



December 5, 2017

Senator Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Amnesty International USA Urges Senate to Pass the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act (S. 2060) to halt Myanmar military's ethnic cleansing campaign against Rohingya

Dear Senator McConnell:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA, part of a global movement of seven million people across 150 countries and territories, we urge you to bring the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act (S. 2060) up for consideration and vote by the full Senate. As this devastating humanitarian crisis continues to worsen, urgent U.S. action is needed to help bring an end to these crimes against humanity. We were pleased to see Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's statement on November 22 in which he unequivocally described the situation in northern Rakhine state and labeled it ethnic cleansing and committed to "pursue accountability through U.S. law." We were also pleased that Senator Merkley and a bi-cameral congressional delegation used the Thanksgiving recess to travel to Myanmar and Bangladesh where they reiterated the U.S. commitment to ending these terrible human rights abuses.

Since late August the world has witnessed the mass exodus of over 620,000 Rohingya who have fled into Bangladesh. That is comparable to the entire population of Washington, D.C. on the run, fleeing for their lives. The Rohingya are fleeing summary executions, mass burnings and rape by Myanmar security forces in northern Rakhine State, as Amnesty International documented in our briefing paper ['My World Is Finished': Rohingya Targeted in Crimes against Humanity in Myanmar](#), released on October 18, 2017. Those arriving into Bangladesh bear gunshot wounds, severed limbs, and the scars of rape. And each day more Rohingya continue to flee into Bangladesh.

The post-August wave of atrocities is only the most recent in a long history of systematic discrimination against the Rohingya rising to the level of apartheid. In our just-released report ["Caged without a roof"](#) Amnesty International documents how Myanmar's state policy has been one of institutionalized discrimination and segregation, with the human rights of Rohingyas and other Muslims communities in Rakhine State being violated on a daily basis, and every aspect of their lives severely

restricted. They have been denied citizenship despite living in Myanmar for generations. They have also faced extreme restrictions on their rights to freedom of movement and access to healthcare, education, and food. These human rights violations are so severe and pervasive that they amount to a systemic attack on a population based on their ethnic identity, and thus legally constitute apartheid, a crime against humanity under international law (p. 13).

The Rohingya, and the international community, need the U.S. to provide global leadership to address this urgent human rights crisis. Amnesty International calls on the Senate to pass S. 2060, a bipartisan bill that would pressure Myanmar authorities to end the violence against the Rohingya. If passed and signed by the President, S. 2060 would:

- significantly increase the pressure on the Myanmar military leaders to halt these terrible atrocities, hold them accountable for ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity, and strongly encourage cooperation with efforts to secure a “credible cease-fire agreement”;
- prohibit U.S. military cooperation with Myanmar’s military until certain conditions are met;
- hold Myanmar authorities to account by requiring cooperation with the U.N. fact-finding mission;
- encourage the full implementation of the Kofi Annan Commission recommendations;
- require support for extending civil and political rights, to include citizenship, to the Rohingya;
- calls on the Government of Bangladesh to ensure refugees have freedom of movement and that under no circumstances should they be unsafely, and involuntarily repatriated back to Myanmar;
- call on the Government of Myanmar to ensure that those who wish to return to their home can do so safely, and that those who do not want to return are compensated or provided restitution;
- and, authorize \$104 million to be appropriated in U.S. humanitarian assistance which will be urgently needed in the region for a long time to come.

Amnesty International urges that the Senate swiftly pass S. 2060. For more information, please contact Amnesty International’s national director of advocacy and government relations, Joanne Lin, at jlin@aiusa.org or (202) 509-8151.



Sincerely,

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