United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 30, 2026

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Schatz,

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2027 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill, we urge you to provide a total of $121 million to support Burma consistent with the BURMA Act of 2022 (subtitle E of title LV of division E of Public Law 117–263) and section 7043(a) of the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 2026 (division F of Public Law Public Law 119-75). Five years after its illegal coup, the Burmese junta continues to murder its own people, even as its hold on power grows tenuous. Continued U.S. funding is essential to hold the junta accountable and support a path toward a peaceful Burma aligned with U.S. interests in the region.

Since the junta's 2021 coup, more than 6,800 civilians have been killed, over 22,000 detained, one million have fled the country, and an additional 3.5 million have been internally displaced.[1] The instability has increased the need for life-saving humanitarian assistance and the need to support those displaced within Burma or have fled to the surrounding region. Burma's instability is increasingly taxing U.S. partners in South and Southeast Asia, including Thailand, Bangladesh, India, and more.

Despite five years of fighting, the junta has been unable to consolidate power geographically or politically. The military controls only about 21 percent of the country.[2] The junta has struggled to make territorial gains due to its lack of public support and continued resistance by Burma's pro-democracy movement and armed ethnic organizations. The junta hosted sham elections from December 2024 to January 2025 to try to regain legitimacy, but the elections were widely rejected as neither free nor fair. The junta prevented opposition parties from participating, continued to imprison previously elected leaders, and prosecuted hundreds for criticizing the elections demonstrates how deeply unpopular it remains with the Burmese people.

Unpopular at home, the junta has become desperate for international legitimacy. It has increasingly relied on and aligned with the People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, and Iran,

[1] "Myanmar human rights crisis deepens as aid collapses, attacks intensify," United Nations, June 27, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1165041.
[2] "The Situation in Myanmar" map. https://pbs.twimg.com/media/HAF15UvXUAA6h70?format=jpg&name=4096x4096

in stark contrast with the National Unity Government and the broader democracy movement, which are pro-American and eager for greater U.S. support. Beijing has exported its surveillance tools to Burma and has attempted to mediate between the junta and resistance actors. PRC-linked criminal syndicates have built an empire of scam centers across Burma's border regions that overtly target Americans, defrauding them of over $16 billion in recent years.[3]The junta has not just turned a blind eye; it actively benefits from these PRC-affiliated scam centers.

The fight for democracy in Burma is at a critical juncture, and U.S. programming is essential to pave a path to peace and civilian rule. This will require funds for Burma as well as support for refugees, including Rohingya, in Bangladesh and elsewhere. When the State Department determined that the Burmese junta committed genocide and crimes against humanity against the Rohingya, the Department reaffirmed its commitment "to accompany Rohingya on this path out of genocide – toward truth, toward accountability, toward a home that will welcome them as equal members, that will respect their human rights and dignity, alongside that of all people in Burma."[4] Congress must follow through on this promise.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

[3] "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.
[4] "Secretary Antony J. Blinken on the Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity in Burma," U.S. Department of State, March 21, 2022, https://2021-2025.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-the-united-states-holocaust-memorial-museum/.

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Andy Kim
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator