

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart,
Chairman
National Security, Department of State,
And Related Programs Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
374 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lois Frankel,
Ranking Member
National Security, Department of State,
And Related Programs Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
2305 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Frankel,

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2026 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill, we urge you to appropriate a total of \$121 million to support Burma consistent with the BURMA Act of 22 (subtitle E of title LV of division E of Public Law 117–263) and section 7043(a) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2023 (division K of Public Law 117–328). As the Burmese junta’s hold on power has weakened, it has grown increasingly violent, ushering a need to ratchet up pressure and rush humanitarian assistance to the region. Moreover, we call on you to increase life-saving humanitarian assistance and support for Burmese refugees, including Rohingya, as more of them flee Burma and strain refugee camps in Thailand, Bangladesh, India, and the surrounding region.

The Burmese junta has waged violence against its people ever since its terrible February 2021 coup. Over 6,000 civilians have lost their lives because of the junta’s ongoing campaign of violence, torture, and repression and over 21,000 remain detained.¹ Four years on, as it has faced mounting military setbacks and failed to consolidate control over the country, the junta has

¹ “Myanmar: UN experts urge ‘course correction’ as civilian deaths exceed 6,000,” United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 2, 2024.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/12/myanmar-un-experts-urge-course-correction-civilian-deaths-exceed-6000>

increased targeting of civilians through airstrikes, abductions, and forced recruitment.² The junta's barbarity was on full display in recent weeks, when it conducted airstrikes in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck Burma in late March³, and continued those strikes in April in defiance of a quake ceasefire.⁴

The junta's violence stokes instability within Burma and beyond. Since the 2021 coup, over 3.3 million people have been internally displaced in Burma⁵ and 184,600 Burmese refugees and asylum-seekers have fled to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, according to UNHCR. The violence and humanitarian crisis in Burma have spilled over to the rest of the region, stressing refugee camps in Bangladesh, Thailand, and other nations. For instance, UNICEF's Representative in Bangladesh has warned of a "catastrophe" in the Cox's Bazar refugee settlements, with child malnutrition soaring as aid cuts make it difficult to provide medical treatment and proper sanitation to a growing population in need.⁶

Due to the instability, the border areas in Burma have become a hub for transnational crime, including money laundering, human trafficking, narcotics smuggling, and scam centers. These illicit activities not only impact the region but directly harm Americans and undermine United States interests. In April, the FBI released a report showing that scammers stole a record \$16.6 billion from Americans last year, an increase of 33% since 2023.⁷ Many of these scams stem from the border areas in Burma, where PRC-linked criminal syndicates have set up shop given the junta's acquiescence, negligence, and inability to govern. Increasingly isolated internationally, the junta has sought a stronger partnership with Beijing, with Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing visiting China in November 2024 and Beijing legitimizing the isolated junta with a string of bilateral visits in recent months.⁸

² "Four years after the 2021 coup in Myanmar, violence against civilians is still increasing," ACLED, January 31, 2025. <https://acleddata.com/2025/01/31/four-years-after-the-2021-coup-in-myanmar-violence-against-civilians-is-still-increasing/>

³ "Myanmar junta continues air strikes after devastating earthquake," Rebecca Henschke, March 29, 2025, *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy7x7r8m3xlo>

⁴ "Myanmar junta defies quake ceasefire to continue deadly attacks, data shows," Devjyot Ghoshal, Poppy Mcpherson and Pasit Kongkunakornkul, April 25, 2025, *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-junta-defies-quake-ceasefire-continue-deadly-attacks-data-shows-2025-04-25/>

⁵ "UNHCR Myanmar Situation Regional Update #1 (January-March 2025)", April 24, 2025, UNHCR. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115905>

⁶ "Bangladesh: Rohingya children's acute hunger surges amid funding cuts," UN News, March 11, 2025. [Bangladesh: Rohingya children's acute hunger surges amid funding cuts | UN News](https://www.unnews.un.org/en/story/2025/03/15905)

⁷ "FBI says online scam raked in record \$16.6 billion last year, up 33% from 2023," Kerry Breen, April 23, 2025, CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/online-scams-2024-statistics-fbi/>

⁸ Lucas Myers, "China is Off the Fence in Myanmar," November 22, 2024, War on the Rocks. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/11/china-is-off-the-fence-in-myanmar/>

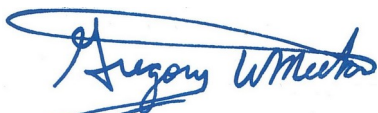
The fight for democracy in Burma is at a critical junction, with the military losing ground and increasingly isolated. Enhanced U.S. sanctions and diplomatic pressure are needed to force a negotiated settlement. Additional Economic Support Funds to implement the BURMA Act would help further isolate the junta while bolstering the resolve of pro-democracy stakeholders. Expanding U.S. assistance and civil society programming would create a foundation for a more peaceful, democratic, and pluralistic Burma, which is in America's interest.

In addition to the funds for Burma, there is need to increase U.S. funding and support for the Rohingya community in the refugee camps in Bangladesh and elsewhere. Congress lobbied successive administrations to make a genocide determination regarding the atrocities against Rohingya, because such a determination holds political and moral significance. However, after the State Department's historic genocide determination in March 2022, and even as the crisis grew worse, the United States decreased its support for Rohingya and other refugees in the last couple of years.

Furthermore, the living conditions for Rohingya refugees across South and Southeast Asia have become more dire. Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and the region cannot meet basic needs, have scant access to education and medical care, and are facing growing security challenges, with little opportunity to secure a livelihood and future. U.S. assistance to the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh should be increased to levels that would fully restore a ration that meets the basic minimum nutritional needs of refugees. Additionally, adequate funding should be provided for the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to provide greater livelihood, education, and health support for Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh.

A stable Burma is critical to U.S. interests in the region, and a democratic, civilian-led Burma will be much more closely aligned with the United States. The United States has spearheaded international pressure for political reform in Burma in a bipartisan way for several decades. We must continue this leadership and support our prior investments in Burmese democracy by putting U.S. dollars toward a Burma where our values and interests converge.

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Meeks
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs
Committee



Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress



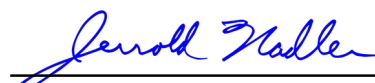
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Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



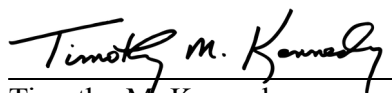
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



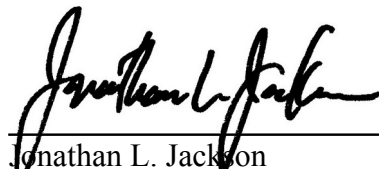
Dina Titus
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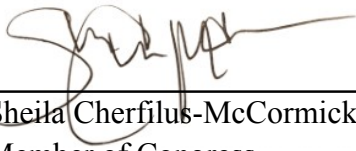
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