

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 28, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Mark Green
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Tillerson and Administrator Green,

We write to urge the Administration to apply the full weight of its diplomatic influence to help resolve the Rohingya crisis in Burma and Bangladesh, and to provide additional humanitarian aid to those who have fled their homes and are struggling to survive.

The world is witnessing a massive humanitarian catastrophe, in which over 480,000 Rohingya have fled their homes in Burma in search of safety in Bangladesh. On September 14th, the International Organization for Migration reported that 10,000 to 20,000 refugees were arriving to Bangladesh daily, and that if this trend continued, the number of new Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh may reach a million by the end of the year. While the current military operation was in response to the appalling August 25th attack by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army insurgent group on Burmese security posts, the response by the Burmese authorities – and in some cases, civilians acting with consent from security forces – has been extraordinarily disproportionate and was most recently condemned by the United Nations Security Council. In fact, the U.N. Human High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein, has stated that the pattern of atrocities against the Rohingya, including extrajudicial killings, rape and the burning of villages “seems to be textbook example of ethnic cleansing.”

Despite international condemnation, the Burmese authorities incredibly continue to deny the atrocities. The Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese Military, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, has even made public statements that the Rohingya do not exist, describing them as the “Bengali problem,” and defending the recent violence as “unfinished business” from World War II.

We commend the Administration for the September 20 announcement of an additional commitment of \$32 million to address the Rohingya crisis, bringing the total U.S commitment to address this crisis to \$95 million in Fiscal Year 2017. We also commend the State Department’s call “to allow for unfettered humanitarian access to people in Rakhine State, Burma,” and to “encourage other donors to join us in providing additional humanitarian assistance for those affected by the crisis.”

Providing immediate humanitarian assistance to the people of Rakhine State and those who have fled to Bangladesh is clearly in both our moral and national security interests. Unless immediately addressed, this crisis will have profound long-term consequences for Burma, the region, and the world. We call on the Administration to work closely with the international community to find a durable solution that protects the Rohingya and helps to prevent long-term inter-ethnic and inter-communal strife in Burma.

We also call on the Administration to continue to urge the Burmese government to allow the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations access to provide large-scale cross border humanitarian assistance to assist the Rohingya and other displaced people, and ensure the safe and voluntary return of those displaced. The Burmese government to date has only permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross to operate and provide humanitarian assistance in northern Rakhine State. Without other aid organizations allowed to operate in Rakhine State approximately 120,000 people will continue without food, medical care, and other life-saving assistance.

In addition, given the credible allegations of mass atrocities, including the risk of genocide, we urge you to hold accountable under U.S. law and international humanitarian law the perpetrators of such atrocities in Rakhine State, as identified by credible international organizations and U.S. law enforcement agencies. We note that current U.S. law, such as the Global Magnitsky Act, allows the President to impose sanctions on individuals “responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against individuals in any foreign country,” against people seeking to “obtain, exercise, defend, or promote internationally recognized human rights and freedoms”. The JADE Act also provides options and tools for U.S. policy. We look forward to discussing with you whether there are other policy actions or measures the United States can take, including calling on the United Nations Security Council to place the plight of the Rohingya on its agenda and hold the perpetrators accountable given the gravity of the situation.

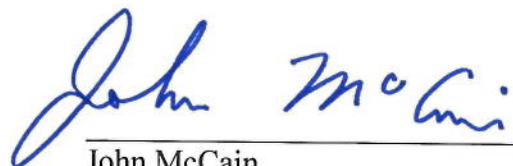
The United States has played a pivotal role in supporting Burma’s democratic transition over the past several years. We fear that if we do not help address the Rohingya crisis now, all of that progress may be squandered. It is time for the Administration to work with the international community to put a stop to these horrific atrocities, to provide support where needed, and to hold the perpetrators accountable.

Congress has historically played a crucial role with respect to Burma policy. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can work together on appropriate next legislative steps to clarify and further our policy.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



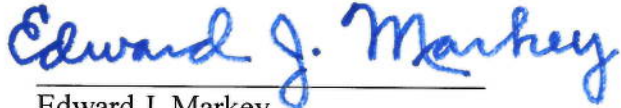
John McCain
United States Senator



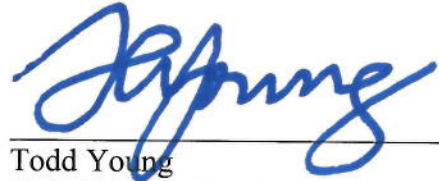
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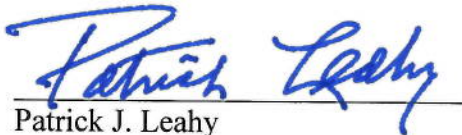
Todd Young
United States Senator



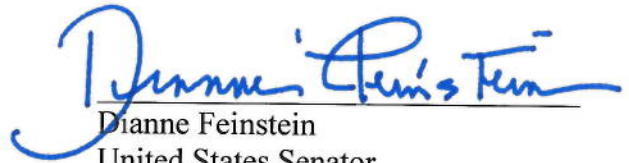
Jack Reed
United States Senator



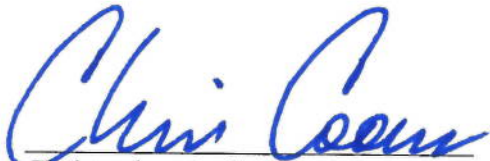
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Dianne Feinstein
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Robert Menendez
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Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



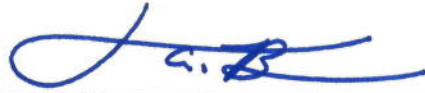
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



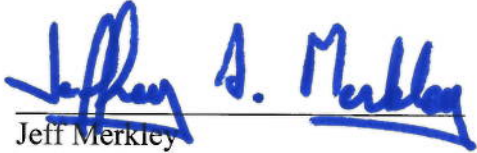
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United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
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Cory A. Booker
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Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
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Dan Sullivan
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