

## BURMA: Statement on the U.S. Government's Potential Law Enforcement Cooperation with the Burmese Military Junta

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On June 25, 2026, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Michael DeSombre testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where he characterized the scam centers operating in Southeast Asia as a grave threat to the U.S. and regional allies' national security. In addition to stealing more than \$12.5 billion from Americans last year (a 25% increase from the year before), a February 2026 United Nations report found that 300,000 people were trafficked into Southeast Asia's scam centers from all over the world and subjected to severe human rights violations. In Burma, these scam centers are also intimately connected to a broader conflict economy that fuels the illegal junta's ability to attack civilians, undermines democracy, and violates human rights with impunity. The junta works hand-in-hand with aligned groups to protect and profit from scam centers, at the expense of both the future of the people of Burma and regional peace and stability.

It was, therefore, deeply concerning to learn that U.S. officials recently met with representatives of the Burmese military junta this past week in Tokyo to discuss potential law enforcement cooperation in combatting scam centers.

"The scam centers and the junta are in a symbiotic relationship: they need each other to thrive," stated Myra Dahgaypaw, board member for U.S. Campaign for Burma. "Cooperation with Min Aung Hlaing's regime would mean helping the very same criminal enterprise that is responsible for, and benefits from, these scam centers that steal billions of dollars and otherwise victimize people in the U.S. and around the world. It is like asking an arsonist to help put out a fire."

In Assistant Secretary DeSombre's testimony, he said that they were looking at all options to combat transnational crime and scam centers and stated, "In the last five years, the civil war has continued, and our policies have not unfortunately stopped the killings and stopped the human rights violations. We continue to evaluate, based upon changes on the ground, about the best way forward." That path forward cannot be through any legitimization of the Burmese military junta who continues to brutally attack civilians throughout the country.

Ethnic resistance organizations (EROs) and local civil society organizations (CSOs), by contrast, have worked to eradicate scam centers, rescue trafficking victims, and document the damage these criminal activities are doing inside and outside of Burma. In December 2025, the Karen National Union (KNU), an ERO that plays a key role in Burma's democratic forces, raided Shunda Park scam center, freeing thousands who were enslaved in the compound.

"The only way to stop this scourge is for the U.S. and other governments to work with those elements of the Burma democracy movement that are committed to dismantling the scam centers," stated Naw K'nyaw Paw, Chairperson of Karen Women's Organization. "Burma's democratic resistance and civil society organizations stand ready to work with the U.S. and other regional governments to fight this scourge that is destroying our country and harming so many beyond our borders."

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**The undersigned organizations:**

1. ALTSEAN-Burma
2. Arakan Rohingya National Organization
3. Australian Karen Organization
4. Burma Advocacy Group
5. Burma Campaign UK
6. Burma Human Rights Network
7. Campaign for New Myanmar
8. Chin Human Rights Organization
9. European Karen Network
10. Genocide Watch
11. Hmong Nationalities Organization
12. International Campaign for the Rohingya
13. Kachin Alliance
14. Karen Community of Canada
15. Karen Human Rights Group
16. Karen Organization of America
17. Karen Peace Support Network
18. Karen Women's Organization
19. Kawthoolei Women's Network
20. Malaysia Karen Organization
21. PAEMA
22. Progressive Voice
23. U.S. Campaign for Burma
24. Women Advocacy Coalition-Myanmar
25. Women's Peace Network