

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 31, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary, U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We are deeply concerned that conditions in Burma have taken a sharp turn for the worse on a number of important fronts and ask you to undertake a significant recalibration of U.S. policy. We also urge that, when you go to Burma next month in the midst of this deterioration, you unequivocally convey to the government that the country's current trajectory will seriously damage relations between our two nations. And, we urge you to use the tools at your disposal to sanction those complicit in abuses and atrocities against innocent Burmese people, increase pressure for concrete changes, and suspend further U.S. concessions contemplated for approval until core issues are addressed.

As you know, Congress has long taken an active interest in U.S.-Burma policy and in promoting democratic change there, including by passing the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act and awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi. The reform process that began in 2011 generated widespread optimism and garnered support for a policy that eased some sanctions in return for concrete progress on democracy and human rights. One of the high points came in September 2012, when Aung San Suu Kyi came to Congress to receive her gold medal in person.

In the past 18 months, unfortunately, the situation has deteriorated dramatically in key areas. Horrific images of emaciated children have emerged from Rakhine State in western Burma, where some 140,000 Rohingya displaced by violent attacks have been confined in what some are calling concentration camps. The plight of the displaced worsened dramatically after the government expelled Doctors Without Borders, the main source of health care for many. Anti-Muslim violence recently reached Mandalay, Burma's second largest city, exacerbating the climate of fear and instability. In addition, President Thein Sein's government seems to be catering to and stoking anti-Muslim sentiment by proposing discriminatory laws impacting not only minority faiths, but also Burma's women. The situation is so grave that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Center for the Prevention of Genocide is now tracking Burma.


Meanwhile, war and human rights abuses, including the use of rape by the Burmese military as a weapon of war, continue in Kachin and Shan States, in the north. Political prisoners remain behind bars and those released still have sentences hanging over their heads, despite President Thein Sein's explicit commitment to President Obama and the United States Congress that all such prisoners would be released. After genuine improvement in media freedom at the beginning of the reform process, press freedoms have gone awry, as evidenced by the jailing and harsh sentences of 10 years imprisonment with hard labor given to five journalists for reporting on the existence of a possible chemical weapons factory. And, land seizures have risen dramatically.

The human rights situation in Burma is directly tied to stalled underlying political reforms, particularly efforts to change the flawed 2008 constitution, which the U.S. House of Representatives recognized as a sham when it was forcibly adopted in 2008. That constitution gives the military a veto over constitutional amendments and arbitrarily bars Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the opposition party, from competing on equal footing with the military-backed ruling party for the presidency. Prospects for a free and fair election next year also are in doubt, not only because of the constitutional provisions targeting the opposition leader but because of recent campaign restrictions proposed by the Union Election Commission, a body chaired by a retired general, former ruling party MP and close confidant of President Thein Sein. Furthermore, ceasefire agreements between ethnic groups and the government have not included dialogue that would lead to political settlements.

We believe that the United States should firmly maintain the core goalposts it has created by insisting that the Burmese people have the opportunity to choose their own leader, be governed through a genuine democratic system under civilian rule, move beyond ceasefires whereby ethnic minorities can participate in the future of the country, realize the unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and an end to persecution of the media, and establish civilian oversight of the armed forces, including substantial and meaningful steps by the military, to divest itself from ownership of commercial businesses.

Just as the beginning of the reform process required a calibrated reassessment of U.S. policy three years ago, recent disturbing developments call for a significant recalibration now.

Sincerely,



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Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress



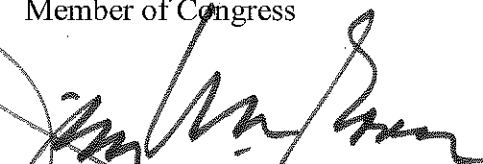
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Steve Chabot  
Member of Congress



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Trent Franks  
Member of Congress

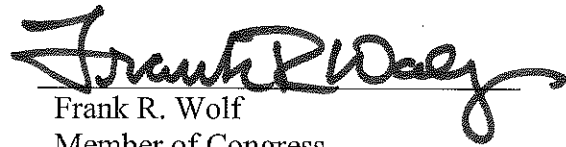


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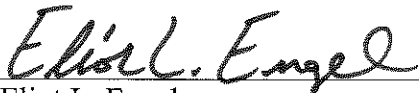
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Rush Holt  
Member of Congress



Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress



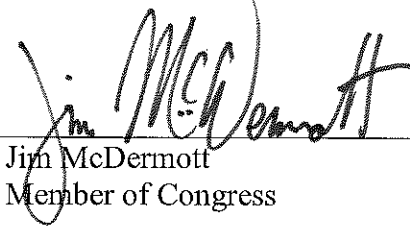
Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress



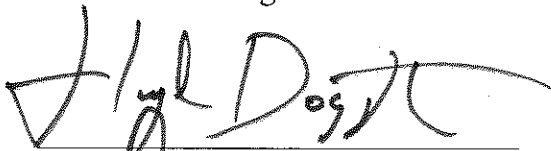
Peter T. King  
Member of Congress



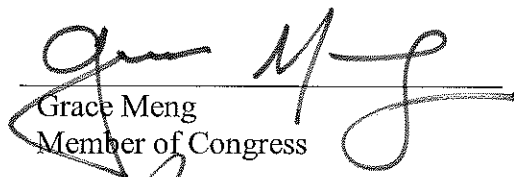
Joseph R. Pitts  
Member of Congress



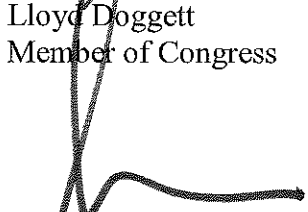
Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress



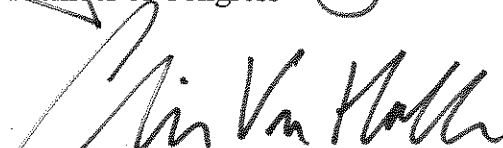
Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



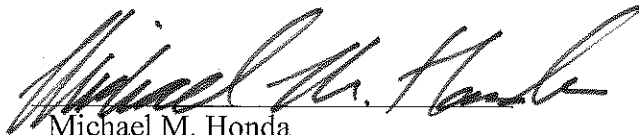
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



Ami Bera  
Member of Congress



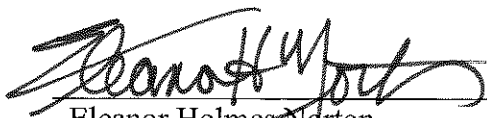
Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress



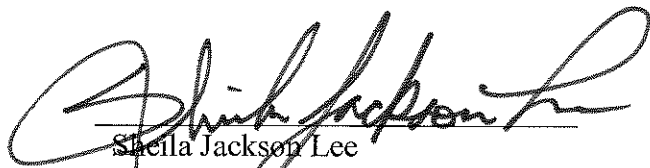
Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress



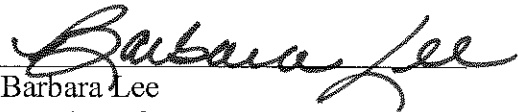
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
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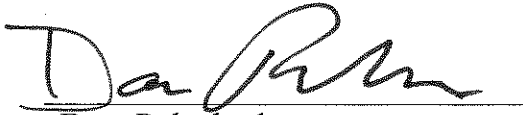
Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



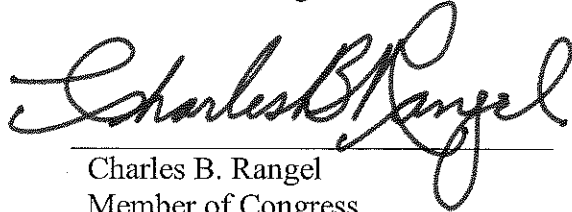
James P. Moran  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



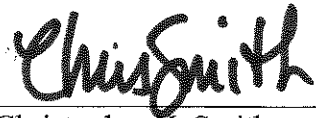
Dana Rohrabacher  
Member of Congress



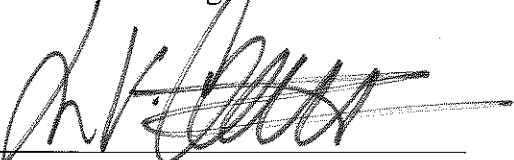
Charles B. Rangel  
Member of Congress



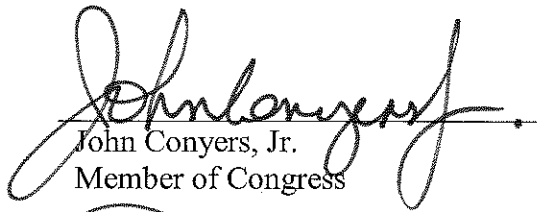
Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



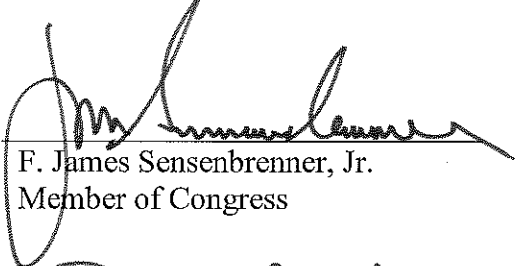
Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutierrez  
Member of Congress



John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress



F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.  
Member of Congress



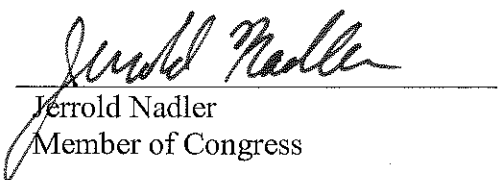
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



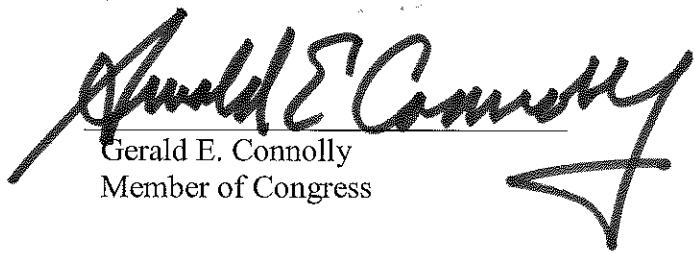
Doris O. Matsui  
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress



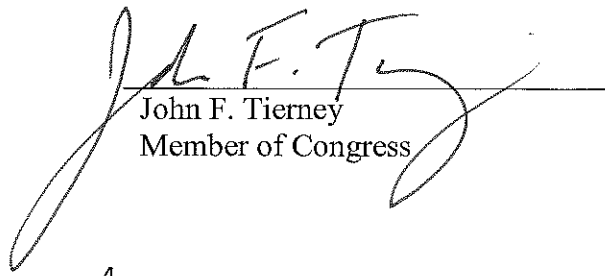
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



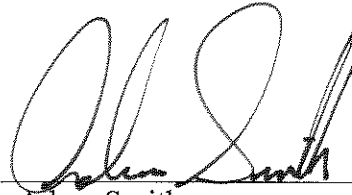
Tulsi Gabbard  
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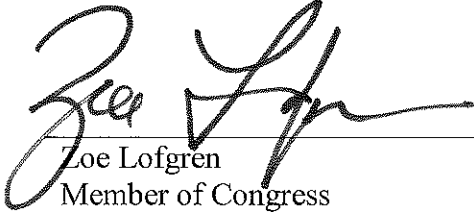
John F. Tierney  
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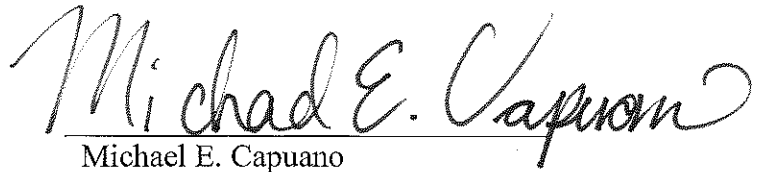
Maxine Waters  
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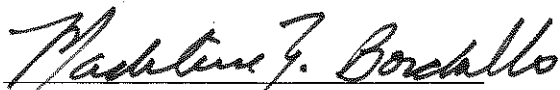
Adam Smith  
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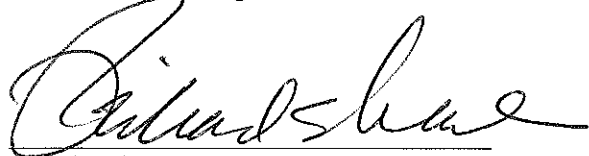
Zoe Lofgren  
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Michael E. Capuano  
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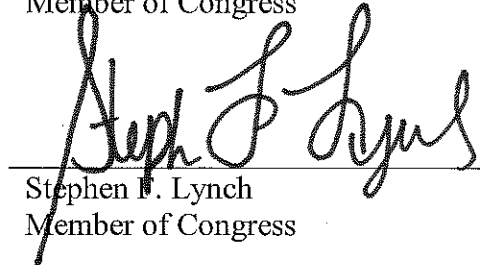
Madeleine Z. Bordallo  
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress



William L. Owens  
Member of Congress



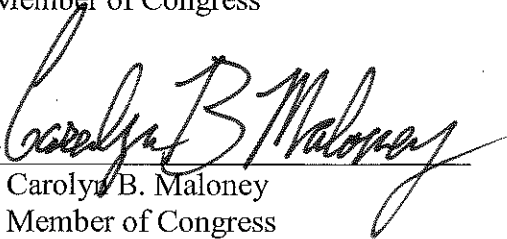
Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress



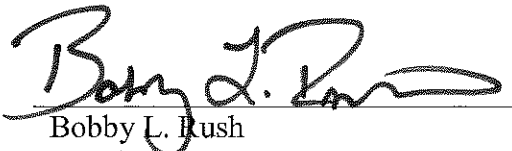
James R. Langevin  
Member of Congress




Carolyn B. Maloney  
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Janice D. Schakowsky  
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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress



William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



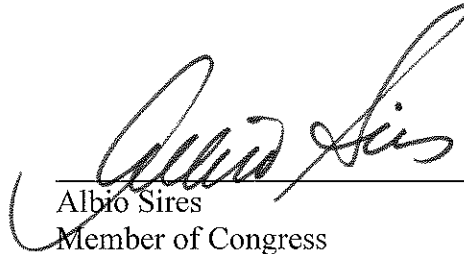
Richard L. Hanna  
Member of Congress



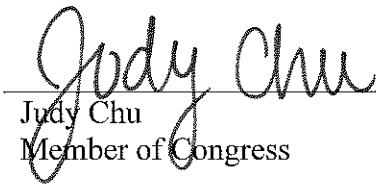
Edward R. Royce  
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David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress



Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



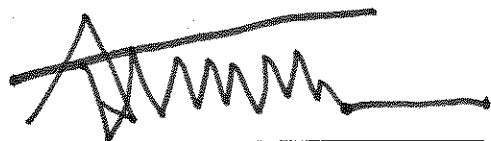
Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



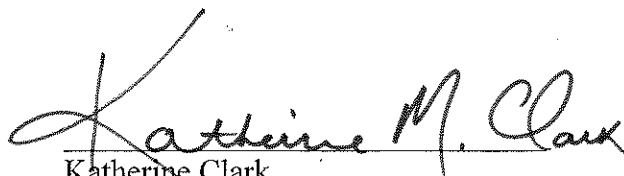
Gary C. Peters  
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Henry A. Waxman  
Member of Congress



Ted Poe  
Member of Congress



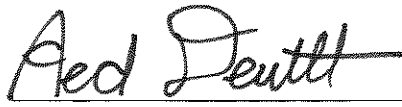
Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress



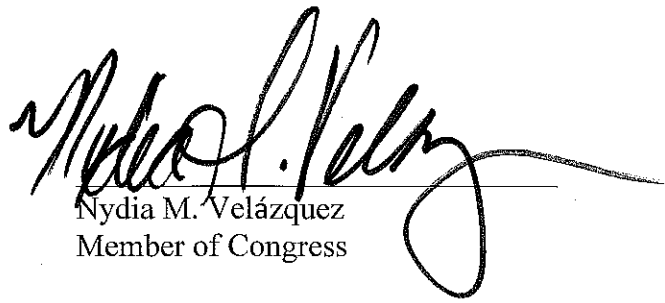
Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress



Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress



Theodore E. Deutch  
Member of Congress




Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



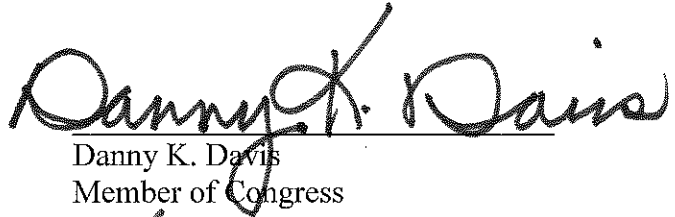
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress



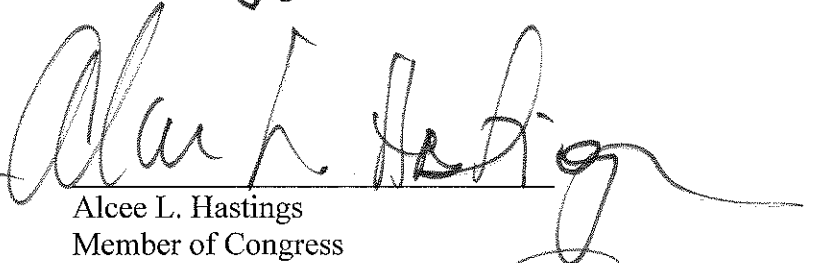
Joseph P. Kennedy III  
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



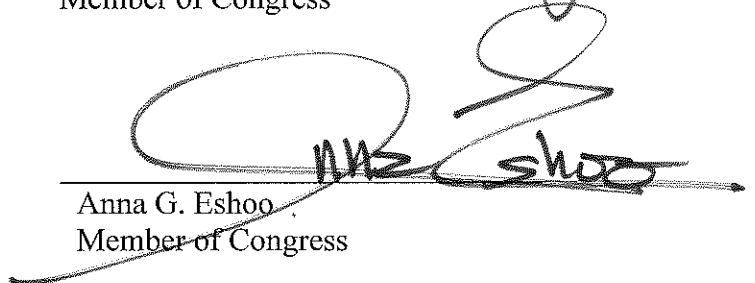
Matt Salmon  
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo  
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