

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 17, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
2201 C St NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the start of the brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing conducted by the Burmese military against the Rohingya, we urge the administration to take additional actions to support the Rohingya community and to hold accountable those responsible for the atrocities committed.

Since August 25, 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees have fled violence in Burma to neighboring Bangladesh. Most of them are living in refugee camps on the border in horrific conditions. They joined hundreds of thousands of other Rohingya forced to flee Burma due to decades of repeated patterns of violence. The systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya is well documented: the Burmese military has murdered thousands of Rohingya; committed widespread rape and sexual violence; razed hundreds of villages; thrown babies into fires; and employed mass graves in an attempt to conceal their terrible crimes.

Although the reprehensible assault on a Burmese military outpost by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) was used as the justification for the wave of ethnic cleansing, there is now reporting from the international human rights community that documents what had been long suspected: that the violence was planned before August 25.

While the United States is the largest contributor to the humanitarian response—a reflection of the generosity of the American spirit—the United States government must do more. No amount of humanitarian assistance will change the fact that the Rohingya are stateless and unable to pursue economic and educational mobility in Burma. Addressing root causes, however, requires accountability, and we urge you to send the unmistakable message to the Burmese military that it cannot hope to escape accountability for documented crimes against humanity, including ethnic cleansing and systematic rape.

Specifically, we urge you and the President to speak out forcefully and publicly about these atrocities. Strong condemnation from both the President and our nation's top diplomat would be critical signals to Burma and to the international community that the United States prioritizes human rights and will stand up against mass atrocities and ethnic cleansing wherever they occur.

Additionally, we encourage you to take the following steps:

1. Swiftly make public the State Department report detailing the atrocities conducted against the Rohingya and submit the report to the State Department's Office of the Legal Adviser for a determination of whether crimes against humanity and genocide were perpetrated by the Burmese security forces;

2. Work with interagency partners to impose targeted sanctions on Burmese military officials responsible for these heinous acts through existing executive branch authorities, and consider broader sanctions on military-to-military engagements, the gem sector, or other sectors as appropriate;
3. Work with the international community, including the United Nations, to explore all appropriate means to bring the perpetrators to justice;
4. Continue to recognize the Government of Bangladesh for its efforts in receiving and hosting the Rohingya refugees and sustain U.S. bilateral and multilateral humanitarian assistance to help Bangladesh and the Rohingya at levels no less than FY2018; and
5. Increase diplomatic pressure on the Burmese government to ensure that any future returns of the Rohingya to Burma are safe, voluntary, and dignified, with access to equal rights and opportunities, as well as a path toward citizenship; and to address the life-saving needs of food, shelter, medical care, clean water and sanitation, and education for Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh.

The late Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel once spoke about the moral imperative to confront injustice wherever and whenever it occurs: "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

The United States must heed those words by sending a strong response to the persecution of an entire population. Only through U.S. leadership can we send the message to others who may seek to perpetrate similar crimes that there will be consequences.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



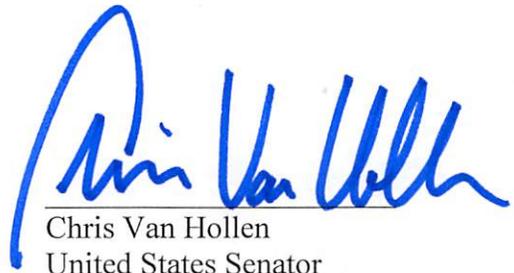
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



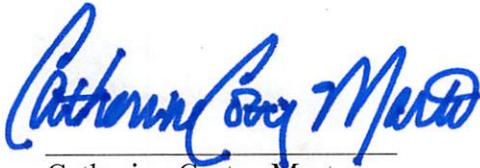
Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



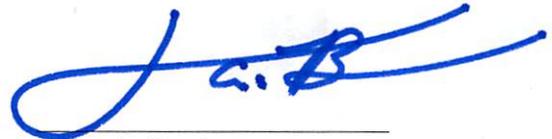
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



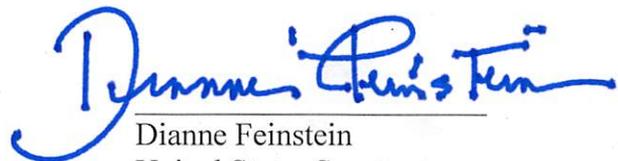
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Todd Young  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

*Edward J. Markey*

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

*Elizabeth Warren*

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

*Amy Klobuchar*

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator