

August 2019 marks two years since the Burmese military drove more than 700,000 Rohingya people from their homes — a deliberate campaign of terror and violence that amounted to genocide.¹ Since that time, impunity has reigned. The Burmese government has prosecuted no high-level members of the military, despite mounting evidence collected by international observers of their responsibility.

This absence of accountability has allowed Burma's military to consolidate its power, thwarting the country's democratic transition and clearing the way for further atrocities. To this day, many Rohingya survivors in Burma live in conditions of apartheid,² while the Burmese military continues to commit war crimes.³ Members of the Rakhine, Chin, Karen, Shan, and Kachin ethnic nationalities, as well as non-Rohingya Muslim groups in Burma, also continue to face severe discrimination and human rights abuses.⁴

Targeted U.S. sanctions would make a crucial difference to protecting human rights in Burma. Currently, the military wields enormous economic power in the country, controlling several key businesses and industries that trade with foreign actors, including the United States.⁵ This provides a funding stream that the military can use to prolong ethnic conflicts and tighten its grip on the state. Sanctions of officials tied to the genocide would ensure there are consequences for mass atrocities, while also limiting the military's capacity to inflict more harm on its people.⁶

Two years is far too long to wait for justice. Congress should act now to impose targeted sanctions. Specifically, I ask that you take the following steps:

- 1 Co-sponsor and pass the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act of 2019 (S.1186).
- 2 Support the inclusion of similar provisions in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), such as the language that recently passed the House of Representatives as the Engel 30 Amendment to H.R.2500.
- 3 Use your influence as a member of Congress to urge your colleagues in the executive branch to impose targeted sanctions on culpable officials using their powers under existing law, including the Global Magnitsky Act. Recently announced State Department travel restrictions are a step in the right direction, but are not sufficient to block key financial transactions and assets that enable the Burmese military to finance its human rights violations.

1 Report of the Independent International Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar, A/HRC/39/64. Published August 27, 2018. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/274/54/PDF/G1827454.pdf?OpenElement>

2 "Myanmar: UN threatens to withdraw aid over 'policy of apartheid' against Rohingya," The Guardian, June 16, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/17/myanmar-un-threatens-to-withdraw-aid-over-policy-of-apartheid-against-rohingya>

3 "Myanmar: UN expert 'fears for civilians' after Internet shutdown," United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, June 24, 2019. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24733&LangID=E>

4 Progressive Voice, "There is No One Who Does Not Miss Home: A Report on Protracted Displacement Due to Armed Conflict in Burma/Myanmar," June 2019. <https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/There-Is-No-One-Who-Does-Not-Miss-Home-English-Web.pdf>

5 "Campaigners target firms doing business with Myanmar's military," Al Jazeera, March 28, 2019.

6 "UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar urges financial isolation of Myanmar military," United Nations Human Rights Council, May 14, 2019. <https://bangkok.ohchr.org/Documents/IIFMMEndofMissionStatement.pdf>