July 9, 2018

Senator Inhofe, Acting Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee

Rep. Mac Thornberry, Chairman
House Armed Services Committee

Senator Jack Reed, Ranking Member
Rep. Adam Smith, Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
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