



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. EMBASSY RANGOON

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Visit of Deputy U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken May 21-22

Yangon – During his May 21-22 visit to Naypyitaw and Yangon, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken emphasized the importance of continued political, economic, and social reforms to ensure sustained democratic change in Myanmar in his meetings with government, ethnic and civil society group leaders, political party representatives, and youth leaders. Deputy Secretary Blinken shared U.S. government concerns about the migrants from Rakhine State and Bangladesh who are increasingly risking their lives for a better future. He emphasized the importance of regional actors to cooperate to address this issue and urged governments in the region, including Myanmar, to provide urgent humanitarian and medical assistance to those aboard these ships, and allow individuals to disembark safely. Deputy Secretary Blinken reiterated that the Myanmar government must fulfill its previous commitments to improve the living conditions of all those affected by the humanitarian situation in Rakhine State in order to find durable solutions to these problems. The U.S. government continues to support the efforts of humanitarian organizations to provide assistance to all vulnerable populations, without regard to ethnicity or faith.

Deputy Secretary Blinken conveyed the U.S. government's support for inclusive, credible, and transparent elections to occur on schedule later this year, and encouraged active engagement between civil society and the government to promote reform. He also expressed support for continued high-level political dialogue among key stakeholders to build trust, discuss constitutional reform, prepare for the elections, and advance national reconciliation.

He also raised concerns on the four bills related to race and religion, the status of "white card" holders, and the harmful impact of hate speech targeting minority groups in meetings with President Thein Sein; Shwe Mann, Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw; Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services; Minister of Foreign Affairs Wunna Maung Lwin; and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, MP and Chairperson of the Pyithu Hluttaw Committee for Rule of Law and Tranquility.

Deputy Secretary Blinken's meetings in Yangon focused on the upcoming election, the peace process, empowering youth and civil society, and the inherent challenges faced by the country in its transition to democracy. The Deputy Secretary commended all sides for continuing to pursue a national ceasefire agreement, but also acknowledged that a durable peace would require trust building, military restraint, and sincere commitment to political dialogue. He stressed that Myanmar's potential was tied to embracing the religious and cultural diversity of the country. He highlighted our commitment to Southeast Asia's youth, embodied in the U.S. government's Young Southeast Asian Leadership Initiative (YSEALI). Over 3,000 YSEALI members are from Myanmar, and nearly 30 members have already participated in YSEALI exchanges programs to the U.S. and around the region.

This was Deputy Secretary Blinken's first trip to the country.

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