

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We are writing to you about an issue of great importance to many of us—the struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma, led by the world's only imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD).

That is why we are greatly concerned about reports that during a recent visit by a senior U.S. diplomat to Burma, this official suggested the U.S. government was considering lifting sanctions against the military regime. While we welcome the Administration's decision to review U.S. policy toward Burma, in an effort to strengthen our support for Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's democracy movement, we urge you to recognize that U.S. law has clearly outlined the parameters for the lifting of sanctions: the release of all political prisoners (including Aung San Suu Kyi), genuine tripartite dialogue between the military regime, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD, and Burma's ethnic nationalities, and the cessation of attacks against civilians.

In a world wracked with violence, Suu Kyi is without parallel. She is a stalwart of non-violent resistance to oppressive rule. As you know, last year Congress unanimously voted to bestow her with its highest honor: the Congressional Gold Medal. Furthermore, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recently announced that Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest violates, not only international law, but Burmese law as well, further highlighting the Burmese junta's utter disregard for the rule of law. To continue our commitment to Suu Kyi today, we must act just as she would: by honoring the people of Burma and keeping faith with them in their struggle for freedom, justice, and democracy.

When you were in the Senate, together with then Senators Obama and Biden, you supported the cornerstones of U.S. policy toward Burma: the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act and the Tom Lantos Block Burmese Jade Act, which just last year passed both Houses of Congress unanimously and were signed into law.

As you know, the situation in Burma remains grim. Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD have continued to offer the military regime led by Than Shwe the open hand of dialogue and have long indicated that they accept the military will play an important role in Burma's future. But the regime has rebuffed these overtures. Last year, even as the country was suffering in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, the country's military junta staged a referendum to force through a new constitution, drafted with no input from the opposition. The constitution disallows Aung San Suu Kyi from participating in her country's political process and guarantees permanent military rule following what everyone expects will be sham elections in 2010.

Campaigning against the referendum in 2008 was treated as a crime in Burma. Since then, to prepare the ground for its 2010 election, the regime has intensified its crackdown against

opposition and human rights activists, sentencing many to essentially life terms in isolated jungle prisons. People have been sentenced to long terms even for the "crime" of distributing humanitarian aid without government permission or translating between bereaved villagers and international aid agencies.

Meanwhile, Than Shwe's regime continues to perpetrate crimes against humanity and war crimes so severe that Burma has been called "Southeast Asia's Darfur". Abuses include the destruction of 3,300 ethnic villages, the rape of women, the recruitment of child soldiers, and the use of forced labor. Over 1 million refugees and 500,000 internally displaced persons have been forced to flee their homes.


The regime has no desire to change or engage with Aung San Suu Kyi or the country's ethnic nationalities for a genuine democratic transition. They seek to "legitimize" their power through an undemocratic election in 2010, and this plan will only bring further suffering to the people of Burma. While the NLD and ethnic nationalities have made every effort to work with the military regime toward national reconciliation, the regime is sowing the seeds of instability, pressuring the ethnic nationalities while the regime continues to attack these civilians.

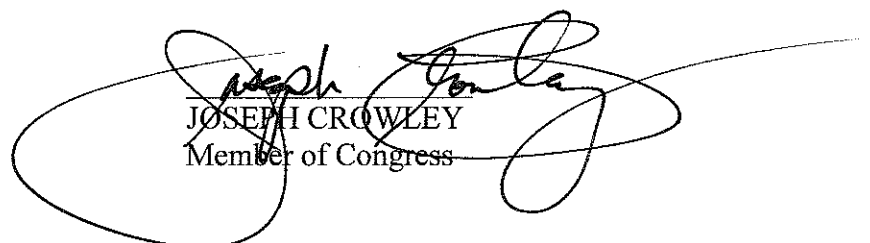
It is in this context that the UN Special Envoy to Burma, Ibrahim Gambari again visited Burma in January. This was the 37th visit to Burma by a UN envoy or special rapporteur since 1990 and Gambari's seventh. Unfortunately, his diplomatic efforts did not produce results as he again failed to even garner a meeting with Than Shwe. International engagement with Burma should be based not on terms dictated by the Burmese regime but on those laid out by the UN Security Council when it last addressed Burma and called for the release of political prisoners and a genuine dialogue between the regime and its opposition.

Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD and ethnic political parties have called on leaders around the world to reject Than Shwe's rigged constitution and the stage managed vote scheduled for 2010. The House of Representatives addressed these issues when it passed H. Con. Res. 317 last May. This resolution stated unequivocally that the United States will not support the Burmese military regime's sham constitution nor the outcome of the undemocratic constitutional referendum. The United States must also make it clear it does not support the regime's 2010 "elections." We urge you to join us in standing firmly alongside Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's democracy movement by continuing to support and implement provisions in the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE Act (P.L. 110-286). To do this, we respectfully request you appoint a U.S. Special Coordinator for Burma as legally mandated by this legislation. The Burmese people need to know the United States remains firmly beside Aung San Suu Kyi, the National League for Democracy, and Burma's ethnic nationalities in their struggle for freedom and justice.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to advance Burma's just cause worldwide.

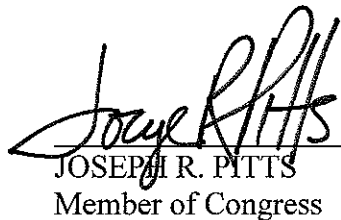
Sincerely,

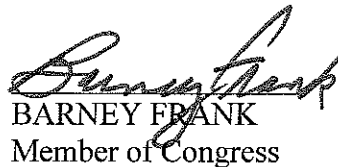

PETER T. KING
Member of Congress

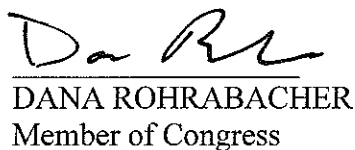

JOSEPH CROWLEY
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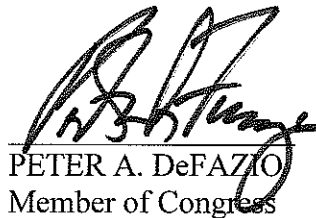

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
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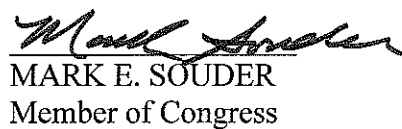

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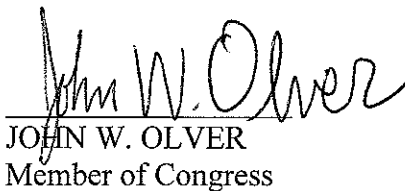

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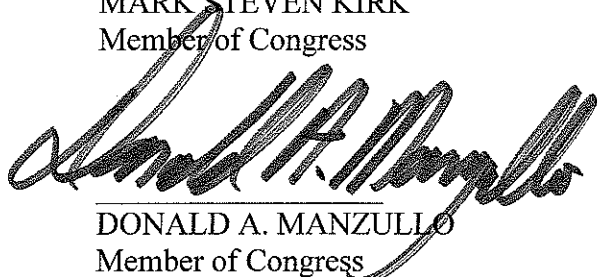

PETER A. DeFAZIO
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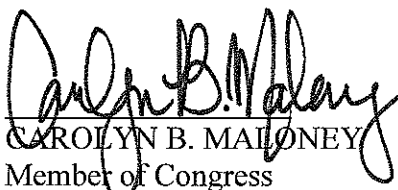

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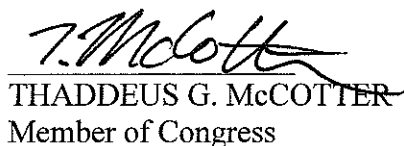

JOHN W. OLVER
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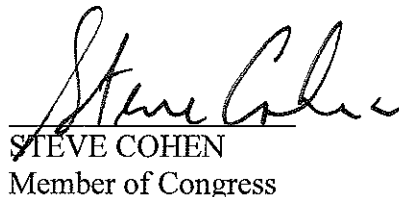

MARK STEVEN KIRK
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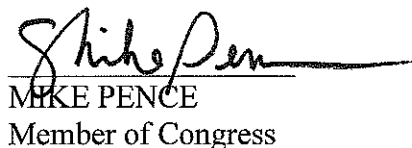

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