

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

August 15, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

As senior Members of the House of Representatives deeply committed to U.S. global leadership on human rights, we write to you regarding Assistant Secretary of State Manisha Singh's upcoming visit to Burma as part of a wider effort to strengthen U.S. economic ties in East and Southeast Asia. These ties are essential to U.S. interests in the region, both on a commercial basis and because they help promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

As you know, promoting greater investment in Burma is complicated by the Burmese military's control over a substantial portion of the country's economy. This has been showcased by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar in its August 5, 2019 report "The economic interests of the Myanmar military." Specifically, Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), which are controlled by senior generals, "own at least 120 businesses involved in everything from construction to pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, insurance, tourism and banking."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Mission urged that governments and businesses sever ties with these military-owned and controlled companies because "[t]he revenue the military earns from domestic and foreign business deals substantially enhances its ability to carry out gross violations of human rights with impunity."<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, two years ago, the Burmese military committed genocide against Burma's Muslim Rohingya minority, and its numerous other grave human rights violations are ongoing. There has been no accountability for these crimes as you recognized on July 16 when the State Department designated senior Burmese military officials for sanctions: "We remain concerned that the Burmese government has taken no actions to hold accountable those responsible for human

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar exposes military business ties, calls for targeted sanctions and arms embargoes," <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24868&LangID=E> (accessed August 15, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

rights violations and abuses, and there are continued reports of the Burmese military committing human rights violations and abuses throughout the country.”<sup>3</sup>

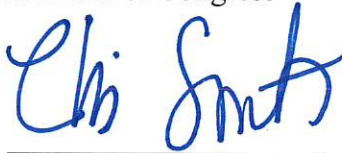
With this in mind, we believe that Assistant Secretary Singh's visit to Burma must send the right message. It is critical to ensure that her visit can in no way be construed to promote American or international business engagement with military-owned enterprises. Without this clarity, our commitment to a prosperous Burma may serve to strengthen the Burmese military and undermine our efforts toward accountability. Additionally, we urge her to articulate a vision for investment in Burma that points toward sustainable, inclusive and broad-based economic development, without military involvement in the economy. The BURMA Act, legislation we sponsored in the House, seeks to promote such development in which all the people of Burma would share. Finally, we remain dedicated to redressing the atrocities committed against the Rohingya. We, therefore, encourage her to take this opportunity to raise the Burmese military's dismal record of human rights abuses and push for full accountability.

Thank you for your consideration and for standing up for the human rights of the Burmese people.

Sincerely,



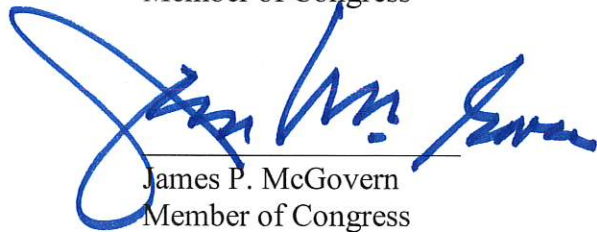
Steve Chabot  
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

cc: Manisha Singh, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs

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<sup>3</sup> “Public Designation, Due to Gross Violations of Human Rights, of Burmese Military Officials,” Statement by Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, July 16, 2019.