

BRIAN J. MAST, FLORIDA  
CHAIRMAN

JAMES LANGENDERFER  
STAFF DIRECTOR



GREGORY W. MEEKS, NEW YORK  
RANKING MEMBER

SAJIT GANDHI  
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

One Hundred Nineteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

March 25, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

As the Trump Administration and the Department of State undertake a review of U.S. policy towards Burma, we write to share bipartisan congressional priorities to shape and inform the review. Through bipartisan legislation signed into law – such as the Burma Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003, the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE Act of 2008, and the Burma Unified Through Rigorous Military Accountability (BURMA) Act of 2022 – Congress has partnered with past administrations to ensure that our Burma policy advances U.S. values and interests. With Burma embroiled in violence five years after the military coup, and nearly a decade since the Rohingya genocide, it is important that the Administration adhere to longstanding, bipartisan principles and stand with the Burmese people against the junta's violence and repression.

In recent months, we have engaged extensively with regional governments, civil society actors, Burma's democratic stakeholders, and think tank experts to assess the best path forward for U.S. policy and Congress's role in enabling that path. On November 19, 2025, the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific held a hearing on Burma that showcased tremendous consensus on the urgency of the ongoing crisis and the challenges it presents for the U.S. In this letter, we would like to share five central findings from the hearing and the committee's engagements over the past year, as well as a set of policy recommendations that we urge the Administration to adopt at the end of its policy review.

## **Findings:**

*First, five years after its illegal coup, and despite a relentless military campaign against resistance actors, the junta has been unable to consolidate control over Burma, including the majority of its borders with other countries.*

Over 40 percent of Burma's territory is controlled by a patchwork of resistance groups; only 21 percent is under firm military control, and the remainder is contested.<sup>1</sup> Pro-democracy and armed resistance actors continue to make territorial gains and maintain broad public support even after five years of war, reflecting the junta's deep illegitimacy. It would be counter to U.S. interests to engage the military junta given that it does not control key border areas and resource-rich territories. Doing so would strengthen China's hand and reduce U.S. leverage in future negotiations.

*Second, the elections held in Burma in December 2025 and January 2026 were neither free nor fair; they were a sham orchestrated to generate support and credibility for the junta.*

The junta did not hold polls in roughly one in five of Myanmar's 330 townships, leaving vast segments of the population unable to vote, discrediting the junta's claim to broad-based legitimacy.<sup>2</sup> The junta also introduced a new electoral system designed to benefit its preferred candidates, installed new and untested electronic voting machines, banned dozens of political parties from participating, and arrested over 400 people under new laws criminalizing criticism of the elections.<sup>3</sup> General Min Aung Hlaing, the architect of the 2021 coup, is now using the sham elections to seek the civilian post of "President" to lend his illegitimate rule some credibility.

*Third, the junta has derived tremendous military, economic, and political support from China, Russia, and Iran, while democratic stakeholders are aligned with the United States and other democracies.*

Since the coup, the junta has only deepened its economic and strategic ties with the People's Republic of China (PRC), which exerts significant influence over the Burmese military. Burma has become a testing-ground for the export of PRC surveillance tools abroad, with the junta collaborating with PRC security officials to install facial recognition and other tracking technologies to surveil dissidents. Beijing has attempted to convene peace talks between the junta and resistance actors so that it can restore trade and bolster border security. While these efforts have been unsuccessful thus far, they reflect Beijing's growing desire to exert soft power in the region. Russia has emerged as a key defense partner, sending aircraft and weapons systems. Iran is also an increasingly important partner, finding in the Burmese junta a perfect buyer to purchase its sanctioned fuels. Iran became a core source of sanctioned jet fuel that

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Situation in Myanmar" map, <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/HAF15UvXUAA6h70?format=jpg&name=4096x4096>.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Head and Josh Cheetham, "Party backed by generals set for landslide as 'sham' Myanmar election ends," BBC, January 25, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2l6wg0p8eo>.

<sup>3</sup> "Myanmar Junta Stepped Up Crimes Against Humanity Before Sham Election: Rights Groups," The Irrawaddy, January 29, 2026, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-stepped-up-crimes-against-humanity-before-sham-election-rights-groups.html>.

enabled the junta's indiscriminate bombing campaigns resulting in mass civilian casualties.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, pro-democracy actors including the exiled National Unity Government (NUG) continue seeking support from western governments. Burmese youth reject the junta's alliances and widely embrace western democratic values - but thousands have been killed and imprisoned for opposing military rule.

*Fourth, the Burmese military continues to commit horrific atrocities against its own people, creating destabilizing effects for the security of the whole region. Over 1.6 million refugees are now sheltering in Thailand, Bangladesh, India, and other nations.*<sup>5</sup>

The military regime's brutality is difficult to overstate. In 2023, the State Department determined that the military had committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Rohingya from 2016 to 2017. Since the 2021 coup, over 6,800 civilians have been killed in protests and conflict, one million have fled the country, and an additional 3.5 million are internally displaced.<sup>6</sup> Aerial bombardments target civilians and terrorize communities daily. Refugee outflows spiked amid panic caused by the reinstatement of mandatory conscription by the junta in 2024. Around 20 million people are thought to need aid, underscoring the urgent need for sustained and increased assistance, yet the junta routinely blocks humanitarian access, including after the devastating March 2025 earthquake.<sup>7</sup> Over a million Rohingya genocide survivors continue to endure insecurity and desperate conditions in Bangladesh camps, leading many to engage with trafficking syndicates that transport them on risky boat journeys to Malaysia and beyond. The Administration's February 2026 extension of the national emergency order with respect to Burma was a welcome and necessary recognition of the ongoing crisis facing the people of Burma.<sup>8</sup>

*Fifth, the junta is actively supporting and benefiting from scam center operations in Burma that are run by PRC transnational crime syndicates and target Americans.*

Today, the Burma crisis is directly harming everyday Americans. As a result of the junta's violence and its inability to govern the nation, border areas have become epicenters of drug production and scam industries.<sup>9</sup> The establishment of massive scam centers is a direct result of policies put in place by the Burmese military stretching back decades: in exchange for loyalty, the previous junta allowed local militias operating along the Thailand and China borders free

---

<sup>4</sup> Gavin Finch, Devjyot Ghoshal, Han Huang, and Adolfo Arranz, "Iran's Shadow Fleet is Fueling the Myanmar Junta's Air War, Reuters, January 26, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/IRAN-MYANMAR/JET-FUEL/jnpwkongrpw/>.

<sup>5</sup> "Myanmar - World Report 2025," Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/myanmar>.

<sup>6</sup> "Myanmar human rights crisis deepens as aid collapses, attacks intensify," United Nations, June 27, 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1165041>.

<sup>7</sup> "Myanmar: Junta Assault on Health Care Hinders Quake Response," Human Rights Watch, April 28, 2025. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/29/myanmar-junta-assault-health-care-hinders-quake-response>.

<sup>8</sup> "Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in and in Relation to Burma," Federal Register, 2026-02497 (91 FR 5663), February 6, 2026, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/02/06/2026-02497/continuation-of-the-national-emergency-with-respect-to-the-situation-in-and-in-relation-to-burma>.

<sup>9</sup> "Treasury Sanctions Burma Armed Group and Companies Linked to Organized Crime Targeting Americans," U.S. Department of the Treasury, November 12, 2025, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0312>.

reign to conduct “business” in their territories. This exchange allowed the militias to partner with transnational criminal organizations to establish drug production centers and, with the rise of the internet, modern scam centers. The results are clear. An estimated 120,000 individuals from dozens of countries have been trafficked and forced to labor in the massive scam centers. Americans have been defrauded by these scam centers of over \$16 billion in recent years.<sup>10</sup> These hotbeds of unchecked criminality not only threaten the safety and well-being of the Burmese people but also pose broader security risks to the region and beyond. Therefore, we welcome the Administration’s sanctions on Burmese entities for supporting scam center operations and for establishing a Scam Center Strike Force to address the threat that these centers represent to the American people.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

Based on these findings, we would like to provide the Department with recommendations for a blueprint for U.S. policy going forward. We urge the administration to build its new Burma policy around the following goals, by incorporating the specific recommendations below and fully implementing all provisions of law related to Burma.

#### **I. Isolate the junta diplomatically and delegitimize it politically.**

1. Publicly reject the results of the recent sham elections and maintain the current U.S. policy of non-recognition of the junta. Refer to the junta as a “regime” rather than a “government” in official statements. The junta seeks credibility beyond anything else.
2. Do not conduct any senior-level engagement with the junta or its successor entities and maintain the policy of not appointing a Senate-confirmed Ambassador to Yangon. Politically isolate the junta internationally by opposing its inclusion in regional and international organizations in which the U.S. is a member.
3. Continue to support the position of Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun at the United Nations. Do not allow the UN to sit a junta-appointed official.
4. Leverage the U.S.’s position in international organizations such as the UN Security Council to pressure the junta and call out China, Russia, Iran, and others who support it despite its violence.

#### **II. Hold the junta accountable for its violence, human rights abuses, and scam center profiteering through further sanctions and support for accountability efforts.**

5. Use the Scam Center Strike Force to further investigate and publicize the links between Burma’s military, scam center operators, and transnational criminal organizations.
6. Fully implement the BURMA Act, bipartisan legislation passed by Congress as part of the 2022 NDAA. In particular, the Administration should expand existing sanctions on

---

<sup>10</sup> “U.S. and U.K. Take Largest Action Ever Targeting Cybercriminal Networks in Southeast Asia,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, October 14, 2025. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0278>.

Burmese targets as authorized by the BURMA Act.

- a) Update existing sanctions targeting the junta's ruling entity to account for its recent name change. The U.S. maintains sanctions on the "State Administration Council," and, pursuant to the BURMA Act, should update those to include the "State Security and Peace Commission" as well as any successor entity the junta establishes following the recent sham elections.
  - b) Extend U.S. sanctions on junta-controlled financial institutions to restrict the junta's cash flow with the goal of preventing it from purchasing weapons and other military supplies. In particular, the U.S. should place sanctions on Myanmar Economic Bank (MEB) as authorized by the BRAVE Burma Act, which the House passed unanimously on February 9th, 2026.
  - c) Expand U.S. sanctions to target additional individuals and entities selling weapons and ammunition to the Burmese junta, senior junta officials, and vessels transporting Iranian oil to Myanmar.
7. Support atrocity prevention, monitoring, and accountability efforts, including through international justice mechanisms and UN human rights monitoring entities, pursuant to the BURMA Act.

### **III. Appoint a senior official to coordinate U.S. Burma policy and engage Burma's democratic stakeholders in a holistic manner.**

8. Appoint a Burma Special Coordinator so that there is senior level political attention on this crisis. In the absence of a full-time Ambassador in Yangon and the regional nature of the crisis, a Special Coordinator is vital to ensuring a focused and strategic U.S. government response. As regional instability intensifies, the role would also strengthen coordination with neighboring countries and international bodies to address the refugee crisis, transnational crime, and other security concerns.
9. Engage broadly with pro-democracy stakeholders, including the NUG, ethnic organizations, and civil society groups to create a roadmap for the future. The U.S. can and should play a convening role in bringing together different Burmese actors. This approach is consistent with longstanding bipartisan policy and the BURMA Act.

### **IV. Support refugees in the region and provide humanitarian assistance in Burma.**

10. Maintain and expand humanitarian assistance for conflict-affected and displaced populations within Burma and in refugee camps across Thailand, Bangladesh, and other neighboring countries.
  - a) Increase funding for the humanitarian response in Burma and countries hosting its refugees, consistent with needs and provisions in the BURMA Act;

- b) Urge other donors to increase their support for the humanitarian response;
  - c) Support cross-border aid delivery into Burma from neighbors including Bangladesh and Thailand;
11. Increase support to civil society, pro-democracy actors, and independent media consistent with the provisions of the BURMA Act. The U.S.'s long-standing legacy of support for democracy and civil society in Burma has been crucial in helping communities resist the junta's repressive policies and mitigating its failure to provide basic services.
12. Increase international assistance for refugees to save lives and to mitigate their exploitation by illicit networks that threaten U.S. interests.
- a) Press Bangladesh and other countries hosting refugees from Burma to expand services including education and livelihood opportunities, and to prevent unsafe repatriation of refugees to Burma;
  - b) Work with regional countries to address the refugee boat trafficking crisis by strengthening mechanisms and overall coordination on search and rescue, safe disembarkation, and effective receiving and comprehensive assistance;
  - c) Renew Temporary Protective Status for Burma, consistent with the Administration's extension of the national emergency with respect to Burma;
  - d) Restart resettlement of refugees from Burma to the United States.

## **V. Match Strategy and Policy Goals with Adequate Resources**

13. To implement the recommendations outlined above, we urge you to fully execute the authorized and appropriate Economic Support Funds for Burma, consistent with the Burma Unified Through Rigorous Military Accountability Act of 2022. The administration previously zeroed out these funds, which is undermining U.S. efforts to combat transnational organized crime, address regional instability, and weaken the regime's grip on power. Eliminating funding for Burma advances no discernible strategy—whether the objective is to isolate, pressure, or degrade the regime. A resource gap would instead cede influence in a region where China, Iran, and Russia are actively expanding their footholds. If Burma is relevant to U.S. national security interests, then policy goals must be matched with commensurate resources to prevent the crisis from deepening into a broader geopolitical challenge.

The junta has proven that it is unable to consolidate control in the face of the courageous and freedom-loving Burmese people. They are providing the United States an opportunity to stand for freedom and push for the return of civilian rule in Burma. The passage of the BURMA Act was a critical step in addressing the multiple crises facing Burma, but its effectiveness hinges on rigorous implementation and sustained U.S. engagement.

Targeted sanctions, humanitarian assistance, and diplomatic coordination must be actively utilized to weaken the junta's grip on power and aid the Burmese people in their fight for freedom. Continued pressure on the military regime is essential not only for Burma's future but also for promoting stability and good governance across the Indo-Pacific region. Given the broader geopolitical implications, including regional security concerns, refugee crises, and the expansion of transnational crime, the U.S. must demonstrate strong leadership and a long-term commitment to Burma.

We urge the Trump Administration to take decisive action to ensure that these measures are implemented swiftly and effectively to safeguard our interests and pave the way for a more peaceful, just, and democratic Burma.

Sincerely,



Gregory W. Meeks  
Ranking Member



Young Kim  
Chairwoman  
East Asia and Pacific Subcommittee



Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Ranking Member  
South and Central Asia Subcommittee



Ami Bera  
Ranking Member  
East Asia and Pacific Subcommittee