



Senators Seek to Renew Sanctions on Burma May 11, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), joined by Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), John McCain (R-Ariz.), Sam Brownback (R-Kans.), and Barack Obama (D-Ill.), introduced legislation Tuesday to renew economic sanctions on Burma, including the ban of all imports from that nation until it improves its record on democracy and human rights.

“Last year, in response to the failure by the military junta to take any meaningful steps towards restoring democracy and releasing Nobel Peace Prize winner and National League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Congress overwhelmingly renewed a complete ban on all imports from Burma for another year,” Senator Feinstein said. **“One year later, it is clear that Rangoon has once again failed to make ‘substantial and measurable progress’ toward putting Burma on a irreversible path of national reconciliation and democracy.”**

“In the face of human rights abuses and terror, approximately 300,000 Burmese citizens have already defied the military junta and signed their names on a petition calling for true democratic change in Burma. We must back their courage.”

On May 30, 2003, Aung San Suu Kyi and at least 17 officials of the National League for Democracy (NLD) were detained after a clash in the town of Ye-u where they were attacked by members of the Union Solidarity Development Association, a paramilitary organization created by the ruling military junta. Four people were killed and 50 injured in the attacks. Aung San Suu Kyi was officially placed in “protective custody,” and later released to her home where she remains under house arrest.

On her 60th birthday on June 19, 2005, Suu Kyi will have spent a total of 2,523 days in detention. NLD Vice Chairman Tin Oo has also remained in custody since May 2003. Another 1,400 political prisoners are still in jail while the military junta’s “road map” to democracy and national convention to draft a new constitution has produced no timetable for restoring democracy and continues to shut out the participation of Suu Kyi and the NLD, the legitimate winners of the 1990 elections. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution last month highlighting continued human rights abuses by Rangoon including “extrajudicial killings”, rape, torture, sex trafficking and forced labor.

The legislation would renew a complete ban on all imports from Burma until the President determines and certifies to Congress that Burma has made substantial and measurable progress on a number of democracy and human rights issues.

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