

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 5, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write to express our profound concern regarding the ongoing bloodshed and oppression in Burma, which has lasted far too long. The systematic persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, including Muslims, Christians, and other vulnerable communities, requires urgent attention and decisive leadership from the United States. The upcoming sham elections in December and January further damage Burma's democracy, rule of law, and further consolidate the junta's repressive power.

We urge you to prioritize addressing the escalating violence and human rights abuses in Burma, condemn the junta's planned elections, and champion justice, accountability, and the protection of basic human dignity. We ask this not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it is also in our core national interest to achieve stability in Southeast Asia and push back on malign People's Republic of China (PRC) influence in the region.

The Burmese military junta's ongoing campaign of violence and oppression has resulted in countless atrocities, including mass killings, sexual violence, forced displacements, and the destruction of entire villages. Alarming, by the end of August 2025, the civilian death toll surpassed 7,100, a grim reminder of the international community's insufficient response.<sup>1</sup> More than four years of conflict since the 2021 military coup have displaced 3.6 million people and left 11.8 million facing acute food insecurity.<sup>2</sup> The crisis has deepened following a once-in-a-century earthquake in March that killed at least 3,800 people and left 6.3 million in urgent need.<sup>3</sup>

Though the military regime's grip on power may be weakening, its violence has intensified. In the six weeks following the earthquake, the State Administrative Council (SAC) launched at least 741 airstrikes—including on schools, killing at least 22 children, and on churches on Palm Sunday—most after a declared "ceasefire" in early April.<sup>4</sup> On October 6, a military aerial paramotor bombed a peaceful candlelight vigil during a Buddhist holiday, killing at least 24 people, including children. The vigil was for the release of arbitrarily detained prisoners and

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office. "Myanmar: Death, destruction and desperation mirror 2017 atrocities – UN report." 31 January 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/myanmar-death-destruction-and-desperation-mirror-2017-atrocities-un-report>

<sup>2</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 50 (17 November 2025)," 17 November 2025. [file:///C:/Users/dd86009/Downloads/OCHA%20Myanmar%20-%20Humanitarian%20Update%20No.%2050\\_17Nov2026.pdf](file:///C:/Users/dd86009/Downloads/OCHA%20Myanmar%20-%20Humanitarian%20Update%20No.%2050_17Nov2026.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR. "Myanmar Emergency." UNHCR, <https://donate.unhcr.org/int/en/myanmar-situation>. Accessed 10 June 2025.

<sup>4</sup> ISP Myanmar. "MP Profile: Zaw Min Latt (Amyotha Hluttaw, Shan State Constituency No. 1)." Institute for Strategy and Policy - Myanmar, <https://ispmyanmar.com/mp-96/>. Accessed June 10, 2025.

opposition to the upcoming elections. The BBC reported that the junta has increasingly used paramotors as sanctions have made it harder to procure aircraft and jet fuel.<sup>5</sup> The junta now controls just 21 percent of Burma's territory,<sup>6</sup> as resistance forces continue gaining ground despite support for the regime from the PRC and Russia.

The junta's ruthless campaign has devastated all of Burma's people, but religious and ethnic minorities remain especially at risk. The Rohingya continue to face genocidal violence reminiscent of 2017. Christians have endured church burnings, arrests, and worship restrictions, particularly in Chin State.<sup>7</sup> The regime has barred non-Buddhist teaching outside of state-approved religious buildings.<sup>8</sup> Other ethnic minorities—Kachin, Karen, Karenni, and Shan—face forced displacement, military assaults, and systemic repression. These abuses demand a robust U.S. response rooted in moral leadership and strategic interest.

To that end, we urge you to take the following actions:

1. **Promote accountability for atrocities committed in Burma:** We urge you to continue U.S. support for international accountability mechanisms, including the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) and The Gambia's legal case against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice. The United States should also continue its vital support for civil society organizations inside and outside of Burma that are working to document and prevent atrocities, support victims, and help protect witnesses who testify in legal proceedings to the junta's appalling crimes. We urge you to follow up on the State Department's 2022 Rohingya genocide determination by initiating a new atrocity determination process to assess whether the Tatmadaw has committed genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity against Burma's other ethnic and religious minority groups following the 2021 coup.
2. **Make Burma a diplomatic priority:** Ultimately, the horrors faced by the people of Burma can only end if the United States prioritizes diplomatic efforts to end the violence. The United States must press the PRC at all levels to reach a common understanding on a way forward to end the conflict and to warn against any action by the PRC to legitimize or provide diplomatic cover for the junta. We urge you to appoint a Special Coordinator for Democracy in Burma to coordinate U.S. diplomatic efforts and to interface with the UN, ASEAN, PRC, and other high-level representatives on Burma. If the junta moves forward with its plans for sham elections, it is vital that you use every authority at your disposal to hold accountable any person or entity that helped facilitate those elections -- whether through sanctions, visa restrictions, or other measures.
3. **Fully implement the BURMA Act and resume foreign assistance to Burma:** The Trump Administration's decision to end aid to Burma has cut off access to food,

<sup>5</sup> BBC article: "At least 24 killed as army paraglider bombs Myanmar Buddhist festival." 8 October 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cge211xj2zdo>

<sup>6</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. "Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar." Global Conflict Tracker, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/rohingya-crisis-myanmar>. Updated October 1, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Chin Association of Maryland. (2024, January). Chin Association of Maryland 2023 Annual Report: The Persecution of Christians in Burma. Chin Association of Maryland, Inc.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of State. (2023). Burma 2023 International Religious Freedom Report. U.S. Department of State.

healthcare, and shelter for countless civilians, worsening suffering and regional instability. After the March earthquake, you fired the USAID staff responding to the disaster, while the PRC immediately sent rescue crews with heavy machinery and to dig through the wreckage for survivors. You terminated \$1.1 billion dollars in foreign assistance grants to Burma, including \$181 million dedicated to the democracy movement.<sup>9</sup> These cuts contravene the express purposes of the BURMA Act and will deal a severe blow to Myanmar's democracy movement and civil society. They also serve as a gift to the Myanmar military and its authoritarian allies, including China and Russia, whose influence will now expand.

- 4. Recommend DHS extend and redesignate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Burma:** On November 24, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced her determination that Burma no longer meets the conditions for a TPS designation. The announcement stated that the termination of TPS for Burma will be effective on January 26, 2026. Junta violence against the people of Burma has, however, continued unabated. Ending TPS for Burma endangers the 3,969 people who currently hold this status in the United States should they be forced to return, and it is inconsistent with our values.

These measures are not only consistent with our nation's values, but also critical to restoring stability in the broader Indo-Pacific region. Continued chaos in Burma creates further openings for increased PRC influence that could gain it strategically valuable access to the Indian Ocean. Both Russia and the PRC have provided almost \$1 billion in weapons to the junta.<sup>10</sup> Instability in Burma also continues to generate refugee outflows, destabilizing Bangladesh, Thailand, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Transnational criminal organizations have found safe haven in Burma to engage in human trafficking, cyber fraud, the drug trade, and other illicit activities that directly harm Americans. The only solution to these challenges to U.S. interests is to work with regional partners to end the violence and place Burma on a path to inclusive governance and democracy.

We stand ready to work with you in pursuing these goals and reaffirming American leadership in defending human rights and democratic principles worldwide.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

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<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Myanmar. "America Cuts \$1.1 Billion for Myanmar, Abandoning Democracy and Rights." Human Rights Myanmar, 4 March 2024, <https://humanrightsmyanmar.org/america-cuts-1-1-billion-for-myanmar-abandoning-democracy-and-rights/>. Accessed June 10, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. (2024). Annual Report 2024: Burma. USCIRF.



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