned are non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, and other members of civil society deeply concerned by the horrendous human rights situation in Burma/Myanmar, in particular, the Burmese military's abusive campaign against the country's Rohingya population, and new and ongoing abuses in fighting in Kachin and northern Shan states.

The House of Representatives recently approved bipartisan legislative language for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that enables targeted sanctions on Burmese military officials implicated in gross human rights abuses and other atrocities against ethnic minorities in Burma. House Amendment 43 to the NDAA was adopted with 382 votes in favor and was incorporated into the House-passed NDAA as Title XII Subtitle G "Matters Relating to Burma."

The language specifically authorizes targeted financial sanctions and visa bans against Burmese military officials implicated in gross human rights abuses and other atrocities against the Rohingya, as well as other communities. Similar language in the Senate, in the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act, was supported by 23 co-sponsors from both parties and was adopted unanimously by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 2018. Several senators attempted to have the bill's language added to the Senate NDAA, but technical and procedural hurdles prevented an amendment's inclusion.

We therefore strongly urge your full support in retaining Title XII Subtitle G "Matters Relating to Burma" of the House-passed NDAA in its entirety in the final conference version of the FY19 NDAA.

It is imperative that the Congress address the human rights crisis in Burma. It has been almost a year since the Burmese military launched a campaign of ethnic cleansing involving forced deportation, killing, rape, and other forms of persecution against the Rohingya Muslim population in Rakhine State. Numerous credible investigations have found that these abuses amount to crimes against humanity, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights and other senior officials have said the abuses may amount to acts of genocide. The Burmese military also has continued to commit serious abuses against ethnic communities elsewhere in the country, including in the context of intense fighting in Kachin and northern Shan states.

The language from House Amendment 43 will authorize targeted, appropriate measures against key individuals who bear responsibility for atrocities. It also will provide clear incentives for

needed reforms to professionalize Burma's military and reduce corruption, conflict, and abuses. In these ways, Congressional action through the NDAA can bolster Burma's civilian leadership and help encourage it, the US Administration, and concerned governments more broadly to take additional steps to bring perpetrators of grave abuses to account.

In urging this legislation, we would note with deep appreciation the role of Senator John McCain, the Senate Armed Services Committee Chair, as a leader in pressing for military transparency and accountability in Burma, including the Senate language referenced above. It would be fitting, in our view, if this NDAA bearing his name also includes the Burma provisions he has long championed.

Respectfully,

Human Rights Watch
Global Witness
Alliance of Baptists
Ameinu
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish World Service
Americans for Rohingya
Anti-Defamation League
Christian Solidarity Worldwide
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Emgage Action
Fortify Rights
Foundation for Ethnic Understanding
Freedom House
Human Rights First
Institute for Asian Democracy
International Campaign for the Rohingya
International Interfaith Peace Corps
Investors Against Genocide
Islamic Society of North America
JACOB: The Jewish Alliance of Concern
Over Burma
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish World Watch

Kachin Alliance
Karen American Organization
Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur
Muslim Bar Association of New York
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social
Justice
Never Again Coalition
PEN America
Rabbinical Assembly
Reconstructing Judaism
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Refugees International
Society for Threatened
STAND: The Student-Led Movement to
End Mass Atrocities
Stop Genocide Now
The Center for Community Leadership at
JCRC-NY
The New York Board of Rabbis
The Shalom Center
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
U.S. Campaign for Burma
Win Without War

CC:
Members of the NDAA 2018 Conference Committee