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46 Local, National, and International Human Rights Groups Oppose Lifting of U.S. Sanctions on Burma in Lead Up to Aung San Suu Kyi Visit

Washington, DC, September 12, 2016 - As the U.S. prepares for a visit by Aung San Suu Kyi, the de facto leader of Burma, they must reconsider their decision to lift further sanctions on the country. Today, the U.S. Campaign for Burma and STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities have submitted a letter to President Obama, supported by 46 local, national, and international organizations in opposition to the lifting of sanctions on Burma.

In July 2012, in response to the country's democratization efforts, the U.S. government began easing sanctions on Burma to support investment in the country. Today, the sanctions that remain are targeted at the richest and most corrupt members of Burmese society and do little to hinder the country's overall development, rather limiting the military power of groups contributing to the destabilization of the country.

Of the letter, Myra Dahgaypaw, acting Executive Director at the U.S. Campaign for Burma stated, "Though there has been democratic progress in the past few years, there remain a number of pressing issues threatening the stability of the country and its most vulnerable people. In particular, ethnic minorities across the country continue to be abused at the hands of the Burmese military, who often deprive them of water, food, and humanitarian aid. There continue to be reports of sexual violence at the hands of the Burmese military, which the government has repeatedly failed to investigate. The U.S. government must continue to exert pressure on the Burmese government until ethnic minorities in Burma achieve basic human rights."

Savannah Wooten, Student Director of STAND and a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, added that there are a number of benchmarks that should be met before the U.S. considers lifting further sanctions. In particular, "the Burmese army must cease violations of international humanitarian law; prioritize the inclusion of civil society, women, and youth in peace talks; and address the lack of citizenship for Rohingya as well as further efforts to protect this vulnerable group. The fact that several reputable international reports have concluded that genocide may have occurred or be ongoing against the Rohingya should be reason enough not to lift sanctions."

The letter is signed by ALTSEAN-Burma, American Jewish World Service, Arakan National Congress Party, Association Suisse-Birmanie, Burma Action Ireland, Burma Campaign UK, Burma Link (Thailand), Burma Partnership, Burma Task Force USA, Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, Carl Wilkens Fellowship, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Franciscan Action Network, Free Burma Campaign (South Africa), Genocide Watch, Global Witness, Harry Potter Alliance, IFI Watch Myanmar, Info Birmanie (France), International Campaign for the Rohingya, Jewish World Watch, Just Foreign Policy, Fortify Rights, Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Kachin Peace Network, Kachin Women Association Thailand, Kachin Women Peace Network, Karen American Association of Wisconsin, Karen Association of Iowa, Karen Culture Organization of Arizona, Karenni-American Association, Peacebuilding Connections, Refugees International, Rohingya American Society (RAS), Rohingya Federation of Arakan (RFA), Rohingya National Coalition (RNC), STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities, Stop Genocide Now, Swedish Burma Committee, Tayovan Women's Union, Together We Remember, U.S. Campaign for Burma, Wan-Lark Foundation, Watchers of the Sky Initiative, Women Peace Network-Arakan, and World Rohingya Organization (WRO).

ABOUT

U.S. Campaign for Burma (USCB) was established in 2003 to help build and channel political will for freedom in Burma. Since then, USCB's work has delivered tangible results for the people of Burma. USCB are the only U.S. based advocacy organization devoted full-time to human rights, freedom, and democracy in Burma. Through public education, leadership development initiatives, and advocacy campaigns at local, national, and international levels, USCB works to empower Americans, resettled Burmese refugees, and Burmese civil society in Burma and throughout its border regions to promote freedom, democracy, and human rights in Burma, raise awareness about the egregious human rights violations committed by Burma's military, and ensure international actors pursue policies that assist the promotion of democracy and human rights in Burma.

STAND, the Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities, was founded in 2004 by a group of students at Georgetown University. Since then, STAND has expanded to high school and college campuses across the United States. Originally an acronym for "Students Taking Action Now: Darfur," STAND's mission quickly expanded to ending and preventing genocide and mass atrocities wherever they may occur. Today, STAND focuses on Sudan and South Sudan, but also on Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, and emerging atrocity issues such as those in Burundi and Yemen.

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