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More than 50,000 people call on Secretary Clinton to demand an end to atrocities, freedom for all political prisoners in Burma

For Immediate Release
December 1, 2011
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Note: Petition texts below, files with all 52,679 signatures available upon request

(Washington DC December 1, 2011) Today the U.S. Campaign for Burma (USCB) and Change.org sent letters signed by more than 50,000 people to Secretary Clinton to demand she push for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and the end of hostilities against ethnic minorities during her trip to Burma today and tomorrow, December 1-2, 2011.

U Pyinya Zawta, an exiled Burmese monk living in the United States and Executive Director of All Burma Monks' Alliance, launched the [campaign on Change.org](http://campaignonchange.org) with the U.S. Campaign for Burma upon learning of Clinton's upcoming visit. U Pyinya Zawta's campaign asks Clinton to demand the Burmese government unconditionally and immediately release 1,600 political prisoners, end attacks against ethnic minorities, and revise a 2008 constitution that legalized military rule.

The letter to Secretary Clinton states: *"While Burma's government prepares to welcome Secretary Clinton, it is still attacking ethnic minorities throughout Burma, using rape as a weapon of war, forced labor, torture and extrajudicial killing. Over 3,700 villages have been destroyed and over 600,000 people are internally displaced or on the run from the Burmese army. On the occasion of her historic visit to Burma on December 1, Secretary Clinton must push publicly for the release of all of Burma's political prisoners, including the venerable U Gambira, and she must insist on an end to hostilities in Burma, and insist on changes to the 2008 flawed constitution."*

This collective call regarding Secretary Clinton's trip to Burma is an exceptional example of the necessity for increased attention and action against the Burmese military's crimes against humanity.

Unfortunately, President Thein Sein has not changed the Burmese army's actions against the country's ethnic minority civilians. On the day Secretary Clinton arrived in Burma, Wednesday, November 30th,

Burmese army troops destroyed 15 homes in two Shan villages in Kachin State, Northern Burma. (for more information: <http://www.bnionline.net/index.php/news/kng/12198-government-troops-destroy-civilian-homes.html>) This is in addition to decades of attacks against ethnic minority civilians resulting in the displacement and destruction of over 3,700 villages. In the past seven months there has been a serious surge in human rights violations committed by the Burmese army, including the largest forced displacement in a decade of over 100,000 new internally displaced persons, renewed armed conflict with 3 separate decades old ethnic ceasefire groups, an increase in the use of rape as a weapon of war, forced labor and the use of civilians as human shields.

“More than 50,000 people have raised their voice on behalf of the thousands of voices silenced by Burma’s regime urging Secretary Clinton to use this visit to secure the release of all political prisoners and end the Burmese military’s attacks against ethnic minority civilians,” said Aung Din, Executive Director of the U.S. Campaign for Burma.

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Petition texts:

Demand release of political prisoners & end to attacks in Eastern Burma

On December 1, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will be the first American Secretary of State to visit the Southeast Asian nation of Burma in 50 years. Her visit is a way for the United States to assess the sincerity of the Burmese military regime’s commitment to human rights and democracy -- including democratic elections and the release of Nobel Peace Laureate and pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi.

The November 2010 elections were highly flawed, and many parties (including Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy) boycotted them altogether knowing that their real goal was to install retired military officials and the generals' cronies.

Additionally, though Burma's most famous political prisoner, Aung San Suu Kyi, is now free, over 1,600 political prisoners still remain in Burma (<http://www.aappb.org/prisoners1.html>), including Buddhist monk U Gambira -- a leader of the 2007 Saffron Revolution led by Burma's monastic community.

While Burma's government prepares to welcome Secretary Clinton, it is still attacking ethnic minorities throughout Burma, using rape as a weapon of war, forced labor, torture and extrajudicial killing. Over 3,700 villages have been destroyed and over 600,000 people are internally displaced or on the run from the Burmese army.

On the occasion of her historic visit to Burma on December 1, Secretary Clinton must push publicly for the release of all of Burma's political prisoners, including the venerable U Gambira, and she must insist on an end to hostilities in Burma, and insist on changes to the 2008 flawed constitution.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

AND

Dear Secretary Clinton,

We are glad that you are showing strong concern for the situation in Burma. We urge you, on your upcoming trip, to secure an end to the egregious crimes against humanity the Burmese Army continues to commit against ethnic minority civilians and the release of all Burma's political prisoners. In the past seven months there has been a serious uptick in human rights violations committed by the Burmese army, including the largest forced displacement in a decade of over 100,000 new internally displaced persons, renewed armed conflict with 3 separate decades old ethnic ceasefire groups, an increase in the use of rape as a weapon of war, forced labor, torture, extrajudicial killings and the use of human shields. Justice is a crucial part of national reconciliation in any country. Burma cannot move forward until these attacks stop and the rule of law are realized.

It is also very crucial to encourage Burma's authorities to realize the international community's longstanding call for a tri-partite dialogue between the regime, Aung San Suu Kyi, and ethnic nationality leaders. Without a concerted high-level engagement that includes Burma's ethnic minorities, any hopes for true democratic reform will not materialize.

Sincerely,