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News Release

Russ Hiebert
Member of Parliament



MP Russ Hiebert addresses Burma atrocities at Ottawa news conference

Committee draws attention to Burma Atrocities

(Ottawa) - B.C. Member of Parliament Russ Hiebert and MPs from all parties on the International Human Rights Sub-Committee joined forces at a Parliament Hill news conference today to condemn the ongoing atrocities in Burma's Kachin State.

"While modest improvements in democratic freedoms are being made in Burma, including allowing some opposition members such as Aung Sang Suu Syi to take seats in the Burmese Parliament, things are not so good for the people in the mountain states of Burma," said Mr. Hiebert.

"This month we have heard graphic testimony in our committee about the horrific treatment of the indigenous people of Kachin State in Burma. We have heard from credible eye-witnesses who have seen the brutalization of the population first-hand," said Mr. Hiebert. "Based on the evidence we have heard, it is clear that the Burmese Government is engaged in a program of persecution in Kachin State against the various ethnic and religious minorities that live there."

The Sub-Committee has heard compelling evidence that:

- **Hundreds of thousands have been displaced from their villages and forced to flee to neighbouring countries.**
- **Another 80,000 are internally displaced.**
- **Rapes and killings are commonplace.**
- **Places of worship are routinely burned down and worshippers are arrested and detained for months with no charges being laid.**

"The military, which is not under the control of any elected official in Burma, appears to be the prime instigator of this program of ethnic and religious persecution," said Mr. Hiebert. "I note that even the President of Burma has called on the Burmese military to remove itself from Kachin State, but this civilian official has no control over the military."

NDP MP Wayne Marston said, "Pressure has to be sustained on the Burmese government to cause the military to be brought into line. Until that happens, you're not going to see effective change in Burma."

Liberal MP Irwin Cotler said, "We're going to see Kachin State as a case study as to whether there is genuine progress going forward. We need to call on the Burmese government and military to cease and desist from these multiple violations of humanitarian law."

The sub-committee has heard testimony from groups including Canadian Friends of Burma, the US Campaign for Burma, and Physicians for Human Rights, as well as a Burmese national who testified in camera.

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