

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

September 13, 2018

Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to express our deep concern about two Reuters journalists, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who were sentenced to seven years in prison by a Burmese Court on September 3, 2018. As you know, they were arrested last December for reporting on the genocide in Rakhine State against the Rohingya. Many of us raised the issue with Secretary Tillerson at that time. We appreciated your raising their case on the sidelines of the ASEAN Ministerial. Now that the journalists have been formally sentenced, we believe it is necessary to raise the issue again this time directly with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. We also urge you to publicly call on the Burmese Government to immediately and unconditionally release these journalists and other prisoners of conscience.


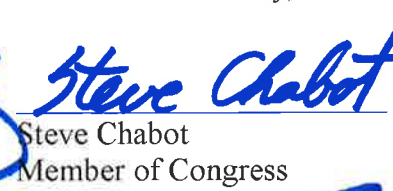

This case is only the latest example of the ongoing erosion of press freedom in Burma, especially directed at those covering military abuses, religious intolerance, and the Rohingya genocide. For many years under the military junta, journalists in Burma repeatedly faced intimidation, harassment, arrest, and imprisonment. Under a democratically elected civilian government, this should no longer be the case.

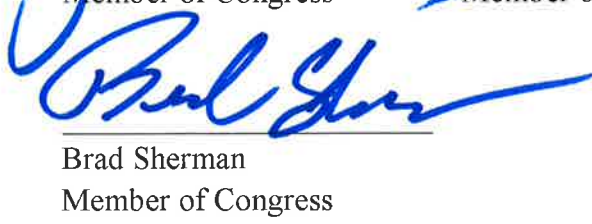
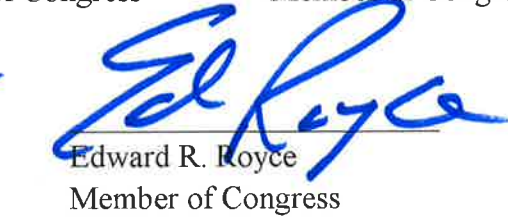
Like numerous leaders from around the world, we believe that the journalists' sentence is politically motivated. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet demanded that the sentence be "quashed and for them to be released, along with all other journalists currently in detention for their legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression." US Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, has called for their "immediate and unconditional release." She added, "The conviction of two journalists for doing their job is another terrible stain on the Burmese government... It is clear to all that the Burmese military has committed vast atrocities. In a free country, it is the duty of a responsible press to keep people informed and hold leaders accountable."

Additionally, this case comes on the heels of the report from the United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar issued on August 27, 2018 which contains ample evidence of "reasonable grounds" that the Burmese military's atrocities meet the legal threshold of genocide. Specifically, the report describes the "intent to commit genocide" against the Rohingya people and names six alleged perpetrators, including the Burmese army commander-in chief. This dramatic step by the United Nations demonstrates the gravity of the

situation and the need for immediate action. The persecution of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo casts further doubt that there could ever be an impartial and independent domestic investigation into recent events in Rakhine State. We believe an independent, impartial, and international body must investigate the crimes committed in Rakhine state. We urge you to call for and pledge the support of the United States for such an investigation at the upcoming UN General Assembly this month, and demand the immediate and unconditional release of the two journalists.

Sincerely,

  
Jan Schakowsky Steve Chabot Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress Member of Congress Member of Congress

 
Brad Sherman Edward R. Royce
Member of Congress Member of Congress

 
Joe Crowley Ted S. Yoho
Member of Congress Member of Congress

 
Debbie Wasserman Schultz Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress Member of Congress

 
Jackie Speier Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress Member of Congress

 
Betty McCollum Joe Wilson
Member of Congress Member of Congress



Gene Green
Member of Congress



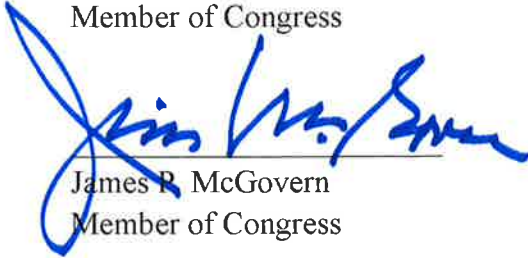
Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Paul Cook
Member of Congress



James R. McGovern
Member of Congress



Mark Meadows
Member of Congress




Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Daniel M. Donovan, Jr.
Member of Congress



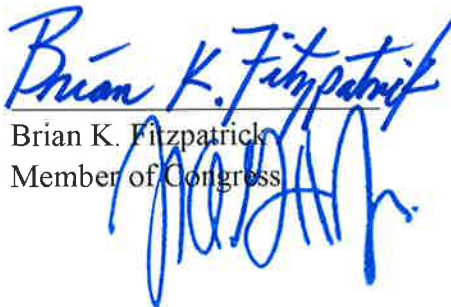
Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress



Thomas A. Garrett, Jr.
Member of Congress



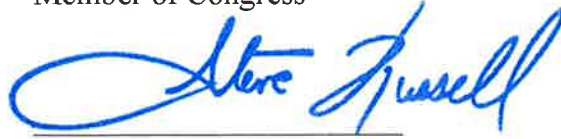
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Mike Coffman
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



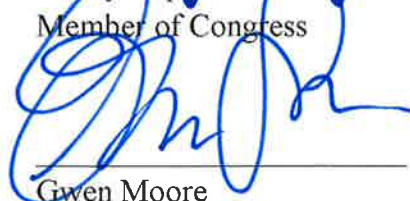
Steve Russell
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Lynn Jenkins
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
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Peter King
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Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



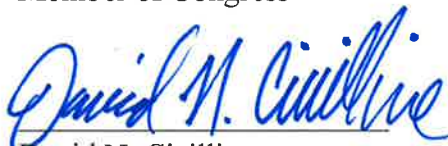
Karen Bass
Member of Congress



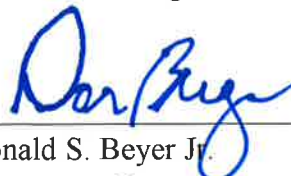
Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



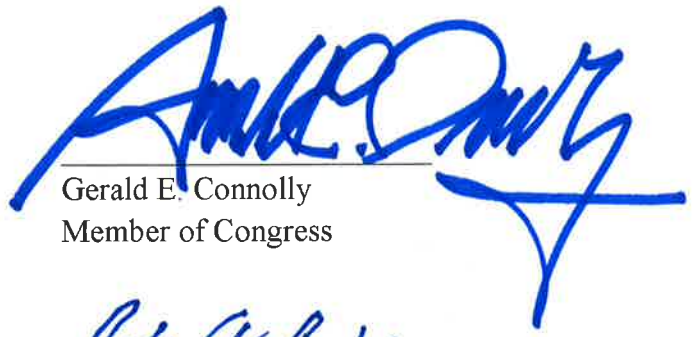
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



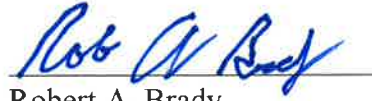
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



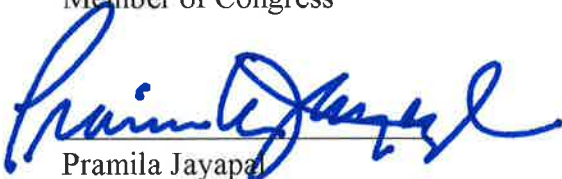
Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



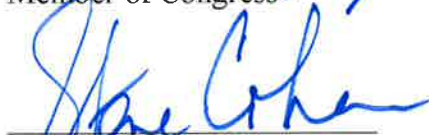
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



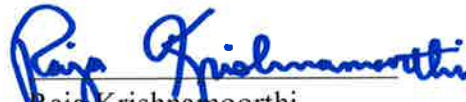
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



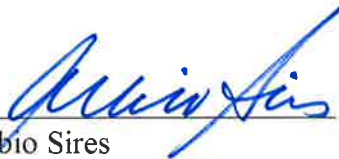
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



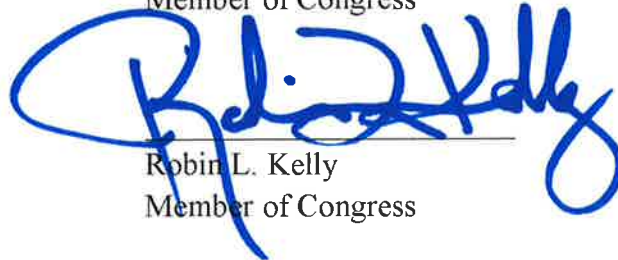
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



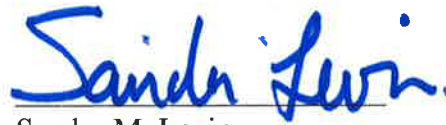
Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



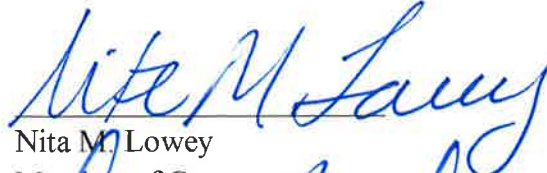
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



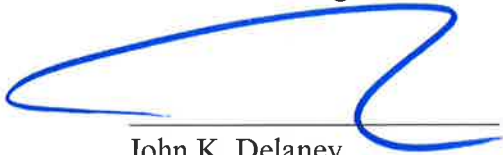
Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress



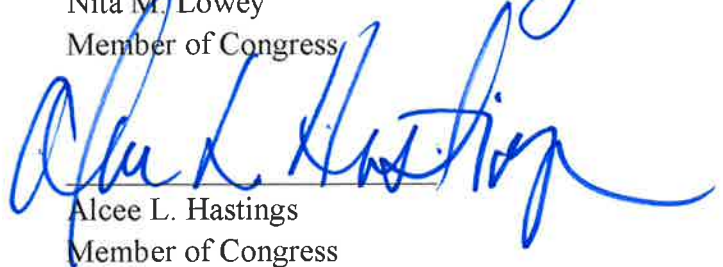
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress



John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



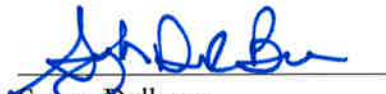
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



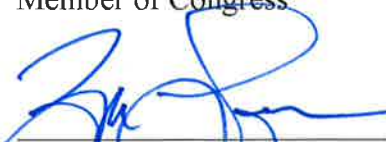
John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



David E. Price
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

Ted Poe
Member of Congress