

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 18, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

Recently many of us wrote to urge you to take concrete actions in response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State, Burma. We appreciate the steps that have already been taken, including your statement that attacks must end, provision of humanitarian aid in Bangladesh, and statements by the United States at the United Nations Security Council condemning the atrocities against the Rohingya.

Unfortunately, the crisis is far from over. The situation in Rakhine State has been horrific and many innocent people are suffering. As you know, credible human rights organizations have documented atrocities carried out against Rohingya and other civilians. Due to these actions, over 500,000 people have fled Burma for Bangladesh, including at least 250,000 children. The vast majority of these are Rohingya. Tens of thousands more are internally displaced. Reports of mistreatment continue.

This happens against a backdrop of major displacement elsewhere in the country including in the Kachin State where the military has carried out attacks leading to displacement of well over 100,000 persons.

Disturbingly, Burma's authorities appear to be in denial of what has happened: a completely disproportionate response by Burmese security forces to attacks on some of its outposts. In fact, the response has been so extreme that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights says it is an effort to cleanse Burma of the Rohingya people.

In light of the ongoing crisis we urge you to build on your initial commitment. Initially, we hope that you continue assistance to Burmese refugees in Bangladesh. Furthermore, we urge you to do everything possible to ensure protection and security for those trapped inside Burma or willing to return, as well as oppose forcible returns from neighboring countries.

At the same time, we ask that you take meaningful steps with respect to the Burmese military and other entities engaged in abuses. At a minimum, we trust that you will suspend all waivers of visa ineligibilities pursuant to the Block Burmese Jade Act until the military allows unfettered humanitarian access to internally displaced persons in northern Rakhine State. We also invite you to work with us to employ existing legal mechanisms such as those under the Block Burmese Jade Act and the Global Magnitsky Act, amongst others laws, that allow for targeted action against

those responsible for abuses. Additionally, we urge you to encourage other nations to suspend arms sales to Burma.

Finally, the United States should support the implementation of the recommendations of the Rakhine Commission which are the result of a year-long effort to examine the root causes of conflict in the area. The commission found that in Rakhine State, communities "harbour deep-rooted historical grievances, shaped by the experience of violence, injustice and neglect." The Commission also noted that "a highly militarized response is unlikely to bring peace to the area." But a highly militarized response is exactly what has happened, and on a stunning scale. A strong response needs to be sent to make it clear that there is no excuse for a cruel, extensive, and grossly disproportionate crackdown on civilians.


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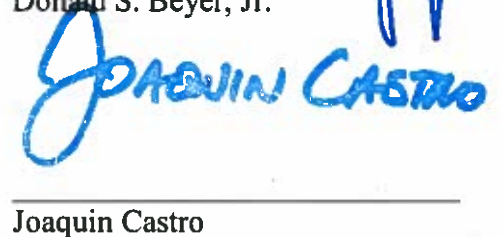

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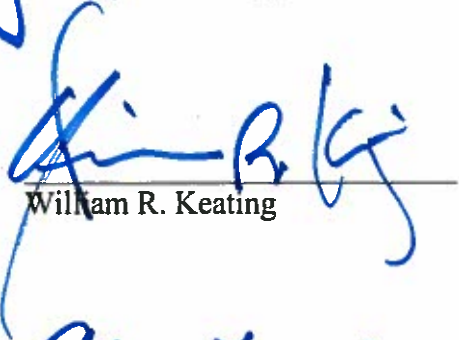

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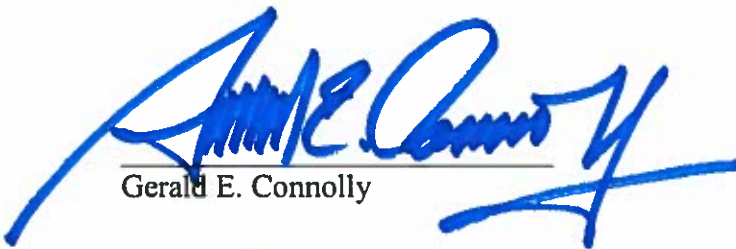

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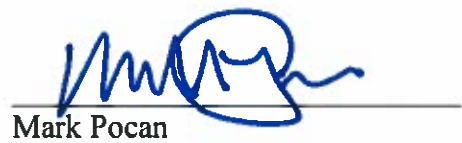

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