



September 12th, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We, the Kachin Alliance, write to express gratitude for President Obama's tireless efforts in advancing and deepening the United States' engagement in Asia Pacific. We laud the Obama administration, for dedicating more resources and time than any of its predecessors to secure friendship with the peoples of Southeast Asia, including all ethnic nationalities of Burma.

We also write to express our concern regarding the Administration's consideration for lifting of remaining sanctions against Burma. Along with the United States, we also welcome the progress that Burma has made in recent years. We were especially thrilled to see the National League for Democracy, the party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, win a landslide victory in the last election and take the initiative to launch the 21st Century Panglong Conference.

In spite of the progress Burma has made, we strongly believe that withdrawing the remaining targeted sanctions on the military, its related entities and the cronies listed on the Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) and the deepening engagement with the Burma army (Tatmadaw) at this delicate transition would be gravely premature. Therefore, we sincerely would like to urge the United States to keep the sanctions intact until there is compelling evidence that the Tatmadaw complies with international human rights standards, adheres to democratic norms, reaches agreeable terms with the armed ethnic organizations, and is placed under the oversight of the elected civilian government. Furthermore, as long as those on the SDN list fail to demonstrate a clear intention to relinquish their large holdings of lands and mining camps in ethnic areas, which were unjustly acquired through land grabs and cronyism, sanctions against them should remain.

As of now, there is hardly any evidence that the Tatmadaw has made progress toward any of the aforementioned aims. In June of 2016, Gum Seng Awng, a 19-year old student, was shot three times in the back by two Tatmadaw soldiers. In October of 2011, Sumlut Roi Ja, a 28-year old Kachin mother of one, was abducted by Tatmadaw soldiers. Perhaps the most notorious case of all was that of Tangbau Hkawng Nan Tsin and Maran Lu Ra, a 21-year old and 20-year old Kachin volunteer teachers who were raped and brutally murdered by the Tatmadaw soldiers in January of 2015. To this day, justice has not been served for the above mentioned and other unnamed victims who have suffered and lost their lives at the hands of the Tatmadaw.

In addition to the systematic use of rape, torture, extrajudicial killing, torching, and other acts of terror committed against ethnic civilians, the Tatmadaw continues with its act of aggression against

armed ethnic organizations, further impeding prospects of a nationwide ceasefire. Despite ongoing peace talks begun in 2011 under the previous civilian government, the Tatmadaw continues to launch offensives in ethnic areas. In August of 2016 alone, there were over 40 battles fought between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) with the Tatmadaw launching 14 artillery attacks against the KIA. The army which continues to prolong the civil war should not be rewarded with an additional easing of sanctions or with a deepening of military ties.

Due to the continued war that has gone on for more than 6 years, there are now over 120,000 Kachin IDPs in 167 camps across Kachin and northern Shan State. Events on the ground prove that the war continues because the Tatmadaw, unhindered by civilian oversight, is exercising its unilateral power to continue or stop war. In more than one instance the Tatmadaw has launched attacks on military posts of armed ethnic organizations despite executive orders to do otherwise. It is our understanding that U.S. sanctions were imposed to restrain Tatmadaw personnel and their cronies. Therefore, it is crucial that the administration not lose sight of the acts of atrocity and aggression that the Tatmadaw had carried out and continues to do so, as it deliberates on whether or not to lift more sanctions against Burma.

We understand that the previous government under President Thein Sein had asked for a complete lifting of U.S. sanctions against Burma. After the new civilian government came to power, the US government partially lifted some of the sanctions in concurrence with the normalization process. We fully understand the administration's good intention to reciprocate democratic dividends, but would like to urge that remaining sanctions stay intact against entities which assert its political legitimacy through provocative military actions. We believe that lifting the sanctions on these individuals, especially the Tatmadaw personnel and SDNs, would directly generate a sense of validation for their military offensives, gross human rights abuses and large-scale repression against the civilian population.

The remaining sanctions are a powerful leverage that only the U.S. has on the Tatmadaw. Upholding these sanctions would be in the interest of a genuine national reconciliation with the ethnic people and project to the world that the cornerstone of the US-Burma foreign policy is an advancement of democracy, human rights, and rule of law. Even during the dark days of strained US-Burmese relationship under the military junta, the Burmese people never lost its affinity with the United States. Now, at this crucial time when they are struggling to extricate themselves from the bondage of the past, when the feeling is stronger than ever before that they are on the verge of a new era when Burma's 52 million citizens can feel proud of being part of a collective Federal Union that is diverse yet united as a vibrant society, it is our fervent hope that the United States will continue to play a constructive role in securing this bright future for all citizens of Burma.

In conclusion, we request that the Obama Administration continue with the following acts until the successful conclusion of the 21st Century Panglong Conference:

1. Sanctions against personnel on the SDN list and enforce any act of abatement
2. Sanctions against the military and military related enterprises
3. Refrain from mil-to-mil engagement
4. Ban on the imports of precious stones and minerals
5. Use of the name "Burma" until national referendum on the change.

Sincerely,

Kachin Alliance
Washington, DC 20004