

November 8, 2014

His Excellency U Thein Sein
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Naypyitaw, Myanmar

Dear Mr. President:

As the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief meeting in Oslo, we write today collectively to express our ongoing concerns about the religious freedom situation in Myanmar. We come from a variety of countries with different parliamentary systems in various regions, but we all are troubled by ongoing reports of violations of this fundamental freedom, especially for religious and ethnic minorities. We respectfully ask you work to ensure that all individuals in your country, be they Buddhist, Muslim, Christian or from another faith, can fully enjoy freedom of religion or belief without fear of violence or discrimination.

We are especially alarmed about violence and human rights abuses against Muslim communities in your country, particularly against the Rohingya Muslim minority. Muslims, especially in Rakhine state, continue to experience severe legal, religious, economic, educational and social discrimination, and are denied citizenship. In September, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar delivered a report to the General Assembly noting the "deplorable" conditions in camps for internally displaced persons of multiple communities, though observing far worse conditions in camps inhabited by Rohingya Muslims. In addition, religious freedom abuses continue in Kachin and northern Shan states, home to large Christian minority populations. It is critical that your government takes action to end the violence against these religious and ethnic minorities, persevere in the national reconciliation process, and ensure perpetrators are punished and human rights are respected.

Towards that goal, we encourage you to lead an effort to reform your country's laws that discriminate against religious and ethnic minorities and limit religious freedom. Lifting all

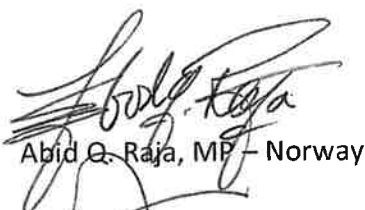
Venstres stortingsgruppe
Stortinget, 0026 Oslo
Tlf. 23 31 33 62
Faks 23 31 38 72
venstre.postmottak@stortinget.no

restrictions inconsistent with international standards on freedom of religion or belief would enable your country to benefit from the talent and skills of all people in Myanmar.

At the same time, we ask that you oppose and withdraw draft laws that would regulate religious conversions or marriages between people of different faiths and we ask you ensure that people are not denied their voting rights because of their religion or belief. These laws are inherently flawed and cannot be reconciled with international human rights standards.

Mr. President, your country is at a historic crossroads. We, as parliamentarians from different jurisdictions and faiths, respectfully urge you to seize this moment and demonstrate a real commitment to human rights that respects minority rights and freedom of religion or belief. We are signing in our personal capacity and not for our government, and we will continue to closely observe the situation.

Sincerely,



Abid Q. Raja, MP – Norway




Sylvi Graham, MP – Norway



Roberto Alves de Lucena, MP – Brazil



Gerardo Amarilla, MP – Uruguay




David Anderson, MP – Canada



Marina Berlinghieri, MP – Italy



Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose – Great Britain



Eugenio Cedeno, MP – Dominican Republic

Lokmani Dhakal, MP – Nepal

Cheryllyn Dudley, MP – South Africa

Aykan Erdemir, MP – Turkey

Graciela Fermin Nuesi, MP – Dominican Republic

Heribert Hirte, MP – Germany

Asiya Nasir, MP – Pakistan

Senator Liliana Negre de Alonso – Argentina

Kasthuri Patto, MP – Malaysia

Ernesto Preziosi, MP – Italy

Leonardo Quintao, MP – Brazil

Mario Redondo, MP – Costa Rica

Vasantha Senanayake, MP – Sri Lanka