

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific

Hearing on Burma:

“Piercing Burma’s Veil of Secrecy: The Truth Behind the Sham Election and the Difficult Road Ahead”

June 22, 2011

12:30 PM, Rayburn House Office Building Room 2172

Transcript of Video Message from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
General Secretary, National League for Democracy, Rangoon, Burma

Any statement made before a committee of the United States Congress must start with a few words, however brief; of appreciation for all that you and your colleagues have done for the cause of democracy in Burma over the last two decades. We are very appreciative and we believe that you will continue to do whatever you can to help us in the future as well.

I understand that the purpose of this committee is to find out what has really been happening in Burma since the elections of November 2010. To, as I understand it, pierce the veil of secrecy and to find out the truth of the situation in Burma. I’m sure you will be receiving a lot of information from very many different sources that will enable you to assess the situation correctly.

What I would like to urge is that you look at what is happening in Burma in the light of the UN Human Rights Council Resolution—the recent one, which came out in March. This resolution covers all the needs of Burma today, all the political needs, let me say, of Burma today.

The requests, the urgings, the demands of this resolution are very much in line with what we in Burma think is needed to start Burma along the genuine process of democratization. So, if you were to consider the resolution very very closely, and then if you were to look at the present situation in Burma, you would have a very good idea of how far we are along the path to democracy, if we have started on that path at all.

The resolution includes such very important issues as political prisoners, freedom of association and information, independence of the judiciary, and the right of Professor Quintana, the United Nations Human Rights Rapporteur, to visit Burma whenever he thinks it is necessary. It also includes the need for an inclusive political process in Burma, that we may have the kind of situation where there can be a negotiated settlement leading to national reconciliation.

All these that the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution has called for are essential if Burma is to enjoy constitutional liberalism and democratic institutions.

It is going to be a long road; it already has been a long road and a difficult one, and no doubt the road ahead will have its difficulties as well. But, we are confident that with the help and support of those who share our values, those like you who are true friends because true friends are those who share your values and understand why you hold on to these values in spite of all the difficulties that you have to

face. With the help and support of true friends, I'm sure we will be able to tread the path of democracy, not easily and perhaps not as quickly as we would like, but surely and steadily. This is why I would like to request you to do whatever you can to ensure that the requests and demands of the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution are met as broadly, as sincerely, and as quickly as possible by the present government of Burma.

The resolution among other things calls for the independence of the judiciary, I mentioned this earlier. This is one of the most important needs in our country today, because without an independent judiciary we cannot have the rule of law, and without the rule of law none of our people can be secure and there can be no true progress towards democracy.

Then, the case of political prisoners - why are they still in prison if this government is really intent on making good progress towards democracy? If it is sincere in its claims that it wishes to bring democracy into Burma, there is no need for any prisoners of conscious to exist in this country.

Surely, democracy means that we all have the right to our own beliefs, that we all have the right to try to live in accordance with our conscious. Because of that, the case of prisoners of conscious is crucial in deciding whether or not the present government is sincere about its democratic aspirations.

Professor Quintana has spoken of the need for a commission of inquiry into human rights violations in Burma. I support his call for such a commission, making it quite clear that a commission of inquiry is not tribunal. It is simply a commission of inquiry to find out what human rights violations have taken place and what we can do to ensure that such violations do not take place in the future. I would appreciate everything that is done to help Professor Quintana in his work. Because, unless we respect the work of the Human Rights Rapporteur, I do not think we will be able to make much progress towards the implementation of the resolution of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

I've never made a statement before a committee of the United States Congress, so I'm not quite sure how to go about it. I would simply like to use this occasion to request that you do whatever you can to help us implement the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution, because that will open up the real road to democracy for all of us.

And I would also like to take the opportunity to repeat once again how much we appreciate all that you have done, and that what you have done for us has meant a great deal. And I know that you will continue to study the situation and to review what has been done in the past and to inquire into what should be done in the future. Sometimes we all have to guess at what is necessary because Burma is not an open society.

But, I think because we truly believe in democratic values and we are all sincere in our respect for human rights and constitutional liberalism, our guesses will not be far wrong. So, I would like to ask you to continue with your work with confidence in what you are doing, and with confidence and the fact that your work is much appreciated.

Thank you.

Aung San Suu Kyi