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THE UNFOLDING CRISIS IN BURMA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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CONTENTS

THE UNFOLDING CRISIS IN BURMA

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 1 p.m., via WebEx, Hon. Gregory Meeks (Chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman MEEKS. The Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any point and all Members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous materials, and questions for the record subject to the length limitations in the rules.

To insert something into the record, please have your staff email the previously mentioned address or contact full committee staff.

As a reminder to Members, please keep your video function on at all times, even when you are not recognized by the Chair. Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves.

Consistent with House rules, staff will only mute Members as appropriate when they are not under recognition to eliminate background noise.

I see that we have a quorum and I now recognize myself for opening remarks.

Pursuant to the notice, we meet today to hear from distinguished witnesses to examine the February 1st coup in Burma and the Burmese military's violent response to pro-democracy protesters demonstrating against the military's undoing of the election and the will of the people.

The coup has resulted in an ongoing crisis in Burma that has claimed the lives of hundreds of peaceful protestors. On February 1st, Burma's military, the Tatmadaw, seized control of the union government, detained democratically elected political leaders, including its president, Win Myint and Aung San Suu Kyi, reversing years of reform and upending Burma's fragile transition to democracy.

As we often see in the face of injustice, an informal and leaderless civil disobedience movement has emerged to protest the military's power grab. Almost immediately after the coup, the Burmese people took to the streets in historic numbers to express opposition to the coup and support for democracy.

The military responded with brutal force. The military has suppressed the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and the press in an effort to silence the Burmese people's desire for democracy.

But we should not be surprised by these actions. We have known for years who the Tatmadaw are. They showed us before the demo-

cratic opening in 2015 and again in 2017 when they led a genocide against the Rohingya people, and now in 2021 with the coup and their response to popular opposition to it.

The military has, again, turned on its citizens, responding to protests with senseless and brutal violence. Thousands have been beaten or injured. More than 750 people have been killed and over 3,400 have been detained nationwide since the coup began.

The junta's indiscriminate and lethal violence has even claimed the lives of more than 50 children, the youngest being just 6 years old, a girl killed in front of her father during a raid of their home in the city of Mandalay.

In response to the military's subversions of Burma's elected government and democratic transition, some lawmakers formed a committee representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, or the CRPH, to restore a democratically elected civilian role.

Working with leaders from the civil disobedience movement and Burma's ethnic communities, the CRPH recently formed a national unity government to represent the will of the Burmese people who have persevered through the military brutality and finding evermore creative ways to resist its rule.

To support the efforts of the Burmese people, the United States has already taken action to reprimand and pressure the Tatmadaw, and we have done this through working with partners and other like-minded countries and through the implementation of sanctions, including on the Burmese military leaders who directed the coup and their military-owned conglomerates in addition to placing export control restrictions on Burma and freezing, roughly, $1 billion in assets.

This very body also passed legislation to empower and protect the Burmese people, and we continue to work with partners around the world to build a more unified response to the coup.

My time in Congress has taught me that nothing we do alone will ever be as effective as the coordinated action that we take alongside like-minded partners.

It is critical that we enlist Burma neighbors, the ASEAN and our partners and allies around the world to place additional pressure on the military junta.

We must send a clear message that we stand in solidarity with the Burmese people. I look forward to hearing our witnesses speak on the ongoing crisis in Burma so that we can better understand the situation on the ground, determine what additional steps might need to be taken by the U.S. Government to pressure the Burmese military to immediately cease its repression and violence, and secure the release of all detained political leaders and activists.

This is, indeed, a challenging time for the people of Burma, who have seen far too much violence and oppression. Now a new generation of Burmese look to the world for hope. We must answer their call and support their campaign for dignity, democracy, and freedom.

Let me now recognize my friend, the Ranking Member, Mr. McCaul of Texas, for any remarks he might have.

[No response.]

Chairman MEEKS. Mr. McCaul?

Mr. MCCAUL. Okay, can you hear me now, Mr. Chairman?

Chairman MEEKS. Now I hear you.

Mr. MCCAUL. We just had a little technical glitch. But I want to thank you for calling this important hearing today and staying on focus on Burma and these horrific acts in the aftermath of the latest coup.

This committee has always stood with the Burmese people in their struggle to free themselves from military rule, to protect their human rights, and to secure democracy.

I'm grateful that we have continued that spirit of bipartisanship by passing multiple pieces of legislation already this year, and I look forward to taking more action to hold the Burmese military accountable, not as Republicans or Democrats but as Americans conducting a foreign policy consistent with our values.

Just a few months ago, the people of Burma had a flawed but functioning democracy. Today, they live under a reign of terror, with their democratic freedoms being stolen away.

And since this latest coup on February 1st, we have seen what can only be described as a military committing mass murder against its own people it's supposed to protect. The latest estimates place the death toll at well over 700 civilians killed throughout Burma.

In addition to this violence, the Burmese people are suffering through mass arrests, nighttime raids, communication blackouts, and widespread intimidation of the press.

It's all designed to crush their spirits and their will to resist. Incredibly, it's not working. The people of Burma continue to take to the streets, inspiring the world with their resolve to regain the democracy and their military—that their military stole.

The United States will continue to stand with them, and today's hearing will guide our next steps. To begin, we need to tighten our sanctions against the regime, against the military for their brutal human rights violations during this coup, as well as their prior genocide against the Rohingya.

In addition, if we want to achieve any meaningful purpose at the United Nations, we need to understand the motivations of Russia, which is drawing closer to the Burmese military, and we need to understand the motivations of the Chinese Communist Party, which wants to extend its Belt and Road Initiative through Burma to the Indian Ocean.

And most of all, we need to make sure we're doing all we can for the brave people of Burma who are risking their lives to stand up for their rights, people like in Burma's—like Burma's Ambassador to the United Nations, who has spoken out against the regime that has taken over his country's government. It is at a huge risk to himself and his family.

So, Mr. Ambassador, it's quite an honor to have you with us here today and your bravery inspires us all. I'd like to thank Ambassador Currie and Ms. Ohmar for joining us today to discuss our next steps to respond to this horrible coup.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman yields back. And I'd now like to turn to Mr. Bera, the Chair of the Asia Subcommittee. I yield 1 minute to you.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Ranking Member for holding this incredibly important hearing. I'll keep my comments short.

I'm proud of the work that we have done in a bipartisan way, both on the subcommittee as well as the full committee, and in a bicameral way, as well as the steps that the Biden Administration has taken both to implement sanctions on the military but also to show support for the Burmese people.

And now that this coup has gone from days to weeks to months, the resolve of the Burmese people is something to be admired. Up to 90 percent of the country is on a general strike, shutting things down, sending a clear message that the Burmese people do not want to backslide on this coup.

Everything we can do as a committee and as a country and internationally to support the Burmese people in their rights and their freedoms is something that we ought to be doing. So, again, thank you for hosting this hearing.

The message to the Burmese people is the American people and the American Congress are with you.

Thank you, and I will yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

I now yield 1 minute to the Ranking Member, Mr. Chabot, for 1 minute.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As the current Ranking Member of the Asia and Pacific Subcommittee and having Chaired that committee several Congresses back, I've followed events in Burma very closely for quite a few years now, and the February 1st coup was a shameless assault on Burma's fledgling democracy that, once again, demonstrated to the world who really runs that country and that's the Tatmadaw, the military.

This time around, though, the people of Burma have courageously rejected the coup and are demanding their God-given right to freedom and self-government as

And the situation keeps getting darker as the Tatmadaw arrests, tortures, murders more innocent people every day. In light of this, the Biden Administration must rally international support for a tougher response against the Tatmadaw.

We need a concerted response that would bring this coup to an end and place Burma on a permanent path to a stable Federal democracy.

Thank you for holding this hearing. Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chabot.

Now I'll introduce our witnesses.

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun began serving as the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations on October 2020.

Since joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993, he has held a number of diplomatic posts, including Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization, Permanent Representative to the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague, as well as Myanmar's Ambassador to Switzerland.

Ms. Khin Ohmar is a Burmese human rights and democracy activist, and currently serves as the Chairperson of the Advisory Board of Progressive Voice. She was involved in organizing the historical general strike or August the 8th, 1988.

Following the Burmese's military crackdown on demonstrators, she was forced to leave her home and was granted political refuge in the United States.

She has continued to campaign for democracy in Burma internationally and regionally as the founder of a number of civil society organizations, including Women's League of Burma, Burma Partnership, and Progressive Voice.

Ambassador Kelley Currie served as the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues and the U.S. Representative at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Prior to her appointment, she led the Department of State's Office on Global Criminal Justice and served as the United States Representative to the U.N. Economic and Social Council and Alternative Representative to the U.N. General Assembly from 2017 to 2018.

Throughout her career in foreign policy, Ambassador Currie has specialized in human rights, political reform, development and humanitarian issues, with a focus on the Asia Pacific region.

So, without objection, all the witnesses' prepared testimony will be made part of the record, and I'll now recognize the witnesses for 5 minutes each to summarize their testimony.

We'll start with Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun. You're now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF KYAW MOE TUN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MYANMAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. TUN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, Members of the committee.

Good afternoon. Mingalar par. I thank you all for holding this important hearing on the serious situation of my country, and thank you for all the strong encouraging remarks.

Due to time constraint, I will be delivering the shorter version of my statement, and the true version has been submitted to the esteemed committee. I will focus more on what action the United States should take.

Mr. Chairman, the situation in Myanmar is, indeed, an unfolding tragedy that continues to escalate over time. The people in Myanmar are seriously suffering from the military brutality and inhumane acts day and night. Fear tends to be the order of the day and we all are living under fear.

Our free and fair general elections were successfully held on 8 November 2020, which is a significant milestone in our history. The NUG won their landslide victory at the elections. Total ignorance of the people's desire, the military staged a coup on 1st February and unlawfully detained the State councilor, the president, other leaders and the parliamentarians, as well as several activists.

In wake of the military coup, millions of people came out on the streets to protest against the military. Subsequently, the military terrorist group has cracked down the peaceful protests in a brutal

and inhumane manner and committed serious human rights violations, including brutal killing, arbitrary arrests, and torture.

More than 756 civilians have already been murdered by the military. The majority of victims are young people who are the future of the country. They even kill children as young as 6 years old.

The people of Myanmar are resilient and unprecedentedly united in fighting against the military and calling for release of all unlawful detainees, for return of the State power to the people, and for restoration of democracy and for building a Federal democratic union. The three pillars, namely, the peaceful protests, CDM, and CRPH are working hand in hand in this regard.

Federal Democracy Charter was announced on 31st March with the ultimate goal of drafting a new Federal constitution. The Charter outlines an eight-step political roadmap toward building a new Federal democratic union of Myanmar.

Accordingly, NUG was formed by the CRPH. The formation of the NUG was overwhelmingly welcomed by the people of Myanmar.

In line with the people's will, the international community's recognition and engagement with the NUG is a critical step to take and it could pave the way to end the violence, to save lives of innocent civilians, and protect them from the military brutal and inhumane acts, to restore democracy in Myanmar and provide humanitarian assistance to the people in need.

Mr. Chair, I wish to stress that Myanmar is not just witnessing another major setback to democracy but also the crisis is threatening the regional peace and security.

In line with the principle that a State has the responsibility to protect its own people from crimes against humanity, the NUG, together with the people, have taken all possible ways and means to defend our own people from the military's inhumane and brutal acts.

We ask the international community to adhere to the principle and to take the responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar from the possible crimes against humanity committed by the military terrorist group.

Taking this opportunity on behalf of the NUG and the people of Myanmar, I would like to thank the United States for your continued support. However, we need the United States to take a decisive leadership role in helping resolve the Myanmar crisis.

On behalf of the NUG and people of Myanmar, I wish to appeal to you and the House of Representatives as follows.

To save lives of innocent civilians, protection should be immediately extended to the people of Myanmar. Humanitarian assistance should be urgently provided to the people in need.

Necessary shelters should be provided to those seeking refuge in neighboring countries and elsewhere. No-fly zones should be declared in relevant areas in Myanmar. Global arms embargoes should be imposed immediately.

Targeted, coordinated, and tougher sanctions should be applied against the military. Myawaddy Bank, Innwa Bank, MFTB, and MOGE should be immediately added in the targeted sanction list. Bank accounts associated with the military and their Members should be frozen and financial inflow into the military regime and its associates should be cutoff immediately.

Foreign direct investment should be suspended. NUG should be recognized as the legitimate government. Any visa should not be issued to any diplomats appointed by State administrative council.

NUG should be allowed to use the Myanmar funds put in freeze in the U.S. for benefit of the people of Myanmar.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, we are confident that ending the murderous military regime will pave a way to finding sustainable solutions to the challenges we face related to effective protection and permissions of rights of ethnic, religious, and all other minorities and equality for all.

The people of Myanmar are resolute to achieve this goal. Time is of the essence for the people of Myanmar, who feel helpless. As such, the United States and the international community must act now decisively in a collective, concrete, and timely manner to avoid further killing of innocent civilians and further bloodshed in Myanmar.

Please do not let killing continue. Please act now. We will always remember the help and support of the United States.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tun follows:]

MYANMAR

Testimony of Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun
Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
At a hearing titled "The Unfolding Crisis in Burma"
(May 4, 2021)

Mr. Chairperson, Ranking Member, Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon and Mingalar par!

I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee for holding this important hearing on the serious situation of my country at this time, and for giving me the opportunity to appear before the esteemed committee. It is timely. I wish to express my appreciation to the House of Representatives for their deep concerns about Myanmar at this difficult time.

The situation in Myanmar is indeed an unfolding tragedy that continues to escalate overtime. The people of Myanmar are facing the military's brutality and inhumane acts day and night. Fear tends to be the order of the day and we all are living under fear. Our people do not have access to enough cash, food is becoming scarce. The efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic have been put on hold, and supply chains for medicines have all dried up. The people of Myanmar are facing serious humanitarian crisis.

I am confident that at this hearing, I can convey at best the voices of the Myanmar people and of the National Unity Government (NUG) which was formed by the authority bestowed by the mandate of the people.

2020 General Elections

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to apprise you of the brief background. Myanmar was undergoing a process of democratization and building a democratic federal union. The free and fair general elections were successfully held on November 8, 2020 which is a mile significant milestone in our history. The people of Myanmar have already shown their solid confidence on the elected Government led by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with their ballots. It is attested to by the NLD landslide victory at the elections. The civilian government has also made a very firm

determination to continue striving hard in compliance with the people's trust and confidence. Ever since the civilian government took over responsibility in 2016, it has never lost sight of the ultimate goal of establishing a peaceful and developed democratic federal union.

After the successful elections, the election observers rectified that the elections were free and fair. Many heads of states and governments and heads of the international organizations sent congratulatory messages to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party, National League for Democracy for the landslide victory at the elections.

Total ignorance of the people's desire and without any proven evidence, the military announced the result of the November 8 elections as unfair and fraudulent, and on February 1, the day that the new parliament was supposed to convene its first meeting, the military detained the State Counsellor, the President and parliamentarians in early morning raids and staged a coup. It is a systematic attack on democracy – plain and simple. The coup, even by the questionable standards of the military-drafted 2008 constitution, is illegal and the military has no lawful or legitimate basis to govern in Myanmar. The military has created so called entity "State Administration Council (SAC)" to seize power illegally.

Peaceful Protest everywhere and Violence everywhere

Mr. Chairperson,

In the wake of the February 1 military coup, as you all witnessed, the past three months have been both heart-breaking and terrifying for the Myanmar people. Millions of people came out on streets to protest against the military. The overwhelming majority of the population has rejected this illegal coup. Since the coup, there has been a significant escalation in violence, human rights violations including arbitrary arrests and torture as well as vicious and irrational brutality, inhumane acts and killings against the innocent civilians. The military has killed at least 750 civilians who have dared to voice their defiance. Majority of the victims are peaceful protesters especially young people who are our future and the future of the country. In some instances, the military killed children as young as 7 year old. In addition, the military and security forces have conducted beating protesters to death, destroying property, looting shops. This brutal repression and continued escalation of violence places Myanmar on the brink of state collapse. The military is at war with its own people – people whom they are supposed to protect. It is grave concern and strongly deplorable.

The unproportionate and indiscriminate attacks by the military have forced the civilians to leave their homes and created displacement of large number of people. Here, I wish to remind that the brutality and mass killing of the military is no doubt an existential threat of epic proportion to regional peace and security.

Mr. Chairperson,

The people of Myanmar are resilient, perseverance and unprecedentedly united in fighting against the military, in calling for release of all unlawful detainees, for return of the state power to the people and for restoration of democracy and for building a federal democratic union. The persistent protests throughout the country are taking place even in the midst of the military brutal crackdown. It is crystal clear that we all do not want to go back to the system that we used to be in before.

On 26 February, I myself took the floor at the informal meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the situation of Myanmar to stand with the people of Myanmar and express my disappointment with the military. I appealed the international community to take strongest possible action to immediately end the military coup, to stop oppressing the innocent people, to release all unlawful detainees, to return the state power to the people and to restore democracy in Myanmar.

Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)

Mr. Chairperson,

Nationwide Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) was initiated by doctors and nurses, heroes of the COVID-19 response and later widespread across the country accordingly. Teachers, shop owners, bankers and civil servants, among many others refuse to work for the regime.

It is highly deplorable that the military and security forces use the excessive force and violence against the non-violence pro-democracy movement. The CDM civil servants have been threatened in many ways and pressured to return to work. Through the military-controlled media, it was announced that the CDM doctors can be persecuted. In Magway Region, 100 workers from oil industry who joined the CDM were threatened to be charged under 505 (a) of the Penal Code, which carries a sentence of three years in prison, if they didn't return to work by 22 April. Through military-controlled media channels, a daily warrant list of individuals, politicians and public figures who speak out against the military and stand with the people for democracy, online and offline, have been announced.

The three forces are working hands in hands to end the military's brutal campaign, to call for an immediate and unconditional release of all unlawful detainees, to return state power to the people, to restore the democracy, and to create a federal democratic union. First force is the people especially our young people who are forefront and risking their lives to protest against the military. Second force is the civil servants and workers who join the Civil Disobedient

Movement, later the people at large join the CDM. Third force is the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH).

Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)

Mr. Chairperson,

Right after the military coup, on February 5,the CRPH was formed with members of parliament to resolutely perform necessary activities and duties that have been entrusted by the people as per the result of the November 2020 general elections, to ensure the unconditional release of those detained including the President and the State Counsellor, and to conduct the regular functions of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The Committee itself is fully operating in accordance with the ruled-based guidelines and has been engaging actively with the international community. Taking this opportunity, I would like to urge the United States Congress to engage extensively with the CRPH which has overwhelming support and mandate of the people as a legitimate representing body of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament).

Federal Democracy Charter

The CRPH released the Federal Democracy Charter on 31 March with the ultimate goal of drafting a new federal constitution by annulling the 2008 military-drafted constitution. The Federal Democracy Charter acts as an interim constitution while the new federal constitution is being drafted.

The Charter outlines an eight-step political roadmap towards building a new Federal Democratic Union of Myanmar, and it is a fundamental political pact which includes a roadmap of the state building process and future peace process of Myanmar. All stakeholders, including CRPH, ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), political parties, CDM participants, civil society organizations worked together in drafting the Charter. As such, I wish to highlight the fact that the Charter reflects the common interests of the people of Myanmar as a whole.

Establishment of National Unity Government of Myanmar

The National Unity Government (NUG) was formed by the CRPH on 16 April 2021, in line with the letter and spirit of the Federal Democracy Charter. The current Cabinet list includes President, State Counsellor, Vice President, Prime Minister, 11 Union Ministers, and 12 Deputy Ministers.

President U Win Myint and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remain as the same positions. The current cabinet comprises of 13 members are various ethnic nationalities, and 8 members are women. I am particularly encouraged to note that some ministers belong to young generations who have

actively participated in anti-coup resistance movement, while the others are leaders from career backgrounds, political parties and civil society organizations.

The establishment of the NUG is based on (i) the authority bestowed by the people's mandate reflecting multi-party democratic elections held in November 2020, (ii) anti-military protests and (iii) the civil disobedience movement.

On April 17, Vice President Duwa Lashi La gave an address to the people of Myanmar, affirming that (a) practical implementation of its laid-down working plans and (b) international community's recognition of the NUG are the two main goals of the NUG. On the other hand, in his statement, Prime Minister Mahn Win Khaing Thann underlined the efficiency of the CDM in breaking the government maneuver controlled by the military regime.

The formation of the NUG was overwhelmingly welcomed by the people of Myanmar. In line with the people's will, the international community's recognition and engagement with the NUG is a critical step to take and it could pave the ways to end the violence, to save lives of innocent civilians and protect from the military brutal and inhumane acts, to restore democracy in Myanmar, and most importantly provide humanitarian assistance to the people in need.

ASEAN Leaders' meeting recently held in Jakarta

Mr. Chairperson,

I wish to stress that Myanmar is not just witnessing another major setback to democracy but also the crisis that we are encountering is threatening the regional peace and security. We are of the view that ASEAN can play a constructive role in developing a coordinated policy to end the coup and the violence committed by the military while respecting desire and will of the people of Myanmar.

Here I wish to recall the statement of the Prime Minister issued on 27 April with regard to the ASEAN leaders' meeting on April 24. Prime Minister Mahn Winn Khaing Thann stated that while the NUG appreciates the support and commitment of ASEAN members states to assist Myanmar and its people, it remains greatly concerned about the military's adherence to the five-point consensus reached at the meeting. Even though those five points do not entirely reflect the current unfolding situation and the interests and will of Myanmar people, right after the meeting, the military made the announcement that it will give careful consideration to constructive suggestions when the situation returns to stability in the country. It is a clear evidence of the military's decision to walk back the limited agreement made during the meeting. There is urgent need to establish an accountable mechanism for monitoring the SAC's compliance with the five-point consensus.

The NUG, in the spirit of the ASEAN Way enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, stands ready to engage with the ASEAN envoy, the ASEAN Secretary-General and other representatives of ASEAN collectively and individually. I would like to reiterate that whenever and whatever a dialogue to aim for solving the crisis in Myanmar is convened, it must be a meaningful one. As such, our leaders and other unlawful detainees must be released unconditionally before any dialogue takes place.

Actions against CDM Diplomats

Today at this hearing, I am proud to inform you that there are at least 20 Myanmar diplomats who have declared their allegiance to the civil disobedience movement, and publicly stood in defiance against the military junta. The CDM diplomats do not recognize the military as their legitimate government and refuse to represent the regime in the international arena.

Similarly to other CDM diplomats, on 23 April, my fellow colleagues in Geneva and Washington DC were terminated from their duties by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the illegitimate State Administrative Council (SAC). On the very same day, the diplomatic passports of all CDM diplomats and their family members from Geneva, Washington DC, Tel Aviv and Ottawa were declared null and void.

While visa issuance to diplomatic staffing replacements proposed by the junta still have been under careful consideration by the European countries, we have learned that two of the illegal military junta's representatives have been granted diplomatic visas to come to the United States. I strongly urge the United States government not to issue visas or accept visa applications of those who have are slated to replace our CDM diplomats. The commitment and determination made by our CDM diplomats for democracy and end of military coup should be acknowledged and they should be encouraged. Accordingly, we are looking forwad to receiving kind consideration and strong support from the United States government in this regard.

To the United States Congress and the United States

Mr. Chairperson,

The people of Myanmar always value the consistent support extended by the U.S. Congress to our struggle for democracy, peace and national reconciliation. Taking this opportunity, on behalf of the NUG and the people of Myanmar, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the United States for being the first country to condemn the coup, imposing targeted sanctions, cutting off the military's access to the funds in the United States and above all, for the

continued support to the people of Myanmar. We also appreciate the recent U.S designation of Myanmar for Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

At the same time, we need the United States to take a decisive leadership role in helping resolve the Myanmar crisis, now more than ever. The United States must lead the way.

I hereby would like to urge the United States to take additional coordinated tougher measures against the military and the SAC, working together with other countries in the region and like-minded countries, to end the coup and the brutal repression by the Military against the unarmed civilians. Our request will remain until the democratically elected government is restored in Myanmar. The people of Myanmar inside and outside the country are working together and utilizing all possible ways and means to end the military coup and build a federal democratic union. Unwavering support and strong assistance from the international community is imperative and utmost needed in this regard.

On behalf of the NUG and the people of Myanmar, I wish to appeal to you and the House of Representatives as follows:

1) To save lives of innocent civilians, protection should be immediately extended to the people of Myanmar from brutal and inhumane acts committed by the military.
2) Humanitarian assistance should be urgently provided to people in need by applying all means.
3) Demands should be made to the countries concerned to provide necessary shelter, taking into account of the humanitarian ground, to those seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and elsewhere and necessary assistance be provided.
4) Work with relevant countries to declare no-fly-zone in relevant areas in Myanmar to avoid further bloodshed caused by the military airstrikes on civilian areas.
5) Global Arms embargo should be imposed immediately against the military.
6) Targeted, coordinated and tougher sanctions should be applied against the military, its businesses and their families and their businesses.
7) Bank accounts associated with the military and their members should be frozen and financial inflows into the military regime and its associates should be cut off instantly, and urge other countries to do so.
8) Foreign direct investment should be suspended until such time as the democratically elected government is restored in Myanmar.

In addition, all official engagement from the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States should direct to the CRPH as a legislative body. I

would like to request the United States that to respect the will of the people, the NUG should be recognized as a legitimate government of Myanmar. Accordingly, the United States should allow the NUG to use the Myanmar funds put in freeze in the US for the people of Myanmar who are dire need for humanitarian assistance and their survival.

Furthermore, I wish to call on the United States to appoint a special envoy for Myanmar aiming at ending the crisis and restoring democracy in close cooperation with like-minded countries, countries in the region especially with ASEAN. While the people of Myanmar appreciate imposing targeted sanctions of the United States, we need more collective, concrete and unified action initiated by the United States. We have to accept the fact that imposing sanctions alone is not enough and issuing statements alone is not enough.

Let me repeat the words of Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US Permanent Representative to UN, said at the UNSC Arria-formula meeting on Myanmar on 9 April. "The military needs to feel the costs associated with its horrific actions. The stability and prosperity of the region depends on swift action. To me, the answer is clear. We have to act." I fully agree with her.

In conclusion, **Mr. Chairperson**, the Myanmar people's desire is vividly clear that we want to build a nation where all the democratic values can be flourished, a place where each and every peace loving individual can play a role in that nation building. We are confident that ending the murderous military regime and the military role in politics and economy will pave a way to finding sustainable solutions to the challenges we face related to the effective protection and promotion of rights of ethnic, religious and all other minorities and equality for all. The people of Myanmar are resolute to achieve these goals. Time is of the essence for the people of Myanmar who feel helpless. Decisive and tough actions are imperative and needed immediately. The US and the international community must act now decisively in a collective, concrete, unified and timely manner to avoid further killing of innocent civilians and further bloodshed in Myanmar. Please act now. We will always remember the help and support of the United States at our utmost hour of need.

I thank you.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

I now recognize Ms. Khin Ohmar for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF KHIN OHMAR, FOUNDER AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE ADVISORY BOARD, PROGRESSIVE VOICE

Ms. OHMAR. Mr. Chairman, distinguished committee Members, thank you for inviting me to speak to you on the tragic events unfolding in my home country, Burma, and for holding today's hearing.

I would like to thank the U.S. Government for your ongoing support to realize our long-fought aspiration for a Federal democracy. The following is a summary of my full statement.

I'm here to share the realities on the ground, the untold suffering of the people, and appeal for swift action against the brutal Burmese military junta.

I appeal to you as a survivor of 1988's brutal coup led by the same military responsible for today's coup, and as someone who still yearns for a true Federal democracy in her homeland.

In 1995, I testified before the U.S. Senate detailing the fatal crackdowns in 1988. I come before you today nearly 30 years later to describe yet another dark and devastating chapter in Burma's history.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, since February 1st, millions of people from all walks of life across Burma, including police and soldiers, have come together to reject the military's unlawful coup attempt.

The civil disobedience movement has effectively prevented the military from controlling the administration of government, banks, hospitals, and other sectors. We can thus say that the attempted coup is failing.

In response, the junta has launched a nationwide campaign of terror attempting to force people into submission using any means necessary. Peaceful protest has been met with murderous and indiscriminate violence, including execution-style killings and the use of heavy military weaponry.

The deadliest single day of bloodshed occurred on March 27th with the mass murder of 169 unarmed civilians. Every day the violence and death continue. At least 766 people have been killed and over 4,600 arbitrarily arrested.

All of this is conducted with complete impunity. The junta has also added new laws to criminalize protesters, including sentencing 19 protesters to death. They're also deliberately destroying the evidence of their crimes, such as by removing bullets from those they have killed before stitching them back together.

Often cash is demanded from the victim's family in exchange for the bodies to be returned. And they're not just taking lives. They are destroying houses, private property, and food stores at random and robbing people of their cell phones, computers, and motorcycles.

Torture and beatings in detention are commonplace, with no access to legal representation or contact with families. For women and LGBTIQ, the situation is far worse with reports of rape, sexual violence, and psychological abuse.

Sexual and gender-based violence has long been used by the Burma military as a weapon of war against ethnic nationalities to terrorize them into submission. They have murdered at least 51 children, including those in their homes and playing in the streets.

Abduction and torture of family Members, including children as young as two, are increasing. Since the end of March, they've launched air strikes in Karen and Kachin States.

In the last week of April alone, there were 68 air strikes. This has led to the displacement of over 45,000 people and killing of at least 20. Furthermore, people are fleeing into ethnic areas, exacerbating a humanitarian crisis that was already teetering toward catastrophe before the coup.

The U.N. warns of a slow-burning food crisis. Severe restrictions on freedom of movement and information are being imposed, including nationwide internet cuts and declaration of martial law in some townships, sending Burma back into darkness.

Mr. Chairman, in spite of such brute force and violence, the people of Burma continue with their daily protest, standing firm in their defiance against this illegitimate military junta and in their support for—in their support of their legitimate government, the National Unity Government.

They ask for the international community, including this legislative body, to do all they can to recognize and support the NUG.

I appeal to this Congress and the Biden Administration to stop the flow of oil and gas revenues from Chevron to this unlawful military junta, impose a comprehensive embargo on the transfer or sale of military arms and equipment, including dual-use goods, continue to impose and enforce targeted sanctions aimed at the military and their business interests, and support efforts to hold the military to account under international law for their atrocity crimes, including for the Rohingya genocide in 2017.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to, once again, thank you and the Members of the committee for allowing me to testify today. I'll close my statement with this. Today's violence and atrocities are only possible because of a lack of accountability for the past crimes.

There can be no democratic and peaceful Burma unless this military is held to account and placed under total civilian control.

I've spent the past 32 years trying to bring about democratic change in Burma. I'll continue to fight for the people.

But drawing on my decades of experience, I know that the people of Burma need concrete actions from you and the broader international community. There's this unprecedented window of opportunity that the people of Burma, so many of them young, have created by sacrificing their lives to topple this military junta once and for all.

We must not allow it to slip through our fingers. I look forward to your concrete and swift action and answering your questions today. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ohmar follows:]

Name: Ms. Khin Ohmar
Title and organizational affiliation: Founder and Chairperson of the Advisory Board of Progressive Voice
Name of the Committee: House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Date and title of the hearing at which you are testifying: 1:00pm EDT on Tuesday, May 4, 2021.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished committee members,

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak to you today on the crisis and the grave tragedy unfolding in Burma. Firstly, I would like to thank the United States government for the concerted efforts to end the Myanmar military's unlawful coup and terror campaign against the people of Burma, and the support it has offered for the people of Burma to realize their long-fought dream to achieve a federal democracy. We are truly grateful for these efforts.

By way of introduction, my name is Khin Ohmar, Founder and Chairperson of the Advisory Board of Progressive Voice. Progressive Voice is a human rights research and advocacy organization, working to amplify the voices of vulnerable, marginalized, and disenfranchised communities of Burma. We work in partnership with civil society organizations across the country working on a range of issues from human rights protection and humanitarian aid provision to ethnic and religious minority rights, land rights, labor rights and sustainable development.

I am here today to share the realities on the ground, to impart on you the untold suffering that my people are experiencing, and appeal to you to accelerate your efforts in taking swift actions to address the dire situation in Burma. There is an urgent need for a coordinated and unified international effort to apply further external pressure to end the brutality of the illegal junta. I appeal to you as someone who was on the ground in Burma during the last coup, staged by the same military in 1988, and as one of the many organizers of the previous democracy movement who still yearns for a true democracy in her homeland.

In 1988, when the Myanmar military brutally cracked down on pro-democracy protesters, an estimated 3,000 protesters were brutally shot and killed. Similar to the situation of current protesters, myself and many thousands of other protesters had to flee our homes to the ethnic areas under the control and administration of various ethnic armed revolutionary governments, such as Karen National Union, for protection. Many of my dear friends spent more than 20 years of their life in prison and some tragically died there. In 1990, I came to United States as a political refugee and since then have continued my life-long commitment and dream of achieving democracy in my mother land, based in exile. In 1995, I testified before the US Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Operations giving my account of the fatal crackdowns in 1988 and the violence and oppression that occurred since.

When Burma opened up in 2012, I was given a visa to return with the ostensible promise from the quasi-civilian military-led government that I would be able to continue my work on democracy and human rights. Unfortunately, I instead experienced heavy surveillance, threats and harassment by the military and police intelligence and severe restrictions on my work. Ultimately, the situation deteriorated to a point which led me to leave Burma again to live in exile. With 32 years of continual work in Burma's struggle for democracy, I have a deep and profound understanding of how crucial this period is in deciding the shape of the future of Burma that is free from the tyranny of this brutal military.

For the past decade of Burma's opening to the world, the people were cautiously optimistic for the democratic transition to become genuine and substantial under the military guided "disciplined

democracy". Unfortunately, the February 1 coup de tat' was a wakeup call loud and clear that the military never intended to give up their power. Now we are at a crossroads.

"To abolish the military dictatorship is our cause!" This is the slogan by the people's Spring Revolution movement with its objectives clear.

Situation on the Ground

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I would like to now give an overview of the current situation on the ground in Myanmar. Since the unlawful coup attempt by the military on February 1st, millions of peaceful protesters have taken to the streets to protest the military junta. People from all walks of life across nearly all geographical areas of Burma have come together to reject and dismantle this attempted coup by the junta, standing firm in their defiance and resistance. The civil disobedience movement, which started immediately after the coup by doctors and factory workers quickly expanded to civil servants and public and private sector workers, including members of the police force and some soldiers, and has effectively prevented the military from controlling the administration, banks, hospitals, and other sectors. To this point, the attempted coup is failing.

Protests have been led and organized daily by a new generation of youth who are much more connected to the rest of the world, particularly through social media, than in my student days in 1988. They have also been more creative and imaginative and more perseverant and defiant than we were in 1988. Professional journalists and citizen journalists alike have played a major role in documenting the evidence of military brutalities and letting the world know what is happening to them. The outright rejection of the military that people expressed in the November 2020 elections and now in the protest movement, is also helping to build unity and connections among the different parts of Myanmar's diverse population, strengthening the country's social fabric by sharing and caring for one another. For the past ten years, and in spite of being under the military-dominated civic space, they have had connections to the outside world and tasted some freedom that we did not have in 1988. This military coup suddenly took away the futures they had dreamed for themselves. These resilient and brave young protestors are not about to let those dreams go so easily.

Despise this, the military are again showing their true face. The junta launched a nationwide campaign of brutality since its attempted coup, as they commit crimes against humanity by systematically murdering, forcibly disappearing, torturing, and imprisoning innocent people throughout the country. This only adds to their violent history which they have built as perpetrators of atrocity crimes for many decades. Freedom of information and expression has also been severely curbed by the nationwide internet cuts which has been imposed for over 70 consecutive nights, placing Burma back into the darkness. Such daily internet cuts have continued daily from 1:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M., while curfew has been imposed from 8:00 P.M. to 4:00 A.M. Phone data services have been cut since March 14, 2021 and Wi-Fi has been cut since April 1, 2021, while social media services like Facebook and Twitter have been blocked, which for many are a lifeline to the outside world.

The protesters, bystanders, and people in their homes, have been met with indiscriminate violence and an absolute all-out war. Against unarmed civilians, the junta has used war zone weapons, including snipers, grenades, and semiautomatic machineguns – terrorizing the Burmese people without remorse. The killings have included execution style killings, aimed at the head – a tactic that has been publicly announced by the junta as a clear warning and threat to the people. The cruel reality is that they are more than just threats.

The deadliest attack occurred on March 27, 2021. While the illegitimate junta enjoyed fireworks and parades in the capital commemorating Armed Forces Day, police and soldiers committed the

mass murder of 169 unarmed peaceful protesters and civilians. This single-minded focus on killing is intended to create terror and weaponize their impunity to force the people of Burma into submission, using any means necessary in order to gain a semblance of control. Throughout decades of war waged against ethnic nationalities, the military raped and killed women to terrorize ethnic communities into submission. Now it appears they are targeting children and women for the same reason.

The military are also deliberately destroying the evidence of their heinous crimes. Injured or dead bodies have been swiftly carried away by the military and police and, in some cases, when dead bodies are returned the next day there were clear signs that they had been cut up, opened, and stitched back together, possibly to remove evidence of the cause of death. In some cases, cash is demanded from the families in order for the bodies to be returned to their loved ones. The military are not only extorting from the families of those murdered, but they are also looting cell phones, computers, motorcycles, and destroying houses, private property, and food stores at random. They have indiscriminately shot into houses and have set fires to buildings in acts of arson. They are also utilizing the age-old tactic of civilian informers, including street children, in order to step up their arrests. This is all aimed to further crack down on the movement.

Currently, 756 people have been killed, with 4,500 arbitrarily arrested and 3,441 remain in arbitrary detention according to the latest data from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Detainees include State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint from the National League for Democracy, who won a landslide victory in the recent November 8, 2020 elections. Most of those in detention are protesters, human rights defenders and journalists arbitrarily arrested during protests or abducted from their homes and often under the cover of night.

Conditions within detention centers are grim, as those detained do not have any contact with the outside world. Some are taken to interrogation centers where they are tortured and beaten with no access to legal representation or contact with their families. For women detainees the situation is far worse. There have been credible reports of rape, sexual and gender-based violence, sexual assaults and psychological abuse and torture. Last week, Radio Free Asia reported on one woman detainee, Khin Nyein Thu, being held at an interrogation center at Shwepyitha Township. She was brutally tortured, beaten with a metal pipe, kicked in her groin, and sexually assaulted by soldiers. A disturbing pair of photographs of her before and after abduction were plastered on the junta's propaganda TV station, MWTV, showing her virtually unrecognizable beaten face. Incidents like this illustrates the extreme cruelty of the military, especially towards women. In addition to this account, there are reports of security forces groping women, manhandling, and humiliating them – such as forcing them to dance in the street for their entertainment. The legitimate, interim government of Myanmar – the National Unity Government – has received many reports of such sexual violence committed by the junta's security forces, and its Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children's Affairs has stated its commitment to ending violence against women and to ensure justice and accountability.

Sexual and gender-based violence has long been used by the Burma military as a tool of warfare. This has been well documented by local ethnic women organizations and evidenced at length in the findings of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, which described the Burma military as committing routine and systematic acts of sexual violence against ethnic women. Justice and accountability for these crimes, and other atrocity crimes, has not been dealt, and perpetrators continue to remain free, enjoying total impunity.

I want to draw the Committee's attention to some of the most vulnerable, including women, children, the disabled and members of the LGBTQ community. The junta's brutality knows no

limits and have targeted these groups as a tactic of oppression for submission. They have murdered at least 51 children since the start of the coup - including children in their homes and those playing in the street. One such case is 6-year-old Khin Myo Chit. Her name means "Patriotic girl". She was from the Muslim community in Mandalay region. She was shot by security forces who raided her home in Mandalay on March 24, 2021 dying in her father's arms. Her injured brother was taken away. Her family had to quickly remove her body from the home and go into hiding. As many in Burma are aware, security forces are returning to the scene of their crimes in order to extract evidence, such as bullets from victims' bodies. In another disturbing incident, security forces kidnapped a 4-year-old daughter and 2-year-old nephew of a National League for Democracy official, Jar Lay, in a disgusting and villainous act to elicit his whereabouts, using children as pawns. There are many similar cases of family members being abducted if authorities do not find their intended target.

In the face of these horrific events, people are determined to rid the country of the junta, but often at great cost. The junta is bleeding money from the government's coffers and the reserve bank in an attempt to bankroll their massacres. Burma is on the brink of economic collapse and the UN warns of a slow burning food crisis. The UN Development Programme has also warned that, combined with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, 12 million more people could fall into poverty. Despite this, brave young men and women are taking to the streets to protest, while civil servants continue striking and refusing to take orders from an illegitimate junta, which means they have not received a paycheck since the end of February. Some civil servants who bravely participated in the civil disobedience movement have been kicked out of their public housing. Still, these brave men and women carry on with their resistance and defiance in the face of extreme violence because the alternative is far worse.

While men, women and children are being killed in the streets and their homes, the unlawful junta has been launching airstrikes in Karen and Kachin States. In Karen State, these air strikes target villages, schools and health clinics – in breach of the Geneva Convention. This has led to the displacement of between 45,000 and 50,000 people, with 20 civilians killed as a result of these airstrikes since the end of March.

For ethnic people, including many of these displaced Karen villagers, this is an all too familiar situation. Decades of civil war – perpetrated by the same military – has caused these ethnic communities to be displaced from their homes multiple times – some throughout their lives. Many Karen people remain over the border in Thailand, displaced since the 1990s due to the military's ethnic cleansing campaign against the Karen people, unable to return to their mother land, known as *Kawthoolei*. They too are in a situation where aid is dwindling and livelihood opportunities non-existent.

Other ethnic areas of Burma remain food insecure and reliant on international aid, which is running out due to difficulties in reaching those in need due to the junta's ongoing attacks. Through cycles of violent conflict over decades, the Burma military has been waging war against ethnic armed revolutionary organizations along Burma's borderlands, which was most recently heavily focused on Rakhine State and has now shifted back to Karen and Kachin States. In Rakhine State, the humanitarian crisis – partly caused by conflict between 2018 – 2020, is becoming extreme and already before the coup over 100,000 Rakhine people were living in IDP camps. Rohingya and other Muslim minorities in Rakhine State continue to live in apartheid-like conditions resembling open-air prisons, confined to IDP camps, unable to move freely, and without access to basic necessities like food and adequate shelter.

Another pressing issue in Burma is the civic space. Martial Law has been imposed in some townships in two major cities while restrictions on freedom of movement have been increased. Civil

society and charity organizations' offices and homes of members have been raided, and members have been arrested. More than 1,276 arrest warrants have been issued, including for celebrities who have joined or shown their support to the people's movement. The junta has revived the death penalty and expanded a list of so-called crimes to charge and convict civilians by court martial. So far, 19 protesters have been sentenced to death.

Over 56 journalists have been arbitrarily arrested since February 1, 2021, and many media outlets have been banned by order of the junta. Civic space for free discourse has been effectively shut down, with the junta widening their efforts to stamp out free speech. For example, on April 8, 2021, the founder of local news outlet Mizzima and women's right activist, Thin Thin Aung was abducted from Yangon and taken to the notorious Yay Kyi Ai military interrogation center. In addition to this, Mizzima's offices were raided, with their computers and server taken and their journalism license revoked.

In addition to protesters and members of civil disobedience movement, journalists and civil society actors have also been forced into hiding, unable to continue their vital work. Some have not been so lucky, such as prominent woman's rights activist and director of Women For Justice, Ah Khu, who was gunned down and killed in a drive-by shooting by two plainclothes gunmen from the security forces during a protest in the small town of Kale in Chin State.

Many protesters, human rights activists and journalists have been seeking refuge in ethnic areas, in order to evade arrest. Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe, the newly appointed Minister of Women, Youth and Children for the National Unity Government fled her home in the city after she heard security forces outside her home coming to arrest her. She then fled to Karen State where she had to flee a second time due to airstrikes. Many will look to fleeing the oppressive tactics of the Myanmar military and cross the border to neighboring countries to seek safety. These people will require support and protection from the international community. To make matters worse, all this is taking place during a global pandemic, where all efforts to manage COVID-19 have been stalled due to the illegal and brutal coup. The already strained poor health system has been crippled by the coup.

How Can the U.S. and International Community Help?

Under these dire conditions, how can the international community, and the United States government support and assist the people of Burma? One concrete action the international community can take is to cut the junta off financially. We are grateful to President Biden and his Administration for freezing U.S. $1 billion in Burmese government assets, which the junta is not able to touch. However, many foreign businesses and investors continue to fund the illegal junta through their enterprises and affiliated businesses. Over 400 Myanmar CSOs sent two open letters to oil and gas giants Chevron and Total to halt payments to the Myanmar military, and hold these payments in a protected account until a legitimate, democratic government takes power. Currently the payments are being made to the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, which falls under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy. However, since the coup, all government bank accounts are under the illegal control of the junta. We are deeply disappointed these companies have done nothing to support the people's calls to end payments to the junta and encourage this Congress, and the Biden Administration, to do more to pressure an end to any such payments funding the atrocities I have described today.

I wish to turn the Committee's attention to the legitimate interim government, the National Unity Government. The NUG was formed with the representation of 76% of elected MPs from the November 8, 2020 elections and participation of numerous ethnic political parties, ethnic armed revolutionary organizations, and mass protest movements. The will of the people is with the National Unity Government, as an interim body. All people, of all ethnicities and religions are calling for a genuine federal democracy that rejects all aspects of military involvement in politics as

well as the economy. For the junta to be stopped and for the National Unity Government to be assisted in their quest for federal democracy, this requires the recognition and staunch support from the international community in order to fulfill their mandate from the people to fully represent the Myanmar state and its people.

Therefore, we were disappointed in ASEAN's decision to not invite the legitimate government representing the people of Myanmar to its Special ASEAN Summit on Myanmar last month. Instead, the invitation to their meeting was extended to the leader of the coup, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, who is sanctioned by the US and stands accused of committing the crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes – evidence of which is laid out by the Human Rights Council mandated Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.

A five point "consensus" which was reached during the summit begins with the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar. However, without the inclusion of the NUG representing the people of Myanmar, such "consensus" is contested. Furthermore, since the ASEAN summit, the Myanmar military has only intensified airstrikes in Karen and Kachin States, displacing thousands more. Over 41 airstrikes have been conducted against civilians in six days alone. The military has arrested nearly 100 people and issued a further 138 arrest warrants since the ASEAN meeting. This, coupled with the military's press release dated April 26 stating that it will only "give careful consideration to constructive suggestions made by ASEAN Leaders" indicates it will hold in total disregard the points it agreed to at the Jakarta Summit until it has brutally wiped out all opposition to its illegitimate power grab. The world must not be fooled by such empty agreements that further delay the real actions that people in Myanmar critically need.

Burma's civil society organizations and grassroots organizations, including the organization that I Chair - Progressive Voice - have been persistently pushing for the United Nations, particularly the Security Council and Secretary General, and the broader international community, to take collective action against the unlawful junta, such as an arms embargo, targeted sanctions on military businesses and affiliated businesses, and to recognize the National Unity Government. However, these calls have not yet been heeded. Progress on action has been too slow. Statements too many.

The military junta continues to act with ferocity and cruelty because of the decades of impunity that has been allowed to go unchecked. Thus, we strongly feel the situation in Burma must be referred to the International Criminal Court or an ad hoc tribunal be commissioned to hold the perpetrators to account and bring about justice for the victims and survivors of the junta's crimes, including the decades of atrocity crimes committed against ethnic peoples, as well as for the Rohingya genocide.

The people of Burma are calling for the Responsibility to Protect doctrine to be used for Burma to protect them from this ruthless junta. There is a complete lack of rule of law and lack of human security. In Burma, no one is safe. Civil society organizations are calling for coordination between the UN Security Council and UN Human Rights Council to send a joint delegation to monitor the situation and stop the violence across Burma. This is part of the international community's responsibility under the UN Charter – collective global peace and security and to protect against grave human rights violations. This external response is needed to support the internal people's movement on the ground, so the people of Burma can once and for all relinquish the military's power and end its violence, paving the way to realize a genuine federal democracy, that guarantees equality and self-determination and protection of human rights of all people in Burma.

I would like to convey to you what a colleague in Burma has shared with me:
"...external support forces may not come, like R2P. We the people of Myanmar have to fight guns by guns. There will be civil wars between the military junta and the civilians. Many young lives will be scarified in this revolution because the only option we have to remove the military totally

from the Myanmar politics is that we have to fight this junta with arms. At the present most of the protest leaders, who are now in military training at remote areas, are students, teachers, doctors, and many professionals. We have to lose some of them in the coming battles, but we cannot replace them easily in the post revolution."

The international community must act before further lives are lost and Burma becomes a complete failed state.

I want to instill this clear message. In order for the junta to be stopped and for democracy to prevail, the international community must unify against this illegitimate military junta and rally around the National Unity Government, recognizing their legitimacy – as mandated by the people. Urgent interventions and actions must be applied. The United States, through the legislative powers of this Committee and this legislative body, must play a key role in effectuating this outcome.

The Myanmar military fear the targeting of their economic interests and the possibility of being held to account for their crimes. The current UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma, and a former U.S. Congressman from Maine, Mr. Tom Andrews, has described the junta's violence as leading to crimes against humanity and urged for a coalition of states to cut off the flow of revenue and weapons to the junta. In this regard, the U.S. Government has been strategic in imposing targeted sanctions against military business interests, in particular the two military conglomerates (MEC and MEHL), as well as the Myanmar state-owned gems enterprise. We thank you for this. We hope the USG will take the further steps to stop the flow of oil and gas revenues to this junta. In addition, it is equally important and essential to impose a comprehensive embargo on the transfer or sale of military arms and equipment, including dual used goods. Finally, the U.S. Government must support international community's efforts to hold the junta to account by international law.

Mr. Chairperson, in closing I would like to once again thank you and the members of the committee for allowing me to testify on the gravely deteriorating situation in Burma and close with this: today's violence and atrocities is only possible because of a complete lack of accountability for the heinous crimes of the past. Their actions today speak clearly and loudly that this military enjoys blanket impunity that they are fully confident that they can do anything, no matter how horrendous it is. There can be no democratic and peaceful future for the people of Burma, without the military placed under civilian control, holding them accountable for their crimes and allowing the people to heal. Burma has been torn deeply. A proper healing process is needed to rebuild and move forward.

We have a long way to go. I have spent the past 32 years trying to bring about democratic change in Burma. I will continue to do all I can to the best of my capability. But I do know for sure from my life experience, that without your help – help from the international community – I am desperately worried that we may lose the last best chance that the people, so many of them young, have created by sacrificing their lives. I look forward to your wisdom and hope for concrete and swift actions. Thank you.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you, Ms. Khin Ohmar.
I now recognize Ambassador Currie for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF KELLEY CURRIE, FORMER AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE FOR GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you, Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, and the rest of the committee for the opportunity to appear before you today with my distinguished co-panelists.

In the midst of all the devastation and cruelty that you've heard about from the previous speakers, Burma's spring revolution has actually been characterized by this incredible optimism, creativity, public spiritedness, and this amazing inclusiveness that's, largely, been lacking in previous movements.

And it's this dynamic that I want to speak to a little bit today, because the way that the CDM and protest movements have cut across class, geographic, ethnic, religious, and generational distinctions in unprecedented ways gives me a lot of hope for where things are actually headed if we can break the circuit on violence that's currently accelerating across the country.

The ethnic nationalities of women who have played increasingly critical and leadership roles in this movement have opened up long suppressed dialogs on key societal issues at the same time they're fighting a military junta.

This is really unprecedented, and it's this increased awareness of and empathy for the situation of the ethnic people among the majority Bamar protesters that's one of the most important features of what is happening today and one that I think we need to look at as a critical element, going forward, as we analyze our own policy prescriptions.

You've heard from my colleagues about the unprecedented combination of persistent nationwide protests and nonparticipation through the civil disobedience movement and how this has tested the junta's ability to retain effective control of the country.

And I think this is also important, especially as we look at what the young people are doing, how their savvy digital native kind of behavior has allowed the whole movement to stay a half step ahead of the junta as they cutoff internet access and tried to censor content.

Instead, these groups have been able to keep the content flowing into the global and regional media, and they've been really connected with regional activists and to the Milk Tea Alliance, and have created this—have been part of this very creative regional network. That is another thing that we can build on with our own policy approaches.

As we pass the 3-month mark, though, I think that we are seeing that the conflict is starting to morph into a new phase and we need to be very conscious of this.

In recent weeks, as my colleagues mentioned, we have seen this effort by the democratic and ethnic nationality forces to come together to disavow the military-drafted 2008 constitution, to issue a new Federal Democratic Charter, to appoint a new National Unity Government that is among the most diverse cabinet in the country's history.

There's also a lot of anecdotal evidence, however, that young people are giving up on nonviolent struggle and are joining up with the ethnic armed organizations with the intent to form the basis of a new Federal army to support the National Unity Government, and the National Unity Government itself has been very open about its intentions there and what they want to do.

The Tatmadaw has, of course, responded with more violence, and so we see this increasingly likely scenario of Balkanization and State failure, especially when you understand that there are so many well-armed groups in the country and that have never operated under effective State control.

And this is a really critical element, again, as we think about what U.S. policy should be, going forward, and how we should respond.

We have seen that the international community, instead of reacting appropriately to the situation, has delegated the international response to one of the weakest regional organizations in the world, the Association of Southeast Asian States, ASEAN, and left to its own devices, we saw what happened with that where the five-point consensus that came out of a special summit in Jakarta recently has utterly failed. The junta had disavowed it and violated it before Min Aung Hlaing even returned back to Burma from Jakarta.

And the United Nations has been no better, frankly. The Security Council has absolutely failed in its responsibilities to support international—to protect and promote international peace and security.

As the penholder on Burma, the United Kingdom has been reluctant to table a resolution, reportedly out of fear of joint Chinese and Russian vetoes, and frustration with the Council on the ground is growing as well as within the ranks of the United Nations, who are looking at alternatives to the Security Council.

So I think that there are a number of things that—in my last minute here that we can highlight and I'm happy to go into more detail on in the Q&A about where the U.S. can and should encourage its allies to take action around three key issues.

One is around recognition and legitimacy, and things that we can do relatively low cost to support the National Unity Government, cutting off the junta's money supply, which you've heard from my colleagues about a little bit, and then moving on a Security Council, which would also include accountability issues.

So, again, I'm happy to talk about more of those things during the Q&A and get into some of the details. They're also found in my written testimony, which has been submitted to the committee.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Currie follows:]

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
"The Unfolding Crisis in Burma"
May 4, 2021

Testimony of Kelley E. Currie

Thank you Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, and the rest of the Committee for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today on this timely and important topic.

The past three months been both traumatic and transformative for the Burmese people. Since their February 1 coup, the Burmese armed forces – the Tatmadaw – have cemented their place among the ranks of the most brutal and recalcitrant thugs on the planet. But this is a reputation they have been building for the past seven decades through their relentless effort to control Burma's physical, political, economic, cultural, and even psychic domains. After ten years of expanding freedom and openness, the February coup was a devastating setback to the Burmese people's aspirations to permanently leave behind a legacy of direct military rule. As the Burmese people have strongly resisted the coup, hundreds of innocent people have been killed; thousands have been unjustly arrested; and millions of dreams have been snuffed out -- all due to Min Aung Hlaing's vanity and arrogance. While the Burmese people's awe-inspiring bravery and defiance in the face of brutal and sustained violence has earned them regional and global admiration and support, this support has yet to translate into meaningful action. It is this failure to move from concern to action that I will address today.

Burma's "Spring Revolution" has been characterized by optimism, creativity, public-spiritedness, and inclusion. From stay-at-home days and pot-banging nights, through the open confrontations between protestors and armed troops, the movement's creativity and bravery has inspired their fellow citizens to join at various levels in resisting and undermining the regime's authority. The combination of persistent, nationwide street protests and the active non-participation of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) have tested the junta's ability to retain effective control of the country. The CDM and protest movement cut across class, geographic, ethnic, religious, and generational lines in unprecedented ways. Their organizational structures are flat, flexible, and decentralized. Ethnic nationalities and women play critical roles as organizers and frontline leaders, not only inspiring clever protest memes but also opening up long-suppressed dialogues on key societal issues. Increased awareness of and empathy for the situation of ethnic people among the mostly urban Bamar protestors has been one of the most remarkable and important features of this resistance movement.

As savvy digital natives, the Generation Z cohort has helped the whole movement to stay one step ahead of the junta's Internet outages and censorship efforts while generating viral content that flows into regional and global media feeds. This tech fluency and networking prowess has also allowed them to connect with and learn from fellow democracy activists across the region, adding to the burgeoning "Milk Tea Alliance." The movement's diversity and inclusiveness, together with a lack of personality-based or leader-driven structures, theoretically should make it harder for the Tatmadaw to divide or decapitate and easier for its participants to sustain.

As we pass the three-month mark since the coup, this conflict between the Burmese people and the Tatmadaw appears to be entering a new phase. After initially showing some restraint as protests grew, the Tatmadaw ratcheted up the level of violence and deployed its usual tools to instill fear across the population: mass arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, and both random and targeted killings. When this failed to quell resistance, the junta began enforcing martial law across the country's major urban areas.

The democratic and ethnic forces have responded by disavowing the military-drafted 2008 constitution, issuing their own federal democratic charter, and appointing an interim National Unity Government (NUG) that is among the most diverse in the country's history. There is also anecdotal evidence that young people are increasingly looking to join up with ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and that these groups will form the basis of a new federal army loyal to the NUG. The NUG itself has been open about its intention to form such a federal army, with or without the Tatmadaw. The Tatmadaw has responded to these developments by ramping up attacks in ethnic areas, targeting communities that have aligned with pro-democracy movement. The Tatmadaw is reportedly taking heavy casualties in these conflicts, and ethnic armed groups report large numbers of surrendering POWs as well as posts and bases being abandoned by junta forces. Nonetheless, conflict areas have seen some of the worst impacts of the crisis. With unreliable troops on the frontlines, the junta has expanded the use of fixed-wing aircraft, UAVs, and distance-based heavy weaponry to indiscriminately attack civilian areas while simultaneously cutting off humanitarian access.

Under the current dynamic, Burma is likely to become increasingly ungovernable and violent. To date, the junta's violence has primarily served to solidify the domestic opposition, but the current level of violence remains relatively low by historical Tatmadaw standards. Increased violence is likely and, based on current trends, will likely drive the democratic forces further away from reliance on non-violent strategies. Given Burma's history of internal conflict and the presence of so many well-armed militias that operate under varying levels of state control, Balkanization and Syria-style state failure appear increasingly likely scenarios absent some circuit breaker.

Yet, to date, the international community's response to this crisis has been underwhelming. Urgent and decisive action is needed to change the current trajectory and give the Burmese people a chance at a real democratic transition and genuine nation-building, but instead the weak-willed and notoriously ineffective Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been tasked with leading toward a solution. Left to its own devices, ASEAN is unlikely to go beyond the disappointing efforts at the recent Jakarta special summit. A case in point is ASEAN's decision not to invite participation by the National Unity Government while coup leader Min Aung Hlaing was treated as Burma's *de facto* head of state. The weak Five Point Consensus that emerged from the special session was ridiculed by Burmese civil society, not least because the junta had disavowed and violated it before the ink was even dry.

The situation with the United Nations is no better. The Security Council has failed to hold a formal public meeting on Burma three months into the crisis, and there remain deep internal divisions even among the like-minded countries about the wisdom of putting forward a resolution in an open session. As the official "penholder" on Burma in the Council, the UK has been extraordinarily reticent to table a resolution, reportedly out of fear of a joint Chinese and

Russian veto. Beyond that, it is unclear what their strategy is and, unfortunately, countries that would normally demand action and accountability are following London's non-lead. Frustration with Council inaction has fueled growing talk of invoking the provisions of the UN Charter that allow the General Assembly to address an issue of international peace and security when the Security Council is unable or unwilling to act.

But within this troubled landscape, the Biden administration has opportunities to lead and inject some seriousness into the floundering international response. The United States should focus efforts to lead the international response around several key pillars:

Recognition and Legitimacy. The junta craves legitimacy; the United States and its allies must do everything they can to deny it what it craves and bolster the nascent state-building efforts underway by the National Unity Government. The US must continue to speak clearly and openly about the illegitimacy of the coup. Our initial leadership in calling the coup by its right name caused other countries followed. Using regular diplomatic and public diplomacy channels, the United States must work with its allies to persistently object to situations where junta representatives are treated as legitimate representatives of the Burmese people or state. Specifically, the US and its allies should:

- Refuse to provide *agrement* to junta-appointed diplomats and expel Burmese military attaches who are currently terrorizing their embassy colleagues who attempt to oppose the coup;
- Object if junta-appointed representatives attempt to take the floor in UN bodies such as the Human Rights Council to the UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific (ESCAP); and
- Work with the current permanent representative in NY to ensure he is well-positioned to withstand an attack on his credentials for the upcoming UNGA session, providing legal assistance if necessary.

At the same time, the US and other countries should help the NUG encourage loyalty to and support for its efforts by aiding those Burmese embassy staff who espouse loyalty to the NUG. The U.S. has extended Temporary Protective Status for Burmese visa holders and is engaging with Burmese diplomats who are supporting the NUG, but right now this is not being done systematically across other countries. As part of this effort towards formal recognition, like-minded countries should be working with the NUG to incorporate accountability on the August 2017 atrocities against the Rohingya into their official platform, and outline a more serious response to the root causes of those horrific events. This will not be easy, but it must be part of the bargain.

Finally, but importantly, donors should work both bilaterally and through UN agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) to restore parallel mechanisms for assistance including by working with the NUG, civil society, existing ethnic nationalities systems, and through cross-border aid. If necessary, the US should set the example by returning to its pre-2010 policy of restricting its contributions to UN agencies from going towards any activity with entities acting under the junta's authority. Prior to 2010, these practices were the norm in Burma, and donors have recognized the need for such heterodoxy in other countries in crisis.

Cut off the junta's money supply. The limited impact of sanctions to date should be no surprise considering the current pin-prick approach. But given the economic hardship created by the domestic CDM and non-participation efforts, the coup leaders are increasingly reliant on external sources of revenue. They cannot effectively control either the country or manage their critical internal patronage networks without revenue, and the US and others need to be more strategic in leveraging the junta's need for hard currency. Instead of continuing to slowly drip out sanctions go after the main sources of revenue such as the large military holding companies and key state sectors, especially in the extractive industries. This means cutting off the flow of hard currency via the Myanmar Financial Transactions Bank (MFTB) and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE). American and European partners involved in oil and gas joint ventures with MOGE should suspend or temporarily redirect contractual payments away from the junta on *force majeure* grounds. The companies could work with their governments' financial authorities to establish an escrow mechanism to facilitate continued contractual payments.

In addition to military leaders, individual sanctions also should target key civilian cronies enabling or benefitting from the coup. Top of the list should be the head of Kanbawza (KBZ) Bank, Aung Ko Win: Min Aung Hlaing's golfing buddy and the financier of choice for his children's business enterprises. International partners should also use and aggressive enforcement of broader legal regimes on money laundering and the illegal trade in extractive products such as timber and gemstones. These revenue streams are dirty in every sense of the word: they not only are environmentally devastating and drivers of criminal activity, but they primarily enrich the elite while providing little meaningful benefit to the Burmese people. The U.S., the U.K., and E.U. should work with and, if necessary, put pressure on financial institutions in Singapore and Hong Kong to examine their accounts for junta and other illicit activities.

Move a Security Council resolution. The failure to do anything beyond issue ineffective statements is daily undermining the international community's credibility and increasing the likelihood of broader violence. Nowhere is this more obvious than the ineffective approach of the UN Security Council. The UK and the United States wasted their respective February and March Council presidencies negotiating feckless statements that the junta promptly ignored. Their desire to have the Council continue to "speak with one voice" has been a serious strategic mistake going back at least since the August 2017 Rohingya crisis, giving China and Russia an unwarranted upper hand in Council negotiations on Burma.

The like-mindeds should stop letting a veto threat keep them from acting. An open vote on a resolution forces China and Russia into a choice both have been strenuously avoiding, to either stand with the Burmese people or protect the junta. While in the past they were largely aligned on non-interference justifications around Burma, Russia and China increasingly have divergent interests in Burma. Russia's primary interests revolve around selling weapons and highlighting anything that can be used to equate democracy with chaos. China has significant economic and strategic interests on the ground and worked hard to cultivate the NLD's blessings for its massive China-Myanmar Economic Corridor infrastructure plans. Beijing effectively leveraged Aung San Suu Kyi's approval to advance what would otherwise be deeply unpopular projects; with her in detention, China's tone deaf and self-interested responses to the coup have reignited the Burmese public's latent anti-Chinese sentiment.

Much as China dislikes the prospect of Security Council action in response to the coup, they are rapidly approaching a tipping point where their attempts at neutrality and non-interference are increasingly unsustainable on the ground. With India and Vietnam currently serving on the Security Council, skillful diplomacy—including an incorporation of a role for ASEAN—would focus on leveraging the regional dynamics that could box China in further. Russia is unlikely to veto on their own and will be especially reluctant if other regional states are leaning towards action.

Today, Burma presents that rarest of circumstances where the core values of the United States and other democracies are aligned with both our interests and the aspirations of the Burmese people. Every day, Burmese people are risking their lives to fight for a democratic, rights-respecting, sovereign, inclusive, self-governing future. They are at an inflection point where self-reflection and shared sacrifice are leading to progress on addressing those issues that have held Burma back, including a reassessment of the place of the Rohingya within the broader nation-building project. The Burmese people clearly are willing to do the work and make incredible sacrifices to change their fate. We must stop being constrained by the soft bigotry of low expectations that arise from Burma's bloody history. Finding a way to both support their democratic aspirations and help Burma begin internal healing would be transformational for everyone involved, and the Biden administration has an historic opportunity to contribute to this hinge moment.

In foreign policymaking, as in other risky endeavors, we often underweight the opportunity costs of inaction and delay and allow these outweighed by even low levels of perceived risk around action. Caution and deliberation in foreign policy are generally good qualities but sticking with the current incremental approach will doom us to accept a failed or at least flailing Burma as an acceptable outcome. This would only benefit the bad actors and leave us with more costly and worse options down the line. We should be vigorously pursuing robust action, not just because it is a reflection of our own nation's core values but because a different kind of Burma will be a better partner to the United States in every conceivable way. This is especially true considering the alternatives are a return to military rule and state failure. While taking action does not guarantee we will get the desired results, it will put us firmly on the side of the Burmese people instead of their oppressors. Under the current circumstances, that should be reason enough for the United States to overcome bureaucratic inertia and policy caution to find a way to lead.

I look forward to your questions and am again grateful for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing.

+++++END+++++

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you, Ambassador, and thank you all for your testimony today. Very enlightening.

I now recognize Members for 5 minutes each, pursuant to the House rules, and all time is yielded for the purposes of questioning our witnesses.

I'll recognize Members by committee seniority, alternating between Democrats and Republicans. If you miss your turn, please let our staff know and we'll come back to you. If you seek recognition, you must unmute your microphone and address the Chair verbally, and identify yourself so that we know who is speaking.

I will start by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

Let me start with Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun. Again, thank you for appearing before us today and for your bravery in speaking out against the coup. I'd like to ask you about the National Unity Government and how representative is it for the vast diversity of your country?

There has been, you know, a long simmering civil war in Burma and there are many ethnic groups there that are not just antagonistic toward the military but also dissatisfied with the lack of progress in the peace process under the NLD. So how is the National Unity Government working to date to reassure those ethnic groups? That's my first question.

And second, then what vision does the CRPH and the National Unity Government have for the ethnic community in Burma?

Mr. Ambassador, I believe you're on mute.

Mr. TUN. Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question. As Ambassador Currie also rightly point out the, you know, the NUG how diverse it is and, you know, the composition, it's, you know, it's very unprecedented.

It's composed of, you know, the Members from the different ethnic groups, including the ethnic organization. So it's quite diverse. It's also—it includes quite a number of women in the government. So that is why we see it's very encouraging.

So this kind of, you know, the NUG it's, you know, come up with the close consultation among all the relevant stakeholders. So that is what we see. So it's very encouraging for us, I mean, the people of Myanmar, where how the NUG come up and how it will proceed with the—you know, the goal of building a Federal democratic union.

That is, you know, the people all over the country give their overwhelming support to the NUG because of the—you know, the—its credibility, and it's because of the support from the people.

So and the NUG and CRPH, you know, as the—as you know, the CRPH is, you know, it stands like a now the legislative body, or body. So the NUG as the executive body and the CRPH as a legislative body. So we are working hand in hand.

NUG and CRPH working hand in hand so because what we are doing is that we are trying to control the area as much as possible together with ethnic organizations.

You may notice that lately there are the, you know, fight between the ethnic organization and the military, the terrorist group because the ethnic organizations now stand with the people of Myanmar, providing all the support to the people and the people also supporting the organization.

Now, as Ambassador Currie also mentioned, the young people who drive the protests now are taking some trainings under the—at an area controlled by the organization.

So for us we do not want to go that much farther because of the, you know, we need to fight against the military. We still need to have the support from the international community, Mr. Chair.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you so much.

Let me ask Ambassador Currie real quick to followup on that, and also, what do you think the ASEAN should be doing? What more should they be doing that they're not doing right now?

Ms. CURRIE. Well, I think that the National Unity Government is doing a good job of reaching out to ethnic nationalities. The biggest challenge right now, though, is that they continue to struggle on dealing with the kind of birth defects of Burma's independence and it's a very complicated dynamic around who has status as a recognized ethnic nationality, and it gets into a lot of very difficult issues.

This is where the Rohingya, for instance, fall into a gap and have been able to—and have been subject to deep discrimination as a result.

With regard to ASEAN, they are very poorly set up to deal with political problems like this. The best thing they could do, frankly, would be to ask the Security Council to take responsibility for the problem and hand it over to them instead of being an obstacle and a fig leaf that allows for Security Council inaction, in my opinion.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you. My time has expired. You know, we try to get as many Members as we can, to hold all Members to the 5-minute rule.

I now acknowledge Ranking Member McCaul for 5 minutes for questions.

You have to unmute, Mr. McCaul.

[No response.]

Chairman MEEKS. Office, can we unmute Mr. McCaul?

[No response.]

Ms. STILES. Mr. Chair, the next member is Mr. Chabot. Mr. McCaul had to drop off for a moment.

Chairman MEEKS. Very good. Mr. Chabot, you're now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much. I'll start with Ambassador Currie, if I could.

Ambassador, you mentioned that the U.N. has, basically, totally failed in its effort, and my thinking when you mentioned that was so what else is new.

But since February, Beijing and Moscow have blocked international efforts to restore stability in Burma, including blocking U.N. Security Council statement condemning the coup before eventually agreeing to a more limited statement that did not use the word "coup."

How can the U.S. work with other nations on the Security Council, including India and Vietnam, for example, to coax China and Russia into being more helpful, although, as we know, that experience can be about as frustrating as anything on this globe, trying to get them to cooperate constructively on virtually anything? But I'd love to hear what you have to say, Madam Ambassador.

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you, Mr. Chabot, and thank you for your historic leadership on Burma. It's deeply appreciated. In my experience working in the Security Council, China hates to be isolated. Russia does not. Russia is more tolerant of it and a little bit more risk tolerant and more of a chaos agent.

But the Chinese have a lot of vested interests on the ground in Burma, and I think that to say that they've been blocking something is a little bit of a mischaracterization. The U.K. and the U.S. and other so-called like-minded countries haven't really tried to drag things out into the open and force the issue in a way that would force the Chinese to make choices that they currently are avoiding making and are very happy to avoid making.

I believe that the best way to see progress in the U.N. is to actually force the issue and to start talking about tabling a resolution to actually accomplish some of the things, whether it's an arms embargo or a no-fly zone, that the Burmese have asked for, to have open meetings instead of closed ones where the Chinese and others can hide behind the process.

But the more openness there is, the more I think that the like-minded countries can benefit and pressure the Chinese into being less obstructive.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay, thank you very much. And just to followup if I could, could you maybe expound a little bit upon what China is up to in Burma? What are their interests there?

What are they doing behind the scenes? You know, what, if anything, can the United States do to, obviously, promote regional stability and democracy and, you know, push back on their malevolent, you know, desires, not only especially there but, really, throughout the region? Could you kind of discuss what China is really up to?

Ms. CURRIE. I think that on Burma the Chinese have built up a lot of infrastructure. So they have sunk costs in Burma. They do not love dealing with the military there. They find them an unreliable partner but—and they had invested a lot in working with the democratically—elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

And so they were quite comfortable having her imprimatur on their big economic Belt and Road China-Myanmar economic cooperation engagements in Burma and were willing to deal with a democratic government quite fine. Found it very comfortable for them.

So there's no reason they cannot do that again. The problem is that they do not—they continue to hide behind this noninterference posture, which is part of a broader global issue, and so there is that.

I think that if they were forced to choose that they would—it would improve the odds that they at least would have to make a choice toward the democratically elected government and move in that direction and show some favoritism.

But they're not going to do it absent others who are more naturally inclined toward doing that and unless they feel boxed out. And so I think that that's the key for us. I think that cuts across everything in Southeast Asia, that we have got to stand on the side of democracy and human rights and these values in order to highlight the difference between what we offer the region and the

model that the Chinese are offering them, which is very extractive, very narrowly self-interested.

One example where we could do this, for instance, is if we were to work with the National Unity Government to help get vaccines cross border through trusted NGO's that have experience while China is giving vaccines to the junta and contrast that, for instance.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much. My time is expired, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you. The gentleman yields back. I now recognize Mr. Sherman of California for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. I want to point out that Congress provided about $135 million of assistance to Burma. USAID and State have redirected $42 million. I can see a use for our money in supporting anti-government democracy activists, press etc.

But the USAID seems to be bent on spending money on general economic development which, while it might be good for people in Burma, is also good for the junta, and we should not evaluate whether these programs are good—some of them help people in need—but whether the best use for American foreign aid dollars, which could instead go to help India deal with COVID–19, allow us to do even more, and we're doing a lot—to do more for the Rohingya refugees or support political engagement and in Nigeria, or election observation in Benin or a host of other issues.

That would be a better use than strengthening the economy of a country that is right now run by the junta.

I want to focus on the Rohingya, and last month the—we saw the formation of this National Unity Government, which has said it will deliver justice for our Rohingya brothers and sisters.

But it's a council of 27 people, none of whom are Rohingya. And so I know Your Excellency Mr. Tun is not officially part of the National Unity Government but I want to give him an opportunity.

Should they add a twenty-eighth member to the council to represent the Rohingya community and is it important for this National Unity Government to declare that they will give citizenship documents to all Rohingya who were born in Burma or in the refugee camps?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Sherman, for the questions.

So, you know, the NUG government and the CRPH make it very clear that, you know, now the common enemy of us is the military. So when we end the, you know, this murderous regime, as I mentioned in my introductory remarks, I said it's clear that, you know, we want it ending this kind of military regime. We are in the—a better position to promote and to protect the rights of the——

Mr. SHERMAN. Sir, if I can interrupt. I think there's no doubt that the National Unity Government is better than the junta. But that's a very, very low standard.

Will this government provide citizenship documents—do you want to urge them to provide citizenship documents to all Rohingya born in Burma or in refugee camps?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. The point that you raised, of course, you know, as a government, we will—of course, we will be, you know, in line with the, you know, the existing law, but those existing laws may not be, you know, the standard.

So we are of the view that those—the law that, for example, the 1982 citizenship law that need to be amended, that is what is clear. And then the—those who are in line with existing law, of course, they will be——

Mr. SHERMAN. Sir, existing law deprived them of citizenship and set them up for murder. Before the coup, the government that appointed you committed genocide against the Rohingya.

Can you call upon the National Unity Government to provide citizenship documents to those born in your country, including the Rohingya?

Mr. TUN. Yes, of course, you know, we are very clear that, you know, the—those who ever are born in Myanmar and then those who have entitled they have to be. You know, according to their——

Mr. SHERMAN. Under the law that existed, they're not entitled. There are laws that existed for decades saying that people whose grandparents were born in Burma are denied citizenship.

And for you to say, we're going to carry out existing law would be like a post-Nazi government saying, we're going to carry out existing German law.

Mr. TUN. I see it differently, sir. Because, you know, they are the same difficulty that, you know, the previous NLD government had. If we go according with—strictly according with the law, they are there—a lot a—lot of Rohingya are entitled to become a citizen. Very clear. That is, you know——

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. SHERMAN. My time has expired. Thank you.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize Mr. Wilson from South Carolina, who is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee of the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism, for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for calling this important hearing. And we appreciate so much the witnesses who are appearing here today on behalf of the freedom and liberty of the people of Burma.

I actually grew up with an appreciation of the people of the region, and then my father served in the Flying Tigers, China, Burma, India. And we know that the United States had such a positive role of liberating and keeping free the people of the region.

With this in mind, Ambassador Currie, the United Nations estimates that approximately 20,000 people have fled their homes and remain displaced within Burma, while almost 10,000 have fled to neighboring countries.

How does the current crisis in Burma inundate the already stretched thin resources available in the region that are being used to assist Rohingya refugees?

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you for that question because it is very important. Most of those people are fleeing either internally up north and east away from the area affected by the Rohingya crisis, more toward Thailand and China, and so the population movements have been in different directions.

In the past, the United States and other donors operated very robust cross border assistance, humanitarian assistance, into some of these areas. But most of those channels have been allowed to atro-

phy over the past decade as we moved more humanitarian assistance through channels through the government of Burma.

Now we need to really look at widening and reopening and reinvigorating a lot of those cross border channels in order to reach those populations who cannot be reached through humanitarian assistance, which has been—access to those areas has been cut by the junta as part of their attacks on these areas and on the civilians living within them, sir.

Mr. WILSON. Well, thank you very much for your insight.

And Representative Tun, how incredible your courage to speak out on behalf of the people of your home country.

And with that in mind, U.S. trade with Burma is limited and, therefore, the United States has little financial leverage over the military.

What can the United States do to encourage countries in the region to put real financial pressure on Burma to isolate the military and to restrict foreign financial flows benefiting the military junta?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

I think because the role of United States is very important influencing the, you know, regional countries, because many bank accounts and the financial flows coming through the countries in the region.

So I think it's very, very—very, very important that if you put, you know, sanctions on the, you know, some additional entities like the MFTB, MOGE, and the Myawaddy Bank, Innwa Bank, so that, you know, the financial flow where we, you know, cutoff, and that is—will make a lot of pressure on the military.

So what we want is that we want the military to—back to the table to discuss to restore the democracy in Myanmar. That is the role that United States can play a very influential role to put pressure on the military.

Mr. WILSON. And, again, thank you for your personal courage.

And final question, again, for Representative Tun, although China has strong incentives to avoid chaos in the region, it, sadly, also views the country as a battleground for preventing the encroachment of democratic values and Western interests in its backyard.

How can the United States engage with civil society leaders in Burma, Myanmar, to fortify the democratic values and institutions of the country?

Mr. TUN. Well, what I see is that please continue to support the—you know, the—all the—that you continue support to the, you know, the civil society as well as, you know, if I may, please support the NUG, the National Unity Government, and recognize them.

So that's the way we can put a lot of pressure not only to the military but also to China so that, you know, China will turn to—turn to, you know, engage with the NUG.

So that is very important that, you know, please continue support to the CSOs as well as the National Unity Government, all stakeholders who are fighting for the democracy. Please do support us. Thank you.

Mr. WILSON. Well, your insight and courage, again, is so inspiring and I just appreciate the efforts of Chairman Meeks to bring this to the attention of the world. I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman yields back.

I now recognize Representative Gerry Connolly of Virginia, who is a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your leadership on this critical issue and insisting that the U.S. Congress bring attention to what is happening in Myanmar, and I thank you for your leadership.

And I echo Joe Wilson—Congressman Joe Wilson on that. It's vital that we elevate this issue in the Congress because we can save lives.

I have two questions I want to put to the whole panel and I'll start with you, Ambassador Currie, if you do not mind. One is when we think back about the U.S. sort of loosening up its restrictions—travel restriction sanctions and the like starting around 2012, are there things, in retrospect, we could have, should have, insisted on that might have prevented or mitigated the coup that happened 9 years later?

And, second, what role will the military have to play, if any, in a government post-coup that, presumably, favors the pro-democratic forces, but, I mean, the military—Tatmadaw is there whether we like it or not, and what role are they going to insist on and what role should we accept?

And if I can put that question to all three of you and start with you, Madam Ambassador.

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you, sir.

With regard to 2012, we should not have lifted sanctions on the military-owned enterprises at that time and should have been more clear that those were not going to be lifted until and unless the military moved forward with more reforms to the constitution that address issues of civilian control of the military and began a glide path toward removing the military from political institutions.

I do not think anybody in the—in the democratic forces, at least not prior to February, would have advocated for the dissolution of the Tatmadaw, but that it should be under democratic control—under democratic civilian control in a democracy is kind of a sine qua non and it never happened.

And that was a mistake for the international community not to insist that that be part of the package.

On the—on the—and so I think that that also gets to the role that the Tatmadaw should play in a democratic Federal union is that it needs to be reformed.

It needs to be heavily reformed, including by changing its force posture, its makeup, its structure, and most critically, putting it under legitimate and seriously strong civilian controls over.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes, because it's—culturally, isn't it they're creating a culture that's entirely separate from the rest of the country. What could go wrong with that? Thank you.

Mr. Ambassador, those two questions, and then Khin Ohmar.

Mr. TUN. Thank you, Mr. Connolly. I think it's very important. You know, our aim is to end the military regime. The military should not be in politics, should not be in economy no longer.

That's the way we can bring them—the, you know, military under the civilian government. Otherwise, you know, it's where, you know, this vicious cycle we were faced, you know, again and again.

So this is the time that we have to make it or not. You know, we have to do or die. This is the time that we have to do it. So within the country, we have the full strength, but at the same time we need help from the international community, especially like the country like United States. We need a lot of help from you.

Please continue put pressure on the military, whatever way that we can. That is the—that is, our top priority now is saving lives of innocent civilians, and then also providing humanitarian assistance at this point.

And then once the Federal democratic union form and the Federal army were established, then the military has to be under the civilian government. That is what I think.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, and I want to give Ms. Ohmar a chance to respond as well.

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you, Congressman Connolly. To respond to your question on the—like, whether the—you know, the restrictions—I'm sorry, the sanctions in 2012 whether it was—in responding to your question, I want to recall my conversations and meetings with the officers from the State Department that I—that I was actually appealing to the State Department not to let go of all of these measures because we know so well of how this military mind set is, and we do not we do not have the confidence enough yet.

Yes, of course, there was—there were cautious optimism. But also we know that we cannot take confidence in that yet. So I was actually appealing to the State Department to have the plan B and also go through step by step calculations of lifting of, you know, like, the measures depending on what are we getting from this, you know, like, the military-guided, quote/unquote, civil—the disciplined democracy.

So I think it was quite too early to have lifted all of those measures. So I would like to respond for this question. But coming to the question on, like, what do we do with this military, you're right. Of course, the military will be there.

But I think we need to ensure that they must go back to the barracks and under civilian control. And also, most importantly, we need to address the transition to justice. Without the justice and healing, we will not be able to have a way to move forward. Thank you.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman's time has expired. I now recognize Representative Scott Perry of Pennsylvania for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Without my—but good to see everybody. Ambassador Currie, you know, I got to tell you, I look at this situation in Burma and I'm not sure what the best position for the United States to be.

I mean, obviously, we do not support the junta or the coup. But Suu Kyi, of course, you know, was no friend of the Rohingyas and, you know, most of us in this committee, if not all of us, voted to characterize that as a genocide against the Rohingya.

I do not know if the administration has taken that up yet or plans to, but it does not seem like a great outcome. I mean, the Chinese military, I think, is probably sending arms to the—to the military right there to oppress the people, and even if it were to work out with Suu Kyi, it would not work out for the Rohingya.

So maybe my question—first of all, my question would be, at a minimum, why would not we sanction the State-owned oil—the energy company there? I think it's MOE or something like that.

And then—and then next would be, what can the United States do unilaterally—unilaterally to advance our efforts in Burma vis-a-vis China? How about—how about those two questions?

Ms. CURRIE. So I do agree that we should have already put sanctions on the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, MOGE. That is the main recipient of royalties and funds related to the oil and gas extractive industries in Burma.

And I hope that the administration will do that soon, together with other countries, and put pressure on the multinational oil and gas industry partners that are continuing to pay royalties to the junta to put those funds into escrow accounts and keep them from going into the hands of the junta.

Yes, China and Russia, of course, are selling weapons and providing some political support to the military junta. But the Chinese above all want stability in Burma and want an environment where they can do business and a permissive business environment for them.

That is not what they have right now. So this has not exactly worked out well for them. I believe that there is a path where we need to make sure that they—well, we can do things as a country that put a thumb on the side of democracy, human rights, and the values that we care about as the preferred outcome here, not the ones that the Chinese care about, which are antithetical to those.

And I believe that if we can work with the National Unity Government and the forces that have emerged that are far more progressive than what we saw from the last NLD government, to be quite frank, even, you know, especially at the grassroots level, they're much more progressive and much more diverse and open minded, and Khin Ohmar can speak to this more fluidly than I can.

But there is an opportunity here to empower a better path for this country. But we have got to lean into it a bit more than we have been doing up to now. We have been taking a very cautious and incremental approach up to now and there are a number of steps we can take that would help move us forward—most of them pretty low cost and low risk, frankly.

Mr. PERRY. Well, I appreciate your answer and I appreciate the caution as well. However, we have been talking about the Rohingya issue—I mean, I'm actually surprised there are any Rohingya left at this point.

But that having been said, what would be in the National Unity Government—what would—what would be the position or where would Suu Kyi be in such a—in such an arrangement that the United States would support it?

I, certainly, do not want to see the United States kind of go from the pan into the fire, so to speak.

Ms. CURRIE. I would actually love to have Khin Ohmar answer that question because she works a lot with these issues——

Mr. PERRY. Okay.

Ms. CURRIE [continuing]. Of how to address this problem within Bamar politics.

Mr. PERRY. All right.

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you. Is it okay—can I get the question again, please? I'm sorry.

Mr. PERRY. Yes. You know, what position would Suu Kyi have in a National Unity Government that the United States would support? What would be her influence? What would be her position?

Would she have no influence, no—because we're, essentially—we're essentially talking about potentially supporting someone who is antithetical to our—to our efforts regarding the Rohingya. So we just need to know what we're getting into here.

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you. Thank you for the question.

Just for us as our organization, Progressive Voice, and our partners who work to advance the human rights agenda and as well as for the protection of the vulnerable communities, including the Rohingya community, for us, we are putting forth our suggestions to the National Unity Government that they must actually come up with a clear policy and our stand on the issue for the Rohingya peoples and the protection and how the government will actually take on this issue without waiting for, like, anyone like Aung San Suu Kyi.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. OHMAR. Oh, sorry.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize Representative Ted Deutch of Florida, who is the Chair of the Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the witnesses for appearing before the committee today and for that important testimony from all of you.

It seems to have become a hallmark of our work on this committee to hear, unfortunately, again and again about the constant relentless threat authoritarianism poses to democracies and democratic values, and as with anti-democratic backsliding elsewhere, the struggle in Burma is one that we cannot ignore. I'm really grateful for today's hearing.

I've said before the battle lines in the fight to protect democratic values and human rights transcend State boundaries and peoples, and it's imperative that those who stand for democracy everywhere, including here in the United States, recognize one another as partners in that struggle.

So in that vein, I've been encouraged by many of the administration's actions to pressure the Tatmadaw to support the Burmese people, including economic, diplomatic, and humanitarian measures.

But it's clear that, as we have discussed, that more can and should be done. I'm disappointed that ASEAN did not include releasing political prisoners among its five points of consensus.

Troubled, as we have been discussing, the Tatmadaw has failed to heed ASEAN's call for ending violence, and I hope that coming out of here there will be even greater urgency beyond this committee to resolve the crisis of Burma and fuel positive momentum behind the legitimate demands of its people, including the Rohingya community and other persecuted minorities who have suffered so much in recent years.

And I want to actually talk about the ethnic minority inclusion in the resistance, and, Ambassador Currie, you note in your testimony that increased awareness of and empathy for the situation of ethnic people among Bamar protesters has been one of the most remarkable and important features.

But we have also heard that there's a strong feeling among some ethnic groups, including the Rohingya community, that the National Unity Government, the Federal Democracy Charter, need to be more inclusive. We have talked about that here today.

What more can our government—can the U.S. Government and like-minded partners do really to promote inclusion and full representation of all ethnic communities in Burma and help the credibility of the National Unity Government, which—where that's sorely lacking?

Ms. CURRIE. I think that's a great question. First, we cannot solve this problem for the Burmese people. The solutions for it do have to come from within Burma because it is—these are problems that predate the founding of the country.

Just as in our own country, we have had to struggle with the issues that came into our society through the founding of our country with slavery and racism and all of these things.

The same challenges are there in Burma, and they've spent the past 70 years since independence more or less under authoritarian and very racist and chauvinistic governments that have not allowed any of those conversations to take place.

So some of those conversations are, essentially, frozen in 1960, or 1950. So if you think about our own experience and where we were back at that time and our own discussions around racism, you can understand how far they have to go and how quickly they have to move to catch up to what the modern world expects from a country in terms of how it treats its ethnic nationalities or minority communities and vulnerable communities.

I think what Khin Ohmar said is right. The groups that are pushing within Burmese politics to change this dynamic are critical to it, and will continue to be.

We have to continue to empower those voices and reflect them in our own engagement with the National Unity Government, and then use what leverage we do have.

Again, we want to support the National Unity Government. It's, obviously, better than the coup, as Mr. Chairman said.

But that's not good enough. I think we do have to hold them to a standard of expecting them to acknowledge and do better on Rohingya than the NLD did in the past.

I've seen some movement in that way. It's not fast enough. It's not far enough. But I think it is in the right direction overall, and we need to do the things we can to facilitate it.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much.

Ms. Ohmar, if I could just ask you about your concerns with respect to the treatment of refugees in the border regions. What—and again, what more can the United States and the international community do to ensure that their basic human rights are protected when they flee Burma to neighboring countries?

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you very much, Representative Deutch. So for now, this challenge that people are having is the neighboring countries' government, such as Thailand, are not allowing the people to—like, those who are fleeing from the air strikes to come across the border to their country, while also there are no free passage or the humanitarian corridors are not allowed to open to reach to those most needy ones across the border back in Burma.

So I think we would like to really see your support in your communication and advocating to the Thai government, in particular, to help open those humanitarian aid corridors.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize Representative Ann Wagner of Missouri, who's the Vice Ranking Member of the full committee, for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank—thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for organizing this very important hearing. What is happening in Burma is a tragedy and my heart breaks for the Rohingya who continue to suffer unimaginable atrocities at the hands of the genocidal Burmese military, or Tatmadaw, and for the courageous protesters braving the brutal crackdown as they fight for democracy.

The United States must continue to support the people of Burma as they stand up to the military junta and to bring to justice those responsible for egregious human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

I'm very proud that Congress has never hesitated to call the violence against Rohingya what it is—genocide. The United States has now at last recognized the Uighur and Armenian genocides but has not yet recognized the Rohingya genocide.

Ambassador Currie, why has the United States neglected to make a formal determination on Rohingya genocide?

Ms. CURRIE. I believe that a lot of it goes back to this kind of tradeoff that we have bounced around a little bit here, which is this belief that we had to protect the—Burma's democratic transition and we were trying in the past to protect Aung San Suu Kyi and not destabilize the country and promote or encourage or trigger a coup by the military.

But I think the lesson we should learn from the past 4 years of refusing to call things by their right name, and you're right, it meets all the criteria for genocide——

Mrs. WAGNER. Yes.

Ms. CURRIE [continuing]. And the U.S. has done—the State Department did an investigation, has compiled the data. It's all there to—for anybody who wants to see it.

But and I think now that we have seen that trying to tradeoff the rights of a vulnerable minority to protect a very fragile and flawed democratic process, you end up with both getting stomped all over.

And so I think that we should be true and call things by their right name. I totally agree with you.

Mrs. WAGNER. It's time. It is——

Ms. CURRIE. Agreed.

Mrs. WAGNER [continuing]. It is past time. The International Court of Justice, or ICJ, has ordered Burma to take action to prevent further acts of genocide as it investigates the atrocities committed against the Rohingya.

Yet, human rights groups report the regime continues to actively destroy evidence and engage in acts of genocide.

Ambassador Currie, how should the United States lead international efforts to pressure Burma into compliance with the ICJ's order?

Ms. CURRIE. Again, I think this is an area where we can work with the National Unity Government to set out some benchmarks for cooperation with the ICJ investigation, too.

They are very interested in having the ICJ investigate also the post-coup activities. We have also been supporting the international investigative mechanism on Myanmar, the IIMM at the—in Geneva under U.N. auspices.

It's headed by a wonderful American lawyer named Nick Koumjian, who does a great job, and is also expanding their remit to include events since the coup.

And so I think that there is an opportunity to take a more holistic look at accountability and transitional justice, as Khin Ohmar has said, and really bring all of these things into a rubric that allows for a meaningful conversation about accountability with the Tatmadaw, whether it's in the ICJ context, the ICC, or through other mechanisms, including local mechanisms that the NUG could start to set up themselves with support from donors.

Mrs. WAGNER. And to that point, Ms. Ohmar, Burma's civil society organizations have formed kind of the backbone of the opposition movement for protesting the coup, with the Tatmadaw, working to isolate Burmans from the international community and resist the flow of information.

How can the United States strengthen these civil society groups, Ms. Ohmar?

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you. Thank you. At this point, for the last 10 years of all of the great work our civil society partners have done on the ground building the blocks for the like, you know, like democracy, now, with this military coup, it's been very challenging.

Everything that we have built seems like it's we're losing at the moment. So yes, we need desperate help. We desperately need your help and support.

My first is also—I will—I will make it very practical. Like the USAID—for example, the USAID grants can make it flexible to the civil society organizations who are losing their ground in the country to be able to have access from the cross border, for example, you know, which is not something that we have seen the U.S. aid has been able to do. So that kind of flexibility.

Thank you.

Mrs. WAGNER. Thank you. My time has expired.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mrs. WAGNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back. Thank you.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you.

I now recognize Representative Bill Keating of Massachusetts, and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, and the Environment and Cyber for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'd like to thank you and the Ranking Member for holding this meeting. I think my question will be directed at Khin Ohmar and maybe a secondary question to Ambassador Currie.

The Burmese military is notorious for its use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war, and it still seems to be holding true, as seen with the relentless perpetrated acts of violence, you know, by security forces against protesters.

And despite this, the women that are involved in this, in particular, they're risking their lives and playing a central role in this nonviolent action of protest to bring about democracy.

So my question is, what's your view of the status of their involvement right now, the risks they're taking, which we have seen so many brave women around the world in leadership roles at protests in countries like Belarus, and what can we do to support their actions in particular?

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you, Congressman Keating. Yes, you're very right. Even compared to our time back in 1988 democracy movement, this movement has seen much more young women, in particular, at the forefront leading the movement.

But now, many of them are in prison and detention and also facing the sexual and gender-based violence—sexual assault. So it's very worrying for me, personally. I have met so many survivors of the military rape from the different ethnic communities for the last 20 years at least.

And now, knowing that there are so many young women are even missing, that we do not know where they are, so it's very worrying for us to think of, like, you know, what could have happened or will be happening.

So many of them already are in hiding at the moment, and many of them fled into the ethnic areas at the moment. So while we need so much support also, like, I think, like, the U.S., you know, including the mission in Yangon will be able to help support, for example, like hiding places, which is the practical support that we need, and as well as also establishing their secure communications equipment.

Again, that is also something that we need in our effort, including those young women and women in the movement to be able to access or communicate to the outside world. So these are the practical support that we need, along with the other material and financial support as well.

Mr. KEATING. And how important is it, hopefully, in a democracy, going forward, to have women included in that government and in the administration of government in the country?

Ms. OHMAR. Being a longtime women's rights activist I will be very practical with you. It's still a long way to go. However, I'm encouraged to see that NUG—this NUG government has included many women, including the young women also from the ethnic communities are already included in the ministry positions, which I take it as a very historical step, which I hope that they will actu-

ally carry on, you know, by the time when the democracy comes back there for us to really, like, establish the full democracy.

I hope that women will not be left out or marginalized when everything comes back to the—in the place. For now, we still have a long way to go. Yes.

Mr. KEATING. Okay. We are seeing authoritarian governments trying to press themselves around the world. But it's comforting to know we're seeing so many women and young women rising up for democracy and standing up for that.

Thank you for your comments.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MEEKS. Representative yields back. Representative Keating yields back.

I now recognize Representative Tim Burchett of Tennessee for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the guests. I have a couple of questions. I'll just throw it out to the panel.

Does China really have a dog in this fight or will the Chinese Communist Party simply back the side it thinks will win?

Ms. CURRIE. I will go ahead and take that.

China definitely has had a dog in the fight in Burma for since before—since—for decades, really. The Chinese Communist Party helped to create the Communist Party of Burma, armed it, and led to instability in Burma since the 1960's, which is one of the reasons that there's been military government in Burma since the 1960's is because of Chinese interference in Burmese internal affairs and attempts to shape and mold the country and make it malleable.

China seeks a Burma that's dependent, weak, internally divided, and easy for it to get what it wants out of, which right now primarily consists of passage to the Indian Ocean, because Burma cuts—Burma, the—China's path to the Indian Ocean cuts directly through Burma, and so they want that very much.

They are very—they have strategic interests. They have economic interests. They're—they, and as—you know, they, obviously—I think, ideologically, they're neutral They've shown they'll work with whatever kind of government does come along.

So I do not think those things are mutually exclusive. But they do want a government that's willing to work with them. They do want to keep us out. They especially want to keep us out of upper Burma, where they are involved with a lot of the ethnic armed organizations and are playing both sides of the street in Burma.

It's a very—they have strategic depth in Burma in a way that the United States does not. But that also means that they've got—they've been tagged with a nasty history of doing things in Burma that the United States has not, and that can redound against them if we are standing on the side of the people in the country.

Mr. BURCHETT. Anybody else on that or is that pretty much it? Okay, good. If the Western companies end up leaving due to the unrest, do you think that China would end up taking over the Western assets?

Ms. CURRIE. Ms. Ohmar, do you want to take that?

Ms. OHMAR. Please go ahead, Kelley. Thank you.

Ms. CURRIE. I think that, you know, it's a possibility. But the other thing you have to remember about the Tatmadaw—we talked

a lot about what the Chinese want, but the Tatmadaw are also quite anti-Chinese themselves. They aren't—you know, they're not just anti—they're kind of anti-everybody.

They're quite xenophobic and nationalistic. So I think that there is a limit to which they will allow Chinese incursion into the country. When they did open up the country back in 2010, it was, largely, because they felt they had become too dependent on China in the preceding years and wanted to—and did not—and they do not want to be that dependent on the Chinese again.

So they will seek to retain independence of operation and will not—and they'll look for other partners, whether it's other Asian partners or, more likely, the Singaporeans.

Even the Japanese and South Koreans have been more amenable to working with military-led governments than the United States and some of the European partners.

Mr. BURCHETT. All right. What are the implications for the instability in Burma, more on a broader, I guess, regional security issue? Anybody?

Ms. OHMAR. I will—I will say the regional security issue there are actually different—quite a few, I will say. First is the spillover effects into the neighboring countries, particularly the people who are actually fleeing from the military violence as we see now. But also, traditionally, in the past decades, people have been fleeing Burma for all kind of reasons across the border, including as the migrant laborers.

So there is this regional—there is an impact on the regional stability from that aspect that comes with the other, like the health as well, especially now during the COVID-the pandemic time.

You can imagine of how also the neighboring countries might be thinking at the moment. But the reality is Myanmar people, Burma people really need to flee for their security. So that's one.

The other is we have this drug problem where the military themselves have been involved and implicit—complicit in that, along with their militias that they have set up.

And so these are also the issues that the region, especially for the ASEAN, have been dealing and need to deal with, which we feel quite frustrated that ASEAN is not able to see that they need to focus the solution for Burma based on the people instead of based on this military.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another excellent meeting.

Chairman MEEKS. I now recognize Representative Ami Bera of California, who is the Chair of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, Central Asia, and Nonproliferation, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again, thank you for this timely hearing.

You know, as I think about, you know, the resolve of the Burmese people, it's quite remarkable. I've heard up to 90 percent of the country is currently shut down with, you know, essentially, a general strike, which it probably is the largest general strike that I can recall in my lifetime and it does not seem like that resolve is shifting. If nothing else, it seems like the Burmese people are

digging in, even with the hardship, you know, electricity shut down, water shut down, food markets, everything, shut down.

At the same time, when I listen to the Tatmadaw, it also does not seem like their resolve is changing as well, even as, you know, we put in sanctions, increased sanctions, you know, perhaps, you know, consider secondary sanctions and the like to continue to isolate them.

I guess a question for any of the witnesses, within the military, you know, the generals, certainly, seem to not care about what's happening to the civilians, but within the rank and file military, as they exert violence against their own fellow citizens and others, are we seeing any erosion of that and folks defecting and, you know, et cetera?

Ambassador Currie?

Ms. OHMAR. Yes, I'll take the question. Yes.

So, yes, there are actually many hundreds and perhaps even a few thousand of police have joined the civil disobedience movement, as well as those from the army are also joining. We have some level, like, including the police chief, for example, position as well as those who are the captain level from the military are also joining.

But, of course, we do not see into the point of, like, the large scale or the large number. I think that the problem is also that because the military already cut down within—like, they are also living themselves in the open prison.

There have been an internal cut to the military and military family Members. So that a lot of these measures and restrictions are already imposed. What worse for them is, like, if they are found to be, you know, like suspicious of even joining the people's movement, they will be immediately put in jail and face a lot of harsh punishment.

So I think we are having to—that situation. But I have to say, though, that there are so many that we know—there are so many, including the high levels, who want to join the civil disobedience movement or who just disagree with the military coup.

Ms. CURRIE. I can add to that. There have been some defections. What we're also seeing is a lack of will to fight on the front lines, because you have to remember that even before the coup there was a civil war going on in Burma and had been since 1948.

And what we're hearing from some of the ethnic armed organizations is that they are seeing people just running away from the front lines, abandonment of posts and bases on a scale that they're not used to seeing. And so there is some question about whether—you know, about order and discipline within the ranks. I think that there is a—that is a potential point of exploitation.

Mr. BERA. Great, and are there any specific steps that, you know, we ought to be thinking about as Congress to, again, support, you know, both the people, but also, I think, if the rank and file starts that—the morale of the rank and file military starts to erode, the longer this goes on, I think, then you can get to an endpoint perhaps.

Ms. CURRIE. If Congress can—if Congress can authorize cross border assistance at scale and make it very flexible so that it can be used to support, you know, deserters who leave the military,

some DDR, and things that are going on to demobilize people, that would be helpful, because there are groups within the—in the cross border space that could carry out that mission, and I think that's something that would be helpful.

The other thing that the United States can do is really make sure that we are leaning heavily on the side of the NUG and against the junta on things—like, on, really, technical things like not giving to diplomats that the junta tries to send to the United States or to other countries—we can all refuse that—and to extend visas for diplomats who are loyal and for others who are loyal to the—to the NUG.

Chairman MEEKS. Thank you. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize Representative Andy Barr of Kentucky for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I join my colleagues in condemning the junta and the Tatmadaw's military coup, the unlawful detention of the State councilor, declaration of martial law and the human rights abuses against civil disobedience and peaceful protesters.

This is, clearly, obviously a major setback for democracy in Burma. But I want to return, Ambassador Currie, to the important strategic implications and the considerations that we have to give to China's malign influence in the region. You did a good job painting the picture for us in terms of China's long-standing interest in Burma.

But can you—can you elaborate a little bit on what ties exist between the CCP and the Tatmadaw? And, obviously, I heard your testimony that the Tatmadaw was skeptical of Chinese investment in Burma and that Burma's prior civilian government was, perhaps, closer to the Chinese Communist Party.

But given the current state of affairs and the coup, what inroads are the CCP making with the current military leadership?

Ms. CURRIE. I think that the situation is never quite black and white. I do not—it's not—you know, it's not a zero sum game, in many ways.

I think that what we're seeing is that the Tatmadaw will never want to be dependent on the CCP, and the people of Burma will never accept a government that's completely dependent on the CCP.

This isn't Cambodia, for instance, where you can get away with that sort of thing, like Hun Sen has been able to get away with it in Cambodia.

The other thing that I think that more than—more than democracy the Chinese Communist Party does not want State failure at its border there. It shares a border with Burma, and there are ethnic groups that straddle that border that—and we have seen in recent days that they've put up heavy fencing and cameras to try to reinforce their border with Burma to keep refugee flows out. They—and they also are cognizant that there's a lot of crime and illicit activity that goes on across that border, that it can be a vector for disease and criminality as well.

If there is State failure and breakdown on the Burma side of the border, it negatively impacts China's aspirations in southwest

China to improve the economic and—economic situation in Sichuan province and in that area.

So they do not want that. They will try to work this—they will navigate the situation as best they can and do—you know, they'll play all sides. They do not—they're not—they have no moral compunction about working with anybody. I mean, let's be very clear. Whereas, we do. We do have a limiting principle.

Mr. BARR. Understood.

Ms. CURRIE. They do not. That's the main difference.

Mr. BARR. I understand, Ambassador.

Let me—let me just ask you to kind of comment on the fact that Beijing, along with Moscow, have blocked the U.N. Security Council statement condemning the coup. Your testimony was pretty rich about the failure of the Security Council.

I mean, if China is a big player in blocking the condemnation of the coup at the Security Council level, what do you read into that? What is going on? What is the CCP trying to accomplish there?

Ms. CURRIE. Well, China typically tries to block things like this at the Security Council. It's not necessarily Burma specific. They have a whole excuse matrix that they will, basically, have to be worked through in order to get to them being willing to abstain on any resolution that would involve insertion in what they consider to be a matter of internal affairs of a country.

And they and Russia both still consider the coup to be a matter—an internal matter for Burma and, therefore, not actually a matter of international peace and security.

Now, what we need to do is put them on the spot a little bit more, I believe, and I think that if—up to now because all the meetings in the Council have taken place behind closed doors, all the negotiations on statements have taken place behind closed doors, they've been able to hide behind all of that.

If we push some of this more out into the public, then they have to be more accountable for what they're doing in the council. Right now, they haven't blocked anything because the U.K. has not brought forward a resolution. So there's been nothing for them to really block except for statements.

Mr. BARR. In my remaining time, just really quickly—and I did not get a chance to ask about Chinese vaccine diplomacy in Burma—but, broadly, how can the U.S. prevent Chinese malign influence in Burma?

Ms. CURRIE. By associating ourselves with the people and the positive aspects of this movement that have such broad popular support.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. BARR. Thank you. Yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. I now recognize Representative Joaquin Castro of Texas, the Chair of the Subcommittee on International Development, International Organizations, and Global Social Impact, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairman. I joined Rep. Tenney in introducing a resolution urging the United Nations Security Council to impose an arms embargo on the Burmese military. Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, I know you've also been urging for the same action.

So, Ambassador, can you explain the dynamics at the U.N. Security Council around imposing such an embargo? What countries are preventing this action and what can we in Congress do to help?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Castro.

In the Security Council, you know, so I approached the—China. We have got to—we'd like to have, you know, stronger action from the Security Council.

But China, clearly, stated to me that whatever resolution that include a sanction regime they will not accept it. But for us, we need really strong action from Security Council.

So that is why I fully agree with Kelley that, you know, we make it—things open—open settings. So that's the way we can push harder and handle, and I also wish that the United States, together with the United Kingdom, to push harder in the Security Council.

That's the way we can get something from the Security Council, not—it is the press statement—the Presidential statement is not really enough for the people of Myanmar because what we are facing at this time is saving lives of innocent civilians.

So that is why we need stronger action from the U.N. Security Council. So we need to push it further ahead. But the difficult thing that we hear in the Security Council is, basically, is that COVID setting, because, you know, those—you know, the agenda, there is no consensus, that this will be difficult to have an open debate on the—in the particular issue.

That is the—you know, I always have the feedback from our colleague from the U.N. Security Council. But we need to push harder and harder to have something from the U.N. Security Council for the—for sake of the people of Myanmar. Thank you.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

And, Ambassador, many of us in Congress have spoken out strongly against the coup and urge for stronger actions like sanctions against the military. We're in agreement that the military should restore democracy and return back power to the civilian government, which you represent.

But if we're honest with ourselves, when the civilian government was nominally in charge of the country, things weren't exactly peaceful. Most notably, what many have called genocide occurred against the Rohingya.

Obviously, the civilian government had only limited power and the violence was done by the military. However, the civilian government was not critical of these actions and was, in many ways, supportive.

Was this a mistake on the part of the civilian government? And if the civilian government is restored, will it take actions to allow for the voluntary and safe return of the Rohingya people?

Mr. TUN. I think, as I said, the NUG is very clear that, you know, we respect the—you know, the agreement, the bilateral agreement that we have with country concerns like Bangladesh and that also we will pursue, address the issue with the international norms and standards as well as human rights norms and standards.

That is what we are—definitely we are going to pursue it. So the NUG is the interim government, so that we are going to do it once

the—you know, the full blown—the government is being established. So we will address the issue with the international norms and standards.

So those who have a—have the, you know, the right, we have to respect it. So for those whoever inside—in the country we have to respect it. Equality should be respected so that, you know, those who are now in the Bangladeshi side we are always welcome them back to Myanmar.

So we will definitely pursue with the—you know, the agreement that we work with with Bangladesh. So we work on them to live together with us in the peace and harmony. That is what we are looking for.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you. I yield back, Chairman.

Chairman MEEKS. The gentleman yields back.

I now recognize Representative Claudia Tenney of New York, Vice Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on International Development, International Organizations, and Global Corporate Social Impact for 5 minutes.

Ms. TENNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for having this important meeting, as well—along with the Ranking Member, and I also want to say thank you to my colleague, Representative Castro, for being the lead on this with me, and so many other Members who have joined on.

And why this is so important to me, in my district I have over 4,000, maybe 5,000 Burmese refugees, many who have become citizens and outstanding Members of our community. They've been coming to our community for many, many years.

They've been vigilant and diligent in protecting the rights of their family Members and friends, and marching peacefully throughout our community to defend the democratic principles in Burma, and so we are doing everything we can support them.

And Mr. Castro actually kind of took my question, but I thought I'd maybe give the Ambassador, you know, another chance to take a look at it. I just wanted to maybe pose it in a different way.

When we're discussing the—you know, the bill that we put in in our U.N. Security Council arms embargo that we proposed, do you think—and I know this is—this is going to be directed to Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun—do you think that the—that, obviously, we're going to be struggling to get this through China and to Russia because they control so much in the Security Council, and you indicated you're keeping in touch, how—do you think that the possibility of working with India, Vietnam, and other Members to pressure them in a public way as we're trying to do would have any impact on them and bring them to understand the human rights violations and the issues that we're—and trying to restore the democratically elected government back in Burma?

Ambassador?

Mr. TUN. Thanks. Thank you, Ms. Claudia. I think this is very important that, you know, the—we need to put pressure on the—some Members of the Security Council, you know, through all from different channels, you know, through India, through Vietnam, and the others in the Europe and the Latin America and the Africa.

We need to do it from all channels. But the most important thing is we need to point out that this is saving lives, not—nothing else. So this is the humanitarian crisis that we are facing.

So without intervention from the U.N. Security Council, the people in Myanmar will be killed more and more, and if you wait for a minute, an hour, a day, the more people will be killed.

So that, you know, that is, immediate action from the U.N. security is very, very needed, and then the intervention from the U.N. Security Council and international community is needed.

So we—better to put it the way that, you know, saving lives. That is humanitarian. Saving lives, and it is the noble task for the human being. So that is what we really need from the international community and that we need the leadership of the United States in this program.

Ms. TENNEY. Thank you.

Do you think the U.S. should consider secondary type sanctions to target other countries, maybe, who have more extensive trade with Burma? And I'm thinking things like limiting not just the arms trade but, possibly, expanded to commercial trade, investment in gems, timber, energy resources, obviously, very important revenue for the Tatmadaw leadership.

Is that something that we could possibly do as a unit in America—a unified front from America.

Mr. TUN. Yes. You know, getting a resolution that involves a sanction from the U.N. Security Council may take time. But time is really of the essence for the—for us. So what we need is some sort of, you know, targeted coordinated sanction for a group of country, like, a group of like-minded countries imposed on this kind of, you know, sanction.

Then this will definitely have the impact on the military as well as those in the region. So that is what we need. So it's that coordinated targeted tougher sanction from a group of country is, you know, this can do it, you know, very quickly manner. And because while we are waiting the—any action from the Security Council, we can do it as a coordinated manner.

Ms. TENNEY. I know you may have answered this question. I just wanted to run it by you again. Do you think that it was a mistake that the ASEAN agreement to recognize or acknowledge the junta leader, Min Aung Hlaing, as Burma's representative? Do you think that was a mistake?

Mr. TUN. It's a—it's very difficult to say, but it's a—one, it's the outcome from the ASEAN leaders meeting. It is—to me, it is very disappointing. Thank you.

Ms. TENNEY. Oka. Do you think that the five-point—we're missing anything in the five-point consensus from the ASEAN leaders summit that——

Mr. TUN. Of course, this is very—they missed a very important point. They should at the—you know, calling the release of, you know, the leaders, Aung San Suu Kyi, president, Win Myint, and unlawful detaining unconditionally and immediately. It is very, very much important point that they are missing because, you know, this is linked to the meaningful dialog among the relevant stakeholders.

Without release of them, there will not be any meaningful dialog among the relevant stakeholders. This is very important.

Ms. TENNEY. Do you think those leaders in exile——

Chairman MEEKS. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. TENNEY. Thank you. I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for taking——

Chairman MEEKS. I now recognize Representative Dina Titus of Nevada for 5 minutes.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Tun, I just tell you how much we respect your courage for being with us today and speaking out about the terrible things happening in your country.

I'd like to ask you and Ms. Ohmar about the humanitarian side of things, if you could comment on just the struggles that everyday people are facing in their lives from shelter to food to just living essentials.

The U.N. has reported that more than 2 million people are facing growing food insecurity due to the political crisis but compounded by COVID, and they are expected to right—scale up their program to provide nutrition assistance in Burma.

I wonder if you could talk to us about what the daily life is like, how the U.S. might work with other agencies through the U.N. or other countries to provide some of the supplies that might be needed, and what we can do to guarantee that those supplies actually get to the people who need them the most.

Ms. OHMAR. May I go ahead with this?

Ms. TITUS. Please.

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you very much. So thank you for this question.

Right now, the humanitarian challenge is really immense. It's actually getting quite widespread across the country for—first of all, is also because this military junta is, like I was saying in the statement, they are—they are, in fact, destroying the people's food storage.

At the same time, they are trying to actually steal even the people from the—like, the rice as a result like that. But the other problem is those as civil servants and public and private sector workers who have joined this movement, there are, like, tens of thousands of them and across the country, and they do not—they do not get their salary for the last 3 months already, and you can imagine how desperate their family situation will be.

And many of them were even kicked out of their public housing by this junta at gunpoint and also now, like, you know, now, right now, the civil servants are now being forced to the point that they were—some of them were at gunpoint but some of them were actually told that they have to return the past 2 months' salary if they do not come and walk right now.

So that's where the challenges they're facing. The civil society also where there are many people depend on, the civil society organizations are being raided, and their bank accounts that the donors are supporting them are now sort of, like, you know, more or less seized by the military, because if you go to get the money from the bank, you will be asked so many questions to the point that you—

like, you know, they will end up being arrested. Many of them are very worried about that.

So they do not have access to the money and they're not getting salary either. So that's why we are having so much problem, and many of the factories are also closed. So now the people are not having this regular income for the last 3 months.

So, yes, it is a very serious situation. The banks are almost bankrupt. I'm sorry, banks are also collapse. So they're having a very serious situation at the moment. Yes.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you. Thank you. I was afraid that that was the case.

Ambassador Tun, do you want to add to that? I know there were some of the USAID folks were there working with some of the civil society, but I'm sure all of that's gone now.

Mr. TUN. Yes, I agree with Ms. Khin Ohmar with regard to what she responds to your question. So because, you know, it is really—we are now in the humanitarian crisis because you know, the economy, according to the U.N. it's going to collapse.

So that is the serious situation that we are having, so we cannot prolong this kind of crisis for the—for our future. So we need to take action as quick as possible. People—now people are really in a dire situation. I definitely can—coming, you know, months it's a more difficult situation that, you know, people will be facing.

So that is why we always trust that we need immediate action from the international community to stop the situation that we are facing.

Ms. TITUS. You know, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights said in late March that Burma may be headed for full-blown conflict like you're seeing in Syria. Is your assessment of it that dire and that immediate?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. May I take this question? I think that that is what we want to avoid. But the situation that we are—we are facing——

Chairman MEEKS. The gentlelady's time has expired.

I now recognize Representative Peter Meijer of Michigan for 5 minutes.

Ms. TITUS. I yield back.

[No response.]

Chairman MEEKS. Representative Meijer, unmute.

[No response.]

Chairman MEEKS. Representative Meijer?

[No response.]

Chairman MEEKS. We will come back to Representative Meijer.

I now recognize Representative Young Kim of California, the Vice Ranking Member of California and Asia, the Pacific, Central Asia, and Nonproliferation for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, Chairman Meeks, and thank you, Ranking Member McCaul.

You know, we had this briefing our committee first held on the situation in Myanmar in February. Since then, my office has received calls and requests from the small but very significant number of Burmese Americans to meet with them and participate in the rallies that they organized to raise awareness of the ongoing

human rights situation. So I greatly appreciate our committee taking the time to discuss this ongoing crisis in Myanmar.

This has really resulted in a deteriorating civil and human rights situation, the murdering of unarmed civilians and continued persecution of ethnic minorities, all at the hands of a brutal military junta that unilaterally seized power in a coup against Myanmar's democratically elected government in February.

However, Myanmar is no stranger to conflict and strife. Over the past few decades, the ethnic minorities of Myanmar have been subjected to targeted violence from the military and militias, as well as larger-scale ethnic cleansing campaigns, stimulating widespread unrest and forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes into refugee camps in neighboring countries.

With the coup in February, these trends are likely to worsen further. So a question to you, Ambassador Currie. What new challenges may rise in the weeks and months ahead, including the possibility of new refugee flows to neighboring countries or the deepening of the country's decades-long civil war?

So how should the United States seek to avoid such scenarios and what could Congress do to guide the U.S. policy?

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you, Congresswoman Kim.

I believe that the biggest threat right now is complete State collapse and State failure with the economy going just completely in free fall. The governance structures that the junta relies on to govern the country have collapsed in many places or are only being held up through martial law and at the point of a gun.

You're really looking at a State failure scenario if the trends continue at the levels of violence and the level of noncooperation from the population continues. You just—they are on a collision course right now.

And yes, this will inevitably lead to greater refugee outflows across the region and will really—and lead to increased criminality, increased narcotics trafficking, just all sorts of ill effects across the region.

I think that what the U.S. Congress can do is, as I mentioned in previous—mentioned previously, explicitly authorize cross border assistance that will allow U.S. humanitarian assistance, including assistance provided through U.N. agencies, funds, and programs to reach those who are fleeing into what are called liberated or safe areas that are under the control of ethnic nationality arms group—armed groups, and be willing to deal with those local authorities; also by reinforcing, strengthening, and working directly with the National Unity Government and helping it to stand up structures that can govern the country, that can distribute humanitarian assistance, that can reach people in need we can help the Burmese people and make our assistance to them more effective and avoid some of the unintended consequences if we were to, for instance, continue to use existing channels that flow through ministries that are nominally under the control of the junta.

We do not want to subject our assistance to misuse or abuse by the military junta. So we need to go back to our past practice of using parallel and cross border structures to deliver assistance to the people.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you very much. Those are great suggestions. We should take—very much take heed of your advice. You know, I would also like to highlight the role of ASEAN that it has played in attempting to mediate the crisis in Myanmar.

Although ASEAN acted in unison to hold a summit with its Members in the months following the February coup and released, like, a five-point plan to resolve the crisis.

Multiple missteps have been made along the way that seriously jeopardize the effectiveness of their influence and response. So, in particular, the summit was jeopardized from the start by inviting a representative of the militia junta to represent Myanmar in negotiations but excluded any representation from the National Unity Government.

You know, ASEAN's capacity to mediate Myanmar's crisis further when, after specifically calling for an end to the violence, Myanmar's military continued to quash dissent and protest violently by openly attacking and killing its own people.

So, Ambassador Currie——

Chairman MEEKS. The gentlelady's time has expired. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Okay. Well, thank you. I hope I can continue this if there is time. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. I now recognize Representative Ted Lieu of California for 5 minutes.

[No response.]

Mr. LEVIN. You're muted, Ted.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Chairman Meeks, for calling this important hearing.

I'd like to followup on the line of questioning from Representative Brad Sherman.

So Ambassador Tun, is there a representative from the Rohingya?

Mr. TUN. So I—could you repeat the question again, because I missed——

Mr. LIEU. In the National Unity Government that was recently formed does it include a representative of the Rohingya people?

Mr. TUN. So, so far there is no representative from Rohingya in the NUG.

Mr. LIEU. So let me—let me just tell you the problem there. There was a article in Time magazine dated March 8th, 2018, that estimates more than 43,000 Rohingya parents have been reported lost, presumed dead. Other reports estimate about 25,000 Rohingya may have been killed.

There was a study in January 2018 that estimated that there are also an additional 18,000 acts of sexual violence against women and girls, and it's estimated that 116,000 Rohingya were beaten and 36,000 were thrown into fires.

In a recent New York Times article—I'm just going to quote from it—states that, "rather than condemn the systematic executions, rapes, and village burnings, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Prize Laureate, defended the generals. There was little outcry in Myanmar over the brutal persecution of ethnic minorities.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi defended the military at The Hague, where Myanmar was accused of genocide against Rohingya.

Myanmar's diplomats, including Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun, fell in line, earning the country's international scorn."

So how can we trust that the Rohingya aren't going to be continued to be killed if we support the National Unity Government? Why should we support you?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. You know, because, you know, as I mentioned earlier, now we are fighting the common enemy. So all the issues that happened in Myanmar are because of the military. So we—first, we need to focus on the common enemy first.

Then, you know, as I mentioned earlier, the NUG government addressed the issue in line with the, you know, international norms and standards, in line with the, you know, the international human rights—human rights law and international humanitarian law, and then also what we—what we believe is that NUG is the interim government.

And then when it's come to the, you know, the permanent one, we were the—you know, because we believe in engagement, we believe in dialog, so all the outstanding issue that we faced, definitely, we can resolve it through the dialog or with the participation from the—all relevant stakeholders and this kind of inclusive dialog will find a way to get the—you know, to solve the problem.

That is what we believe is that, you know, that is what we need, the support from the international community toward the National Unity Government.

Mr. LIEU. Let me ask you another question. Can the Rohingya people get citizenship in your country?

Mr. TUN. Yes, of course. Of course. Those who are in the—you know, that is why we—I want to point out is that, you know, those we—the NUG government will pursue in accordance with the international norms and standards. Those who are entitled they were the—get the citizenship and those whoever get their citizenship they were enjoying the fundamental rights that the others like.

So that is what we believe. We believe in the democracy. We believe in the human rights. That is why I am in favor inside the country they have to enshrine the right, same like the others. That is what I believe.

Mr. LIEU. So thank you. I'm going to reclaim my time.

So the military coup is unacceptable, and I would hope that the military would stop killing people and we need to reverse the coup. At the same time, I do not see any change in the National Unity Government when you cannot even include a representative of the Rohingya people.

The U.N. has said that the government of which you were a part of had genocidal intent and ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people, and you still cannot even manage to have a representative of the Rohingya people in the Unity Government.

So I cannot support your National Unity Government and I will oppose efforts for the United States to support the National Unity Government until you commit to having at least a representative from the Rohingya people and you commit to stopping the genocide of the Rohingya people.

I yield back.

Chairman MEEKS. Time has expired. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize Representative Meijer of Michigan for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEIJER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for holding this hearing today and to our guests who are joining us to share their wisdom and their experience.

Like Ms. Tenney, I also have a significant Burmese population in my district. There are over 4,000 Burmese and Burmese Americans in west Michigan, many of whom were—fled during the 1988 coup, which I know that both Ambassador Tun and Ms. Ohmar, you know, lived through, right, experienced firsthand.

I think of the earlier comments just about how, initially, when the kind of green shoots of democracy were first occurring when Aung San Suu Kyi kind of burst onto the scene and then the Nobel Prize—the Nobel Peace Prize and all these positive efforts how much excitement there was that after decades of kind of brutal repression and military dictatorships and coups that the Tatmadaw were finally starting to relinquish some of their grasp.

I think it's pretty clear to us right now that that was, as Ms. Currie mentioned, that that relinquishment was a bit in name only, and I think they have sought to take the best benefits of that cooling—or that warming of relations, that thawing of tensions with the rest of the world and the Western world in particular, and turn that into being able to line their own pockets and do what they can to further cement their hold on the country, and the coup on February 1st, I think, made that very clear.

I'm, obviously, very sympathetic to the tension between the recognition of the genocide against the Rohingya and the plight that they're in, you know, in balancing how we can achieve stability and peace and prosperity in the region in the short term.

But I guess I'm very concerned about the way that the kind of—the peaceful urban protesters and some of the existing fighting organizations like the Kachin Independence Army, which I think just a day and a half ago shot down a helicopter of the junta regime.

You know, I wanted to ask Ambassador Tun, I guess, first and foremost, while I see the benefit of kind of a rainbow coalition of various ethnic groups kind of coming together who had traditionally been just aligned against the government but now have common cause in kind of bringing—or gets aligned against the Tatmadaw and now have common cause in establishing a unity government, are—do you think that that can be a sustainable balance in the long term, especially when you have—when we have seen evidence in the past of when long-running armed conflicts then try to implement the more reformist democratic mind set individuals and how they can quickly result in the people who have the guns having the say? Could you speak to that, Ambassador Tun?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Meijer.

It is true that, you know, the situation that we are having, especially, you know, unprecedented unity that we are having at this point, as analysts pointed out that it is over 20 years we do not have this kind of unity among different players, different organizations. It is the time that we have unprecedented unity.

So for sustainability, that is, of course, we also have the consent, you know, because now we are fighting against a common enemy. Once we over this kind of enemy, we still need to talk. That is why we are aiming to help the Federal democratic union.

So because we want to bring all relevant stakeholders in the equal footing in the work together or for the country, because their Federal democratic union, their constitution, will give them the way to bring everyone together again.

So that is the hope. So we always hope for the best. But, of course, you know, we prepare for the worst. Of course, we have to believe very positive points on this regard.

Mr. MEIJER. Yes, thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I think we have spoken to the failures of ASEAN, more broadly, to try to tackle and kind of have a hard framework. So I hope that partners in the region step up.

But just finally, Ms. Currie, can you speak to the fact that if we were to implement sanctions and cutoff some of that funding, specifically, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, do you think that that would really have an operative impact on the Tatmadaw's survival?

Ms. CURRIE. I think it would definitely clip their wings. They rely on the revenue from oil and gas substantially for a lot of what they do. The other thing that I think that we could definitely do is put some more pressure on Singapore.

The junta is, clearly, having some challenges with access to hard currency, and they hold accounts in Singapore that continue to be able to participate in purchases and dollar auctions. We need to do more to cutoff their access to hard currency, and putting sanctions on MOGE would, certainly, put a big chunk of pressure on them, yes.

Mr. MEIJER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. BERA [presiding]. Thank you. Let me go ahead and recognize the gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Cicilline.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you. I really want to thank Chairman Meeks and Ranking Member McCaul for this really important hearing.

I had the fortune of traveling to Myanmar and to meet the Burmese people and to see a nation struggling, and one that really has attempted to persevere under the weight of successive military dictatorships.

But I also had the opportunity to visit the Rohingya in Bangladesh in the camps, and my first question is really to Ambassador Tun. Three quarters of a million Rohingya refugees were forced from Myanmar into Bangladesh at the direction of the Tatmadaw.

Roughly, 600,000 remain in Myanmar and there is justifiable concern for their well-being and their safety. So what is the current state of Myanmar's remaining Rohingya? How likely are they to be—remain safe and what is the status of the Rohingya refugees?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Cicilline. To be very frank, under the military government we all are the same. You know, we are—we—the human rights violations, atrocity taking place everywhere in the country. So we have a concern with each and everyone, including those Rohingya in the camps in Rakhine State.

So, of course, we do not know exactly. To me, I do not know exactly the situation. But, of course, we have the concern because they already have the difficulties. So their situation because of the—you know, the coup and compounded the challenges that they already faced.

So that is why we keep telling the international community that, you know, please end this military coup. Please support us to end the military coup. That is that what we really want.

So then the next step where we will, you know, we work together to solve the problem, find a sustainable solution with regard to this matter. You know, that is very important for us.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Ambassador, thank you.

You know, I've heard your responses to Mr. Lieu and Mr. Sherman, and I can tell you I met with Members of the Rohingya community who were Members of the elected government and no longer have citizenship.

So this issue about making the Rohingya a Stateless people is a serious one. Democracy means more than uttering the words. It means respecting the basic human rights of all of your citizens.

And so I hope you hear the message loudly and clearly that we expect the Rohingya to be repatriated to their own country and, obviously, be kept safe.

But I want to turn now to a question about food security. The U.N. has reported more than 2 million people in Burma are facing growing food insecurity due to this crisis, and both the political crisis as well as the COVID–19 pandemic, with families being forced to skip meals, obviously, having less nutrition.

The World Food Programme is scaling up its response in Burma to providing assistance to more than 3.3 million people in the coming months. What is the kind of current status of the humanitarian effort in Burma?

I do not know, Ambassador Currie or Ambassador Tun, who is best prepared to answer that.

Mr. TUN. May I—may I take it?

Ms. CURRIE. Sure, Ambassador Tun. Please.

Mr. TUN. Yes. Thank you. Thank you.

Because this is a really huge challenge that we are facing, because the one hand we do not want any country to recognize the military, to engage with the military.

But at the same time, we pay attention for the humanitarian assistance. But this is why what we like to request the international community, including the United Nations and our government partners, whatever the assistance that you make please consult with the National Unity Government and go through the CSO and the other NGO's.

That is what we'd like to request. The humanitarian assistance is very important for all of us at this point. I think that Ambassador Currie may have some more points to add.

Mr. CICILLINE. And, Ambassador Currie, if you can also respond to the independent investigative mechanism for Myanmar. I know there's been some concern about evidence being destroyed, and is this an effort that we can provide additional resources to? This is, ultimately, about accountability.

And Facebook, I know, the platform was used to spread hate speech against the Rohingya and the ability to kind of collect that information is going to be really critical.

Ms. CURRIE. Thank you. I would add that right now is—it's rice harvesting season. It's the dry season. Rice harvest is taking place

(audio interference) very critical that that be able to take (audio interference). Can you all hear me?

Mr. CICILLINE. Yes.

Ms. CURRIE. And then on the IIMM, we need to increase U.S. contributions and also work within the Human Rights Council and within the General Assembly to extend the mandate of the IIMM to make sure that they can investigate all the atrocities that have taken place, not just the ones in the Rohingya areas, and they're already doing that, to some degree. But we can—we can support that more robustly. Thank you.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you so much. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. BERA. Great. Thank you. Let me go to recognize the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Pfluger.

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. (Audio interference) discuss this important issue and, obviously, take a look at the atrocities that have happened and make sure that we, as a country, are standing up for the ideals that have made America what it is, and that we continue to look around the world at ways to influence.

And so I'd like to start, Ambassador Currie, by just kind of asking about the—some of the investments that have been made by some Western energy companies, whether it's Chevron or Total or some of the others, and how important has that infrastructure been to helping with the poverty, to helping with some of the quality of life throughout the country in the last couple of decades?

Ms. CURRIE. I would say that, on balance, the investments in oil and gas infrastructure not just by Western countries but overall have, largely, enabled the military to avoid the consequences of its failure to use resources to invest in the people of the country and have allowed the military to purchase weapons to turn on its own people.

The civilian government, ostensibly, gained control of those resources starting in 2010, 2012, and the NLD government controlled them starting in 2015 and started to institute policies under the Extractive and—the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and other ways to try to make them more—make those revenues go more toward the health and welfare of the Burmese people.

But now that those revenues are flowing back into the pockets of the Tatmadaw they will, once again, be used to torment the Burmese people, not to support and help them.

Mr. PFLUGER. What are the chances and the threat of if they were abandoned and, you know, expropriated or, even worse, you know, is there a threat that the Chinese could somehow take over those assets and do something else with them? Can you kind of talk to that line of thinking?

Ms. CURRIE. Well, it depends on the assets. You know, you have the offshore facilities that are in the Andaman Sea and then you have onshore facilities, including pipelines that cut across.

The Chinese already have a substantial investment in the oil and gas industry in Burma, as does India and even Malaysia, the United States, others.

The Yadana pipeline is servicing a mature field and it—they're—it's unlikely that it would be—that the impact of the U.S. withdrawal there would mean much.

One of the challenges for the Burmese is that they have no refining capability. So even if they're able to export the oil and—or even if they're able to pump the oil and gas that they cannot refine it and sell it on the open market.

So that's why the Yadana pipeline flows to Thailand, where the Petroleum Authority of Thailand actually refines it and then gives a portion of it back to Burma and then sells the rest on the stock market.

So it's a—you know, they're the—what has—what I think there's a debatable proposition about whether shutting—whether pulling out U.S. investment will have much of an impact, I know that it will take some time for them to be able to replace the U.S. capabilities that are currently allowing the production to continue.

And in that time, if we're also working on the financial side to cutoff the flow or to require that if U.S. entities stay involved that they put the funds into an escrow account instead of sending them to the military, that's another option where the U.S. companies and other multinationals do not have to withdraw. They just do not pay the royalties to the junta. They put them in an account that's set aside for the people.

Mr. PFLUGER. Ambassador, thank you very much for that explanation. Just very quickly, Ambassador Tun, in the remaining 40 seconds, do you agree with, you know, kind of the philosophy of making sure that the funds are going to be flowing in the right direction and that we do not have some secondary or tertiary effect that could be worse?

Mr. TUN. At this time, our focus is to stop any money inflow into the military regime. So whatever way that you can cutoff, please do so. That is the quick question that I'd like to respond. Please cut the money inflow into the military regime.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With that, I yield.

Mr. BERA. Great, thank you. Let me go ahead and recognize the gentlelady from Minnesota, Ms. Omar.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you, and thanks to our panel for joining us today for this really critical conversation.

I wanted to chat a little bit with Ms. Ohmar. I know that you have previously been supportive of a U.N. Security Council referral to the situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.

Of course, the ICC has claimed some jurisdiction through the Bangladesh referral, and there's also an ongoing case at the ICJ regarding the Rohingya genocide.

What would you like to see happen in terms of an investigation and prosecution for the atrocity crimes being committed this year, and do you see the ICC as the best venue? Should we be thinking about helping set up a hybrid court?

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you, Congresswoman Omar.

Yes, my stand and our organization's stand too was resistant on the support of the, you know, situation overall referral to the ICC, that we know that can only happen with the Security Council referral. So that's why we also are calling for the option—another option, if it is not possible, to set up an ad hoc international tribunal that can be commissioned as well.

And if the Security Council will not move, that is another possibility through the General Assembly as well. So that's something

that we have been calling for, and we know the current—the jurisdiction that ICC can exercise through the Bangladesh is very limited.

It is not enough and it does not cover all these—all these violence the Rohingya community face before they fled into the—into Bangladesh.

And we mean all of these crimes, including the sexual violence against women. All of these are—like, I met with many of these Rohingya sisters, you know, who are the rape survivors of this military regime—the military.

So we need to address all of these crimes, but not only for the Rohingya people but also for all of the crimes across other ethnic areas as well as those crimes against humanity happening for the last 3 months.

And only with the Security Council referral that we will be able to address all of these crimes at the ICC. So we would like for the U.S. Government to also just recognize the genocide definition and also support all our efforts to—at the Security Council either to refer to ICC or set up an independent ad hoc tribunal.

That will be the best option. But we are also calling on the National Unity Government to actually sign the Rome Statute so that we will be able to have the ICC also look into the other crimes as well.

Thank you.

Ms. OMAR. I know Currie wants to add something but let me pose this question and then I'll give you a minute to do that as well.

Obviously, one of the barriers to establishing justice for the victims, both with the Rohingyas and the pro-democracy protesters, right now is destruction of evidence, and I know that you mentioned in your testimony that the Burmese military is covering up their gross humanitarian violations.

So how can the United States be supportive in terms of documentation so that there are—there is sufficient evidence when the ability for prosecution can exist?

Again, to Ms. Ohmar and then we'll let Currie chime in if we have a couple of seconds.

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you for this question.

For the last few decades since the previous military regime, the local organizations, local civil society organizations, when it comes to the rape and sexual violence, particularly, the ethnic women organizations, they've been the one who have been documenting and presenting to the United Nations and to the international community.

I will come back to this—to them for this one as well, because they are well experienced, you know, how to document not only the human rights documentation but also the evidence collections.

And, of course, it's very—extremely challenging now and with this military junta how to collect and preserve those evidences. But together with this—the IIMM, the United Nations established mechanisms, I think the local civil society organizations, women's organizations, are in—they are placed best to collaborate with the international mechanisms to work together, and we need all your support for that to happen.

Thank you.

Mr. BERA. Ms. Currie, if you could keep your answer short.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. CURRIE. Very, very short.

Just that there is also the possibility without signing the Rome Statute for the National Unity Government to do a self-referral under the ICC statute under Article 12. So they can just refer themselves—refer Burma themselves to the ICC.

Mr. BERA. Great. Let me go——

Mr. TUN. We have already engaged with the ICC. We are already engaged with that.

Mr. BERA. Let me go and recognize the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Levin, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

You know, I want to, first, say that I stand with Mr. Lieu and other colleagues in that any simple return to the status quo ante before the coup is not acceptable, and I want to explore with you whether there's real hope of a new day between the Bamar majority and the various ethnic majority—ethnic minorities, not just the Rohingya but the Karen, Kachin, Mon, and others who make up 30 percent of the population of Burma all around the periphery.

My first trip as a Member of Congress was to Bangladesh, including Cox's Bazar and the Rohingya refugee camps. I will not belabor the point of the horror of that. But, you know, Ambassador Tun, we—it is simply unacceptable that we are still where we are in talking about the lack of citizenship, the lack of safe return, and on and on.

But my question is with the Rohingya and others, I've seen increasing reports about dialog between different minority groups and hope for a different future. You know, Burma was basically a State created—that's a child of colonialism. You know, a State whose boundaries were kind of imposed by European powers.

It's never cohered yet to this day as an inclusive democracy. And, Ms. Ohmar, you know, I'm a scholar of Buddhism. I was supposed to get a Ph.D. and be a professor of Asian religions, but I realized I should come and hang out with you all instead and talk about policy.

So I'm not shy to say that the Burmese majority, the Buddhist majority, has been unable to see the humanity and the citizenship of others.

I feel like you might be a leader in this regard. Is there new hope in this horrible moment of repression from the Tatmadaw in a different future for Burma and how can we get there?

Ms. OHMAR. I think that—the question is directed to me, is it? Sorry, I'm——

Mr. LEVIN. Yes. Yes, ma'am. Yes.

Ms. OHMAR. With—in the past 3 months, I see—I see a ray of hope because I see the different ethnic communities coming together while I also see, particularly from the Buddhists, Brahma majority, are showing their sympathy and understanding—empathy to the other ethnic communities such as, like, you know, Karen and Kachin, who face the—this kind this kind of abhorrent violence from the military for many generations.

Mr. LEVIN. Yes.

Ms. OHMAR. They are publicly writing on the social media and also they are publicly apologizing to the ethnic communities, including to the Rohingya people. Even, Congressman, I received a public apology to my direct messages or, like, writing, for—like they have assaulted and threatened and harassment me for my support and standing for the Rohingya people.

So I think this——

Mr. LEVIN. So this—so let me just ask—I'm so glad to hear that. But this Unity Government, obviously, isn't the big vehicle here.

What can we do as the Congress and as the United States to support authentic bottom-up dialog and, you know, democracy building amongst the Bamar majority and the different minority groups? And I—you know, Ambassador Currie as well, or if you have more to say about that, Ms. Ohmar.

Ms. OHMAR. Yes, thank you. I will say that, first of all, Burma never had a chance to process a nation building. But with this current moment, this is the best chance and the best time—I mean, the first time that I've ever seen the opening opportunity.

I would like you to help and facilitate and support us by bringing these communities together, and in that what we really need is, like, you know, I look into the NUG and there is a potential because within the NUG there are different ministers who already has taken the stand on the universality of—universality of human rights as well as, like, supporting the Rohingya community as well.

So we need to encourage these elements within the NUG to be able to go up to the level of holding such dialogs among the different communities and with your support.

Of course, you know, like, we will—we will have to hold the NUG accountable for the human rights. We will have to hold the NUG accountable for the—for the Rohingya people as well.

Make sure that Rohingya people are also included in the process of the NUG and the leadership. But at the same time, NUG needs your support to be able to get to that point.

So I think this is our proposal to the U.S. Government is support the NUG but make sure that we all—we all hold the NUG to account for what they have to stand on the principles of human rights and as well as the protection of the ethnic and religious minorities, particularly the Rohingya people, that—as they are the most persecuted.

Thank you very much.

Mr. LEVIN. Well, I guess my time has expired, Mr. Chairman, so I better yield back. Thank you. Beautiful statement. Well, I—we'll be here to support that dialog one way or another, whatever is most appropriate. Thanks.

Mr. BERA. Great. Thank you. Let me go ahead and recognize the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, Ms. Houlahan.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Hi, and thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you so much to everybody for your really thoughtful conversation. I have also had the opportunity to go to Burma more than once and it's a beautiful country, and I'm devastated by what's happening there.

I am fortunate enough that I'm on the Foreign Affairs Committee, but specifically on the Asia Subcommittee and another one that's new that's called the Foreign Affairs Committee on Inter-

national Development, International Organizations, and Global Social Impact—its global corporate social impact, importantly.

And so I was hoping that I might ask the both Ambassadors if they could speak a little bit about the role that the U.S. and our allies, businesses, for-profit businesses, could have if we stayed in country rather than imposing sanctions.

I'm not specifically talking about no oil, gas, those kinds of, you know, meanies or baddies that we've all been talking about but I'm talking about other businesses that may be helping or not negatively impacting the Burmese people themselves and allowing them to continue to have, potentially, jobs and otherwise.

So if maybe I could start with Ambassador Tun to ask if there's any value at all to maintaining some aspects of our businesses and our allies' businesses in Burma.

Mr. TUN. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Houlahan. I think it's very difficult, you know, if we keep the—you know, the business as usual, then it's a benefit to the military. So my short answer is that do not do any business under this military. That is what we—we need to change their behavior. So if we go like this, definitely, they will be surviving. So we need to stop that. Thank you.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And, Ambassador Currie, would you—Currie, would you be able to add to that? Is it your opinion that no business at all—all business being barred from the U.S. and our allies would be their best course of action?

Ms. CURRIE. I think that the key is to avoid doing business with the military. Sorry, my dog just started barking. I do not know if you hear. The perils of working at home.

But I think the key is to avoid working with the junta, avoid dealing with military on businesses as well as the crony businesses that support the military.

Unfortunately, right now due to the situation and, basically, the economic collapse or the country—of the country under the civil disobedience movement and the work stoppages that are going on, there's not a whole lot of economic activity taking place.

What we do need to do is try to find those mechanisms. There are projects that do work on small-scale income generation for IDP women, for instance. Those activities can continue and should—we should continue to lean into that sort of thing.

But that's not what's going to—that's incredibly different from the Chevron investment in the Yadana pipeline. I'm thinking about things like Turquoise Mountain's work with Rakhine IDP weavers on—in peri-urban areas of Yangon to produce woven fabrics for—that then get sold into high-end——

Ms. HOULAHAN. But not all of those are NGO driven. Some of those are actually for-profit driven.

Ms. CURRIE. They are—they are joint public-private partnerships.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Right.

Ms. CURRIE. And so I think that right now, if we can look primarily in areas where there are joint public-private partnerships available and where we can ensure that companies are engaging, either whether in their—if they're extractive industries they need to be strictly adhering to EITI standards.

If they're not in extractive industries they need to have very high awareness around who their partners are on the ground. That's the key is being able to know your partner and being able to have confidence that they are not feeding into the military.

And also, you know, looking at things like tax revenue and where your tax revenue is going.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Yes, exactly. And my next question—my last question is in a similar kind of should we stay or should we go line, which is in light of the coup and the very clear uncertainty of the future and when, if at any point, this will all clear up, what should the U.S. assistance to Burma look like in the near term?

What should it look like as we move forward? And I would love to know from Ambassador Currie and Ms. Ohmar, if you would not mind answering that question for me.

Ms. CURRIE. So I'll very quickly reiterate. In the past, the United States was able to push assistance into Burma through parallel channels and through—and through cross border channels that avoided the military and military-run enterprises and ministries.

We can go back to that model, and we have seen this happen in other countries and other contexts where the government is not trusted or capable.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Ohmar? Ms. Ohmar?

Ms. OHMAR. I will say again, Ambassador Currie as well, I think what we really need is the assistance to be able to reach to all the most vulnerable and needy communities across the country.

In light of the coup, this is why the situation is. So we also need, like I said in the earlier, we need your support and your engagement with the Thai government, for example, to help to—for the Thai government to agree to open the humanitarian aid corridors along the border areas. That goes to the Indian government as well.

So if you could help us do that, then we will be able to save a lot of lives by all kinds of means, and our civil society is very resilient and also very vibrant with so much capacity among the—also the—among the ethnic community. So we will appreciate that. Thank you.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. BERA. Thank you. Let me go ahead and recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Malinowski.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you so much, Mr. Bera. Hello to all of our—all of our witnesses. I want to just start actually by saying a few words. I have—I have good friends on this panel, but particularly to Ms. Ohmar.

Members of the committee heard a little bit about her story, how she was a refugee from the 1988 protest movement against the military government.

You all should know that she was actually one of the first, I think, three or four Burmese refugees to come to the United States at that time, and I know because I was there and knew her as a slightly younger woman, college student at Simon's Rock College up in upState New York.

And I saw you grow from those young confusing days into a leader and a leader in what turned out to be a multi-decades struggle to return democracy to Burma.

You mentioned you testified to Congress 20 years ago, 25 years ago, making very similar points as you are today about the Burmese military and, you know, I worry a little bit that you may feel that it was all in vain, that you're right back where you started. And I just want to tell you that that is not the case.

Thanks to you and your generation, Burma does have a civil society now. It had 10 years of not true democracy but relative freedom, during which people had a chance to begin to have these kinds of conversations.

Thanks to you and your generation, there is a younger generation in Burma now who really understands what it means to exercise the responsibilities of democratic citizenship.

And we have heard in this hearing just how extraordinary this movement is. It's completely different from what we saw in past Burmese democratic uprisings in its sophistication, its level of organization, its determination, its skill, and that is the product of the work that you and many others did over the years.

I believe the military has much less legitimacy today. Back in the 1990's when we were working on this for the first time, all the nations of Asia, basically, dealt with the military junta as the government of Burma that had always been the government of Burma. That's a little bit different right now.

You know, we heard from Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun today and everyone should remember he is speaking to us as the Permanent Representative of the country of Burma to the United Nations, recognized by the United Nations.

He's not speaking for some exile government or some nongovernmental group. He is the recognized representative of his country, and that complicates matters for the Burmese military junta in a very, very serious way.

And I also think that although the U.S. has always been on the side of the Burmese people, this is now a much higher priority for the U.S. Government than it ever has been.

I think the Biden Administration's response—there's more that can be done and we have heard great ideas here. But I think it has been exemplary in the first two or 3 months of this administration, from the freezing of over a billion dollars of funds held by this junta in the American financial system, to, I think, a very sophisticated sanctions policy that we have seen unfold, and I expect more to come.

So you should feel a sense of accomplishment, as terrible as the situation is today.

A couple of quick questions. Ambassador Currie, you gave us a really interesting and, I think, insightful assessment of China's complicated role, more complicated than some might imagine, based on just the fact that China, ideologically, is not going to be in favor of democracy in Burma.

We have heard a little bit less in this hearing about Russia, which seems to me actually at the United Nations to be a much more unvarnished supporter of the Burmese junta. There's a military-to-military relationship. Could you say a little bit more about that?

Ms. CURRIE. Sure. Russia is primarily the arms dealer for the Tatmadaw and they have no bones about it and they, as you said,

have been more unvarnished in their willingness to accept the coup just as they were—you know, just as they are unvarnished in their support for Assad in Syria.

They are completely amoral about all of this and they do not care. They do not care about democracy and they, certainly, do not care about any of that, the human rights considerations here. They will—they like their client.

That said, if they are—if they lose China in resistance to U.N. Security Council action, I find it hard to see them acting alone on this. This isn't Syria.

They do not have as much strategic input in Burma. It's much more transactional for them and just an opportunity to be chaos agents, in my opinion. And I think that if we can move China to abstain, then Russia will follow them.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Great. Thank you so much. I yield back.

Mr. BERA. Great. Thank you. I see Ms. Manning's camera, but I do not see Ms. Manning. So let's go to the gentleman from California, Mr. Vargas, and then we'll come back to Ms. Manning.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the committee for holding this hearing and especially the witnesses today. Since I guess I'm not last but almost last, I've been privileged to hear most of the discussion here and many of the questions that I had have been answered.

I do want to comment, however, that I, too, have great concern over the Rohingya and the situation that they face outside of the country and inside the country, and hope that they will be respected and cared for and I look forward to that happening.

I do have one question that I thought Mr. Malinowski was going to followup on and that is China, and we have heard quite a bit about it.

But I'm surprised that they're not meddling more in this situation, not only because, obviously, it's on the border but, as Mr. Wilson very appropriately and proudly mentioned, and his father was a Flying Tiger, the United States has a very long history with Burma, a very proud history, and that's why I would think that the Chinese would want to meddle more in the situation in Myanmar.

But they haven't. Why is that? Ambassador Currie, why do not you handle that one?

Ms. CURRIE. Well, I think that—I think they're meddling a lot, actually. I think they're trying to shore up their own interest, which is what they do best in these situations, from their own perspective.

But their interests are very narrowly cast and so they are doing things that are not helping them, and when they have taken an action in one way or the other, it has set off protests against them and put them in uncomfortable positions.

I think they are in an uncomfortable position and they're not quite sure what to do because this has gone on and has unfolded in a way that they're not really comfortable with.

I think the thing that makes them probably most uncomfortable is the way that the protesters in Burma have linked up with protesters across the region, several of whom also are agitating against the Chinese, whether it's the Chinese Communist Party,

whether it's the ones in Taiwan or the protesters in Hong Kong as part of the Milk Tea Alliance.

But I think that has really got them off balance. I think they, frankly, are a little off balance. They've resorted to their usual tools but they aren't working very well.

Mr. VARGAS. But I guess I would ask that—or comment that the Chinese oftentimes are uncomfortable and they seem to act anyway, and I see them with their Belt and Road acting in places where it's uncomfortable but they continue to act. And that's why the off balance sort of catches me off balance.

I do not understand why they aren't more active here. I mean, it's right on there—obviously, it's on their border. You would think that they'd be much more engaged.

Ms. CURRIE. Their preference is to see what happens and then deal with whoever comes out on top, and because nobody is on top right now and there's not a clear outcome, I think that they are continuing to hold that.

And by keeping things like Security Council deliberations private and not holding them in the public eye more, we're allowing them space to continue to hold back and withhold until—and not have to put their chips on a number, that they can kind of keep their cards close to the vest. I'm sorry, I'm mixing gambling metaphors.

Mr. VARGAS. That's OK. But I do not—I do not understand why they do not want to force or influence who comes out on top. I mean, you mentioned they're going to sit back and wait. You would think that they would be more involved in pushing to see who does come out on top.

Ms. CURRIE. I think they're outcome neutral here, actually. I mean, they just want an outcome. That's what they want. They want somebody to deal with that they can make deals with.

Mr. VARGAS. Okay.

Ms. CURRIE. And they do not really care who it is because they've found over the past 5 years that they can deal with the NLD just fine. They have no problem manipulating the NLD and cutting deals with them.

It worked out great for them the past 5 years, in fact, better than dealing with the junta because they had more legitimacy because they were dealing with a more legitimate government. So they would rather just wait and see and not be forced to make a choice. That's their preference.

Mr. VARGAS. Okay. I heard today and I've read, of course, about the potential 2 million people that have food insecurity. I have to tell you, I have great faith in the United Nations World Food Programme and, in particular, the leader there—the new leader that they've had for a few years, David Beasley.

I always tell him if he was Catholic, we'd make him a saint. But I think he's done great things around the world. He's worked very hard. And, again, how can we help and how can the United Nations World Food Programme help more? Maybe tie it in with what we should do helping people with Taiwan because I know Taiwan also has, obviously, a lot of opportunity to help and has not really done much.

Senator Currie? I mean—Senator Currie—Ambassador Currie?

Ms. CURRIE. Thanks for the promotion, but I'll stick with Ambassador.

Mr. VARGAS. I'm not sure—yes, I'm not sure it is.

Ms. CURRIE. All right. I'm a House girl. I've worked on the House side. So I hear you.

I would say that, you know, the WFP does do amazing work and David Beasley is a wonderful leader there. But I think that the key is to give the U.N. agencies the flexibility to do more cross border.

Again, I'm, like, a one-trick pony here—cross border, cross border, cross border, parallel systems. Allow them—you know, encourage and allow them to go around the blockages with the government or with the—I'm sorry, with the—with the junta that would keep the assistance from getting directly to the people who need it and the most vulnerable people in the country.

Mr. VARGAS. Okay, thank you very much. I have 23 seconds left, so I will not force a question upon anyone, that I just, again, want to thank everyone for being here. Appreciate it, and hopefully we can be more involved.

But it's also a little tricky for us too because we do believe in the human rights aspect so deeply, and it's troubling, the former government.

But anyway, I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. BERA. Great. Thank you, and I still see Ms. Manning's camera but do not see Representative Manning.

So let me go over to—recognize the gentleman from Illinois, Representative Schneider, and I'll be passing the gavel off to the vice Chair of the full committee, Mr. Malinowski. Thank you.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Chairman Bera and Vice Chairman Malinowski, and I want to thank all the witnesses for sharing your perspectives today. So it's good to be here and I have what may or may not be the final question.

But, you know, speaking of perspective, one of the things that has always struck me I like looking at maps in different ways, and if you look at the map of the Indian Ocean as the center of the map rather than the Atlantic Ocean, it's very clear to see the importance of Burma.

It's wedged between China and India. It's—you know, the Indian Ocean, it's Africa, it's the Middle East, it's the Indian subcontinent, it's Australia and Indonesia. It's a rather important area and a lot of people have interest, and I know we have talked about those today.

And maybe, Ambassador Currie, I'll start with you. But, you know, we have talked about China and Russia and India and their respective interests, but these interests intersect with each other and there's an interplay, and how does that affect the decisionmaking we should be doing in Congress and as the United States?

Ms. CURRIE. Well, all of Burma's neighbors as well as countries that have an interest in it, including Japan, the United States, you know, we are all pursuing our own interests in Burma and that's to be expected.

I think that we also have to account for the agency of the Burmese people here, that they're not just a pawn in our great game. They have agency and in the past, past Burmese governments have proven very good and very resilient at managing great power com-

petition over and around their interests and playing powers off of each other, whether it's the U.S. and China or India or ASEAN.

They are quite good at manipulating and the military junta, in particular, because they do not care about the people of the country except as they represent a resource for them to exploit.

So they're perfectly willing to sacrifice the well-being of their own people in order to gain leverage with others, including the United States and other parties. So I think that we have to be mindful that this, you know, like other places is a—it's a complicated situation, and while we're pursuing our interests in this context we have to be mindful that their interests, their agency, people with agency on the ground, that this is not a tabula rasa blank slate, that nothing's going on there and we cannot just shape the events of this country to our will.

So I think that's the first step is to really have a very kind of humble—and then to the extent that we can align our interests and our policies with what the desires and the clear desires of the people of the country are, we're long term going to be better off.

And we saw this that even after people in the country were quite angry with the United States or critical or unhappy when we took the side—when we spoke out in favor of the Rohingya or to defend the Rohingya or criticize what had happened during the Rohingya genocide, there was still a very strong reservoir of support for the United States that underlied this momentary, you know, popular irritation.

And so I think that there's still a strong desire for these things—for alignment with the United States and for what the—the kinds of values that we represent, that we have an enduring appeal in Burma that we can rely on, even though we're not a neighbor and cannot rely on the strategic reserves that the Chinese or the Indians necessarily have.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you. And if I can turn to the Permanent Representative, and thank you for being with us here today.

You're, I imagine, having conversations with the respective representatives from China and Russia at the U.N. Could you share a little bit about those conversations and how it might inform, again, the decisions we're trying to make here in the U.S. Congress?

Mr. TUN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Schneider.

Not lately but before, like, three, 4 weeks ago, when I talked to the Chinese Permanent Representative and he—because they are worried about the—you know, the perception of the people vis-a-vis China because the perception of people toward China is very negative.

So that is what they worry because, you know, I—the perception, that because in the people's eyes, China's always with the military. But China said they are not with the military. They like to see the country, like, stable and the prosperous Myanmar.

But what I was struck is that, you know, this is very important time for China to demonstrate they are with the people of Myanmar, not with the—with the military.

How they can show it, they can, you know, the—condemn the military coup, to condemn the violent act, demand the release of,

you know, the—all the unlawful detainees including leaders, and then to stop, you know, doing business with the military.

That's sort of the point that I expressed. But the point that they always make is that they do not want to get misunderstood from the people of Myanmar because they like to show that they are with the people of Myanmar. But in the eyes of people of Myanmar it's very, very difficult.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you. And Ms. Ohmar, I'm sorry, we're out of time. I would love to hear your perspective as well. But with that, I will yield back.

Mr. MALINOWSKI [presiding]. Thank you. Thank you so much. And I see Representative Manning is back and I will yield 5 minutes to her and then we'll close.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the witnesses for all your testimony and answering so many questions on this very difficult topic.

Ambassador Currie, women continue to risk their lives and play central roles in nonviolence to bring about a true democracy in Burma, even as the Burmese military uses sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war.

How can we best support women in the movement at this time?

Ms. CURRIE. The United States has a long history, going back to the founding of the Women's League of Burma, where I—and I was proud to be there with Ohmar at the first conference of the Women's League of Burma, quietly sitting in a corner crying, watching this amazing event unfold. It was so beautiful to see, and to see the generations that have followed and how they've stepped up in this movement has been tremendous.

At the same time, the dark side of it is the stories that I hear, the messages I get about young women taking Plan B birth control pills with them when they go out to protest because they fear being raped by the military. You know, just these heartbreaking stories of sexual assault and abuse and sexual violence.

Because this is a, you know, pathology that is highly present within the Tatmadaw, and I think that the key is to work with the U.N. agencies that actually do work.

There are a few parts of the U.N. that actually function well. One is the Office of Pramila Patten, who's the SG's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, and she is fantastic and does amazing work.

She has an MOU with the government on this issue that came out of the Rohingya crisis that can now be more broadly applied, and to also continue to support the investigative mechanisms and the other accountability mechanisms and make sure that we're holding people accountable and that we are sanctioning individuals who are involved in sexual violence when we get information about that.

I think that that's a critical thing that we can do. We have done that in other contexts where we have specifically sanctioned in South Sudan, for instance, individuals for sexual violence.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. Some of those details are just horrific. But thank you for those—for your answer.

Ms. Ohmar—and thank you for being with us today—what more can the U.S. and the international community do to ensure the

basic human rights of refugees are protected in neighboring countries throughout what is—what is very likely to be a protracted displacement and what are some of your concerns with respect to the treatment of refugees in the border regions?

Ms. OHMAR. Thank you very much for your question, Madam Congresswoman. The very needs at the moment is, as I was also mentioning earlier, we really need the Thai government to open their border but also allowing the humanitarian agencies to operate, because right now, I mean, the Thailand government has already said, you know, like, best examples are in the previous times for the people fleeing from Burma, and I think we need to get their support again.

And I really hope that the U.S. Government and also the Congress will actually convince the Thai government that they are—this is also their—in their best interest to protect the people of Burma, as well as also, you know, like, to show their humanity side of the country, because Thai civil society has always been supporting our people and Thai government in the past has always been supporting, too, but only now that we are having some difficult times.

So if you could actually get the Thai government on board for the humanitarian assistance to the refugees, not only those who are fleeing right now but also those who remain in the refugee camps who do not have—you know, who are surviving in the very minimum—minimum needs at the moment.

And that we really need the cross border aid because many people in the ethnic revolutionary-controlled areas they really need their support and only through the cross border that we will be able to help them and get their needs reached to them. So thank you very much if you could take that. Yes.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. Let me ask one last quick question. Do you expect that this COVID–19 pandemic will add a complicating factor to get the Thai people to assist?

Ms. OHMAR. This is one of the very worry, locally, definitely. But also, this is also—I think this is also—COVID–19 can be the entry point for the Thai society, Thai communities, to feel confidence if the U.S. will, for example, like, support the Thai government with the COVID–19 vaccines, for example.

And they need it so much. They need it so much. They are very worried or not willing to open the door to the Myanmar people, Burma people, leaving is because they worry about their own situation. So if you will actually support to the Thai government with the COVID–19 vaccines and other necessary—like, including the—like, you know, like, including the quarantine, testing, and monitoring and all of those other necessary elements of what is needed to be for the COVID–19 situation, I think there is a very good chance that the U.S.—I mean, sorry, the Thai communities will come back to welcome the Burma people, will also—I think the Thai government will also come back to take the—take the—take back the—you know, the people like they have done all along in the past. Thank you.

Ms. MANNING. Thanks so much. My time has expired. I yield back.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you so much, Representative Manning, and to all of our Members and, of course, most of all, to our distinguished witnesses, Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, Ambassador Kelley Currie, and our friend, Ms. Khin Ohmar.

I know the Chairman would also want me to recognize our friend and colleague, the Ranking Member of the committee, Mr. McCaul, for his partnership and in helping to put this hearing together, and in all of our bipartisan work together on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

The situation in Burma is going to demand America's attention and this committee's attention for some time to come. This is not a challenge that the United States can meet alone.

But I think it's important for all of us to remember that the United States has a unique historical relationship with Burma and with the people of Burma, having led the international effort for decades to bring Burma closer to democracy.

We cannot do it alone, but there is—there is about zero chance that ASEAN or the United Nations or our allies in Europe or any other international body or institution would be doing the things that they are doing right now to help the Burmese people if not for intensive American engagement and leadership today and in the many years that have preceded this moment.

That's going to demand continued oversight for this—from this committee as we figure out the best ways, the most effective ways, to stand with the Burmese people, and recognizing as well that how we respond to the crisis of democracy in Burma is going to be a test of how the United States responds to the crisis of democracy throughout the world, a test that we absolutely have to pass here and more broadly.

So with that, thank you once again to all of the Members, to our distinguished witnesses, and this hearing is now adjourned. Striking the gavel.

[Whereupon, at 4:13 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Gregory W. Meeks (D-NY), Chair

May 4, 2021

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held virtually via Cisco WebEx. The meeting is available via live webcast on the Committee website at https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/:

DATE: Tuesday, May 4, 2021

TIME: 1:00 p.m., EDT

SUBJECT: The Unfolding Crisis in Burma

WITNESS: His Excellency Kyaw Moe Tun
Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations

Ms. Khin Ohmar
Founder and Chairperson of the Advisory Board
Progressive Voice

The Honorable Kelley E. Currie
Former Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues

By Direction of the Chair

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day *Tuesday* Date *05/04/2021* Room *Cisco WebEx*

Starting Time *1:00 p.m.* Ending Time *4:13 p.m.*

Recesses *0* (____to____) (____to____) (____to____) (____to____) (____to____) (____to____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Gregory W. Meeks
Representative Ami Bera, Representative Tom Malinowski

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☑
Executive (closed) Session ☐
Televised ☑

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☑
Stenographic Record ☑

TITLE OF HEARING:

The Unfolding Crisis in Burma

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See attached.

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☑ No
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

SFR - Connolly

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *4:13 p.m.*

Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

FULL COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

PRESENT	*MEMBER*
X	Gregory W. Meeks, NY
X	Brad Sherman, CA
X	Albio Sires, NJ
X	Gerald E. Connolly, VA
X	Theodore E. Deutch, FL
X	Karen Bass, CA
X	William Keating, MA
X	David Cicilline, RI
X	Ami Bera, CA
X	Joaquin Castro, TX
X	Dina Titus, NV
X	Ted Lieu, CA
X	Susan Wild, PA
X	Dean Phillips, MN
X	Ilhan Omar, MN
X	Colin Allred, TX
X	Andy Levin, MI
X	Abigail Spanberger, VA
X	Chrissy Houlahan, PA
X	Tom Malinowski, NJ
X	Andy Kim, NJ
X	Sara Jacobs, CA
X	Kathy Manning, NC
X	Jim Costa, CA
X	Juan Vargas, CA
X	Vicente Gonzalez, TX
X	Brad Schneider, IL

PRESENT	*MEMBER*
X	Michael T. McCaul, TX
X	Christopher H. Smith, NJ
X	Steve Chabot, OH
X	Joe Wilson, SC
X	Scott Perry, PA
X	Darrell Issa, CA
X	Adam Kinzinger, IL
X	Lee Zeldin, NY
X	Ann Wagner, MO
X	Brian J. Mast, FL
X	Brian K. Fitzpatrick, PA
X	Ken Buck, CO
X	Tim Burchett, TN
X	Mark Green, TN
X	Andy Barr, KY
X	Greg Steube, FL
X	Dan Meuser, PA
X	Claudia Tenney, NY
X	August Pfluger, TX
X	Nicole Malliotakis, NY
X	Peter Meijer, MI
X	Ronny Jackson, TX
X	Young Kim, CA
X	Maria Elvira Salazar, FL

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

Statement for the Record from Representative Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)
"The Unfolding Crisis in Burma"
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Tuesday, May 4, 2021

On February 1, 2021, the Burmese military junta, under Commander in Chief Min Aung Hlaing, detained democratically elected leaders and State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi just hours before the new parliament was set to meet for its first session. Three months later, over 700 people, including children, have been killed by security forces. Millions of peaceful protesters have poured onto the streets across the country, and more than three thousand individuals – students, journalists, unionists, civilians – have been detained as a result. A country once known for picturesque pagoda-dotted landscape and as a symbol of democratic resistance worldwide has devolved into one of violence and bloodshed.

In one fell swoop, the military plunged this nascent democracy into renewed political turmoil just as it was emerging from nearly five decades of military rule and isolation. In 2015, more than 30 million voters went to the poll in 2015 to elect the then-main opposition party, National League of Democracy (NLD), and its leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to power. Images of voters proudly holding up their ink-stained finger after voting became a symbol of pride and victory. Burmese citizens and international community sighed a collective breath of relief when the country's first transfer of power from military rule to a civilian government took place.

Unfortunately, Burma's democratic journey was short lived as the military junta declared that the November 2020 parliamentary elections were marred by fraud. In fact, an estimated 26 million people voted in the country's 3rd nationwide parliamentary elections, and the NLD won in a landslide in what has been determined as free and fair elections. Nevertheless, the February coup went forward. A civil disobedience movement has emerged with medics, bankers, lawyers, teachers, engineers and factory workers leaving their jobs as a form of resistance against the takeover. After weeks of peaceful protest, the front line of peaceful resistance has transformed into guerilla fighting, with protesters building barricades and using all means at their disposal to protect their neighborhoods and communities. Renewed clashes between ethnic armed groups and the military, with the latter responding with overwhelming airstrikes, have resulted in additional casualties and internal displacement. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains in detention and is being subjected to a sham trial.

Regional efforts, led by a few member states to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to broker peace have proved unfruitful. The military junta has ignored calls by ASEAN and regional leaders to end its violent crackdown and restore peace and stability through dialogue. The military appears unfazed and untouched by U.S. and EU sanctions designed to hurt their economic interests.

The crisis, while bleak, is not hopeless, and we must not give up on democracy or the people of Burma. I was privileged to travel to Burma and meet with Aung San Suu Kyi as part of the House Democracy Partnership delegation in 2016, a visit that reinforced my commitment to supporting Burma's democratization and development. That is why I introduced the Protect

Democracy in Burma Act in 2021 to instruct the United States use its voice, vote, and influence at the United Nations to hold accountable those responsible for the coup and work with ASEAN to support a return to democratic transition. While I am pleased by the House's passage of this legislation, more must be done by this body to signal its steadfast support for the Burmese people, their democratically elected leaders in detention, and the future of a democratic Burma.

The military junta's unlawful seizure of power will never be accepted by the United States and the American people. I thank our witnesses for being here today and look forward to hearing how Congress can help restore hope and democracy to Burma.

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