



KACHIN ALLIANCE

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November 15th, 2012

Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW; Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

The Kachin community in the United States offers our heartfelt congratulations on your re-election and wishes you every success as you continue leading our great nation for another four years. We are writing this letter to you as fellow Americans.

We wish to convey to you our sentiments regarding your impending visit to our homeland, Burma. This trip has historic implications not only because it is the first visit by a sitting US President, but also because it has potential for pressing the government of Burma to enact further democratic reforms and achieve national reconciliation. In the light of these, we want to express the following concerns:

- Visiting the country at this juncture might provide legitimacy to a government which has one of the worst human rights records in the world, especially in respect to our kinsmen, the Kachin, living in northern Burma.
- Premature engagement with a government which remains to fund the army that currently terrorizing innocent civilians and Internally Displaced Persons could undermine the United States' stature and integrity.
- These potential outcomes could further marginalize minorities in Burma and destabilize the country.

Despite widespread reports of political reform, Kachin civilians continue to suffer grave human rights abuses under the current quasi-civilian government backed by the Burma Army. They continue to commit ethnically motivated war crimes and crimes against humanity, especially our families and friends, as documented by respected human rights organizations. These crimes have intensified since the breakdown of the government's 17-year ceasefire with the Kachin Independent Organization in June of last year. Within the course of a year, this ongoing offensive has displaced over 90,000 Kachin civilians, the majority of whom are now living in two dozen camps along the Chinese border. These civilians live with constant fear and uncertainty and in dire need of the most basic human needs. Nevertheless, the administration of President Thein Sein continues to block much needed aid by making it impossible for international organizations to provide assistance to internally displaced civilians. In addition, innocent Kachin continue to suffer arbitrary arrests, harassment, interrogation, and detention by government authorities.

The Kachin have an important historical connection with the United States. Senator Mitch McConnell expressed in Congressional Record on Oct 12, 2011 that Kachin contributions to the Allied efforts in Burma during World War II are legendary. Today, the Kachin are engaged in a different kind of war, a war to secure the right for self-determination that was guaranteed under the historic Panglong Agreement, the document which gave birth to the Union of Burma in its present form. In view of these historical ties, we implore you to give your utmost attention to the crisis facing the Kachin in your discussions with the current administration of President Thein Sein.

The United States is a leader in promoting freedom, equality and democracy around the world. We are bonded by faith that our appeal to you will cause ripples of hope for others across the globe. Thus, we are urging you to consider the following requests in your visit to our homeland:

- that you and your administration continue to stand for American values and principles in times of great strife.
- that you, our leader, serve as a witness to atrocities committed against our kinsmen in our homeland.
- that you use your influence as a world leader to speak out against injustice and unscrupulous terror against innocent civilians.
- that you and your administration foster unity by engaging in dialogue with all Burmese parties, including armed resistance political organizations.

Furthermore, we ask that you urge the current administration of President Thein Sein to take the following actions:

- Provide assurance of a free flow of domestic and international aid for the displaced Kachin civilians, especially those living in camps along the China-Burma border because a solution to the IDP problem is prerequisite to future talks, whether military or political.
- Permit the presence of UN observer teams or intermediary teams in conflict zones and IDP camps for the purpose of monitoring and preventing human rights abuses.
- Begin a genuine political dialogue based on Panglong Agreement and find lasting tangible solutions that will address the six decades of the country's political turmoil.
- Ratify a new democratic constitution that reflects the founding principles of the Republic of the Union of Burma, which is inclusive of representatives from all ethnic stakeholders.

We sincerely thank you for your attention to these matters and trust that you will use all the powers vested in you to bring about peace and reconciliation for all ethnic nationalities in Burma, including the Kachin.

Sincerely,

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Participating Organizations -

Kachin communities in USA:

1. Kachin American Association
2. Mid-Atlantic Kachin Christian Fellowship
3. Pennsylvania/ New Jersey Kachin Fellowship
4. Kachin Development Foundation, Florida
5. Kachin Community of Indiana, Indianapolis.
6. Kachin Cultural and Heritage Organization, Dallas - Ft. Worth, Texas
7. Kachin Community of Louisiana
8. Kachin Community of Mississippi
9. Kachin Community of Tennessee
10. Michigan Kachin Community
11. Kachin Development Society of Nebraska
12. Illinois Kachin Community
13. Kachin Heritage Organization, San Francisco
14. Kachin Community, Los Angeles
15. Tulsa Kachin Community, Oklahoma
16. Washington Kachin Fellowship Committee
17. Kachin Culture and Literature Association (JLH), Houston, Texas
18. Georgia Kachin Community
19. Iowa Kachin Community
20. Phoenix Kachin Community, Arizona

International Kachin Communities and Organizations:

21. Kachin National Organization
22. Kachin Canadian Association (KCA)
23. Kachin Culture and Literature Association (JLH), Singapore
24. Kachin Community Netherlands
25. Kachin National Organization (Thailand)
26. Kachin National Organization (Japan)
27. Kachin National Organization (United Kingdom)
28. Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG)
29. Wunpawng Ninghtoi (WPN)
30. Kachin Refugees Center (KRC), Malaysia
31. Kachin Women's Association Thailand
32. Kachin Association of Australia (KAA, New South Wales)
33. Kachin Association of Australia (KAA, Melbourne)
34. Queensland Kachin Community Inc, Australia (QKC)