



December 5, 2017

**Amnesty International USA welcomes unanimous agreement by House Foreign Affairs Committee on *H. Con. Res. 90*, which condemns the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya; calls for swift passage and strongly urges further action from Congress and international community**

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of Amnesty International and our more than seven million members and supporters nationwide, we urge you to cosponsor and swiftly pass *H. Con. Res. 90*, which unanimously passed out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) on November 15, 2017, and was brought to the House floor today. Further, Amnesty strongly urges Congress and the international community to not only express condemnation for these egregious human rights violations, but to immediately work to bring about a permanent end to this ongoing crisis and ensure that humanitarian aid is received by those in desperate need.

We welcomed the unanimous agreement on and passage out of HFAC of *H. Con. Res. 90*, first introduced by Congressman Joseph Crowley (D-NY) and Congressman Steve Chabot (R-OH) at the start of November. A Congressional delegation recently [concluded a visit to Rakhine State in Myanmar and the refugee camps in Bangladesh](#), and agreed that the “violent and disproportionate” attacks on the civilian population by the Myanmar security forces bore “all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing”. The Congressional delegation was blocked from visiting the northern areas of Rakhine state as well as Rohingya camps there, underlining how the Myanmar authorities continue to block access to a United Nations (UN) fact finding mission as well as other humanitarian actors.

We are in an urgent moment, with a strategic and systemic campaign of persecution, violence, and ethnic cleansing occurring against the Rohingya in the northern Rakhine state of Myanmar that has resulted in thousands of deaths and displaced [well over 620,000 to southern Bangladesh in recent months](#), including around 250,000 children. This overwhelming exodus follows decades of systematic oppression against the Rohingya community in Myanmar, which Amnesty has recently concluded constitutes state-sponsored, institutionalized discrimination, meeting the legal definition of [apartheid](#).

Amnesty has greatly appreciated the increased attention that Congress has given the devastating plight of the Rohingya in recent months, including bipartisan letters in both the [House](#) and [Senate](#) calling on the Trump Administration to do more, in addition to hearings in the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#) and in the [House Foreign Affairs Committee](#) in October 2017. While there have been several prior resolutions in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress condemning the violence against the Rohingya, including [S. Res. 250](#) and [H. Res. 528](#), Amnesty is pleased to see this most recent effort which references Amnesty’s findings of a targeted campaign to push the Rohingya people out of Myanmar. Further, this resolution contains strong language condemning the attacks by Myanmar’s security services, with specific calls on Myanmar’s Commander-in Chief, Min Aung Hlaing, “to immediately end all attacks against civilians in the state of Rakhine in

Burma”. By passing this resolution, the House will send a powerful signal to General Hlaing and the military leadership that these crimes will not go unchecked and must be stopped.

We welcome the changes that the Committee made to the resolution including noting that the government could do more to prevent the violence and secure rights, such as by addressing the inflammatory rhetoric helping to perpetuate the violence. We also welcome the change reflecting the UN’s estimate that \$434 million in humanitarian assistance will be needed to provide life-sustaining support to 1.2 million people over the next few months. While we applaud the U.S. government’s initial aid contribution of \$32 million in September, and the [\\$47 million pledged by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson](#) during his recent visit to Myanmar, given the enormity of the crisis we believe it is essential for the U.S. to continue to step up its support both for refugees in Bangladesh and the internally displaced in Myanmar, and encourage others in the international community to do more as well. The existing international framework of humanitarian protections, including unhindered access for urgently needed humanitarian aid, must be deployed.

On November 2, 2017 Margaret Huang, executive director of Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) [wrote to President Trump](#) and the U.S. delegation, in advance of his recent trip to Asia, urging him to raise several human rights issues during his trip. Top of the list was our call on the U.S. government, in concert with the international community, to impose a comprehensive arms embargo and targeted financial sanctions against senior Myanmar military officials responsible for crimes against humanity. Prior to that, on October 23, 2017, Amnesty submitted a [statement for the record](#) to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in advance of their hearing, “Assessing U.S. Policy Towards Burma: Geopolitical, Economic, and Humanitarian Considerations”. In that statement, Amnesty strongly urged the U.S. government to take several actions without delay. Those actions are needed now, more urgently than ever before.

What has been occurring in Myanmar these last months is nothing short of crimes against humanity, [involving a reprehensible ethnic cleansing campaign](#) that has resulted in thousands of lives lost, and many, many more forced from their homes. Congress and the international community need to speak out in the strongest voice against this unspeakable violence and persecution. AIUSA welcomes this bipartisan effort in the House to condemn the violence and atrocities taking place in Myanmar and urges its immediate passage.

Thank you for your continued leadership in pressing for urgent action for the hundreds of thousands of persecuted Rohingya. For more information, please contact Ryan Mace, Grassroots Advocacy Refugee Lobbyist, at (202) 509-8185.

Sincerely,

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