



September 18, 2015

His Excellency U Thein Sein
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Naypyidaw, Myanmar

Dear President Thein:

As the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, we write as a network of parliamentarians from diverse political, religious and geographical backgrounds to express grave concerns about limitations on freedom of religion or belief in your country and discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities.

Members of our network wrote you in November 2014 to express our deep concern about a series of bills being considered that would seriously restrict freedom of religion or belief for Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and other individuals in your country. We were disappointed that you recently signed into law the deeply flawed religious conversion bill that inappropriately positions government as the arbiter of “legitimate” religious conversions. We respectfully urge you to rescind this law, and withdraw the other race and religion bills, and work to initiate new legislation that protects freedom of religion or belief for all.

In addition, we were deeply troubled to learn that sitting members of parliament, including a member of our network Shwe Maung, have been denied the ability to run in the upcoming general elections on November 8, 2015. Shockingly, this decision was based on their religious and ethnic identity, as primarily Muslim candidates, such as Rohingyas and Kamans, and candidates from ethnic states have reportedly been denied the opportunity to contest the election. We strongly urge you to correct this deeply problematic decision that discriminates against individuals based on their religious faith and ethnic identity and effectively disenfranchises entire populations.

Mr. President, when we last wrote you in 2014, we noted that your country is at a crossroads. That is even truer now, with approaching elections and the recently passed legislation. Under your leadership, you have the opportunity to ensure that all of Myanmar’s diverse population can participate fully and equally in the development of Myanmar. We respectfully urge you to consider your country’s future and take steps to amend these problematic laws and policies.

Sincerely,

Baroness Elizabeth Berridge
United Kingdom
IPP Steering Committee

Abid Raja, MP
Norway
IPP Steering Committee

David Anderson, MP
Canada
IPP Steering Committee

Leonardo Quintao, MP
Brazil
IPP Steering Committee

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His Excellency U Thein Sein
President, Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Senad Sepic, MP
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Zurab Japaridze, MP
Georgia

Son Chhay, MP
Cambodia

Steffen Bilger, MP
Germany

Leon Benoit, MP
Canada

Frank Heinrich, MP
Germany

Russ Hiebert, MP
Canada

Heribert Hirte, MP
Germany

James Lunney, MP
Canada

Volker Kauder, MP
Germany

Senator Thanh Hai Ngo
Canada

Volkmar Klein, MP
Germany

Lucien Yaliki, MP
Central African Republic

Claudia Lückling-Michel, MP
Germany

Ammo Aziza Baroud, MP
Chad

Karl Schieverling, MP
Germany

Mamadi Moussa Mamadi, MP
Chad

Johannes Singhammer
Germany

Jorge Rathgeb, MP
Chile

Walter Banegas, MP
Honduras

Mario Redondo Poveda, MP
Costa Rica

Satya Pal Singh, MP
India

Gonzalo Ramirez Zamora, MP
Costa Rica

Mohammedali Yaseen Taha, MP
Iraq

Senator Ehab El Kharrat
Egypt

Lucinda Creighton, MP
Ireland

Bonner Francisco Jimenez Beloso, MP
El Salvador

Yoav Kisch, MP
Israel

Peter van Dalen, MEP
European Parliament

Marina Berlinghieri, MP
Italy

Chiora Taktakishvili, MP
Georgia

Ernesto Preziosi, MP
Italy

Mohammed Al-Alwan, MP
Jordan

Abdallah Khawaldeh, MP
Jordan

Jude Njomo, MP
Kenya

Ghassan Moukheiber, MP
Lebanon

Mantas Adomenas, MP
Lithuania

Jessie Kabwila, MP
Malawi

Doi Bu, MP
Myanmar

Shwe Maung, MP
Myanmar

Kasthuri Patto, MP
Malaysia

Charles Santiago, MP
Malaysia

Rodrigo Ivan Cortes Jimenez, MP
Mexico

Ruard Ganzevoort, MP
Netherlands

Sokonte Davies, MP
Nigeria

Sylvi Graham, MP
Norway

Marit Nybakk, MP
Norway

Arifa Khalid, MP
Pakistan

Assiya Nasir, MP
Pakistan

José María Ibañez, MP
Paraguay

Julio Pablo Rosas Huaranga, MP
Peru

Elene Marie Ndionetine, MP
Senegal

Cherylyn Dudley, MP
South Africa

Nqabayomzi Kwankwa, MP
South Africa

Mohamed Ali Mohamed Adam Nimer, MP
Sudan

Yu Mei-Nu, MP
Taiwan

Bochra Bel Haj Hmida, MP
Tunisia

Mehrezia Labidi-Maiza, MP
Tunisia

Lord David Alton
United Kingdom

Bishop Nick Baines
United Kingdom

Diane Dodds, MP
United Kingdom

Jim Shannon, MP
United Kingdom

Stephen Timms, MP
United Kingdom

Gerardo Amarillo, MP
Uruguay