



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. EMBASSY RANGOON

110 University Avenue, Kamayut Township, Rangoon, Burma

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Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewall Discusses Reform Efforts, Inter-communal Violence, and Child Soldiers

Yangon – During her May 7-10 visit to Yangon, Naypyitaw, Meikhtila, and Mandalay, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewall met with senior government officials, including Vice President Nyan Tun, Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing, Presidential Ministers U Soe Thein and U Aung Min, Minister of Foreign Affairs Wunna Maung Lwin, Minister of Home Affairs Lt Gen Ko Ko, Deputy Minister of National Planning San Lwin, civil society representatives, ethnic minority leaders, NLD party chair Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and other key stakeholders to discuss the country's overall reform efforts.

Under Secretary Sewall addressed the challenge of inter-communal violence and combating hate speech, progress in talks between the Union government and armed groups to achieve a durable peace, solutions for combating human trafficking, efforts to encourage the country's membership in the Open Government Partnership, and support for ongoing efforts to advance democracy, justice and accountability, good governance, and respect for human rights.

“This country has made great progress toward implementing unprecedented political and economic reforms, and the United States remains committed to serving as a true partner in these efforts,” said Sewall. “During my candid meeting with the Commander-in-Chief, I noted the U.S. interest in seeing demonstrable support from the Tatmadaw in advancing the country's reforms. This includes demonstrating transparency, accountability, upholding human rights, and allowing for civilian oversight. I was encouraged by the Commander's comments on the importance of peace and combating the recruitment of child soldiers.

“In the past few weeks, the Union government, including the Ministry of Health, has made some constructive efforts to allow humanitarian access in Rakhine State for international NGOs and UN agencies. However, the provision of healthcare in many areas is still a critical concern, and we urge the government to continue its urgent efforts to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need.

“As the environment for free expression continues to open, we have seen a rise in extremist sentiment and hate speech that promote exclusionary definitions of religious or ethnic identity, rather than the universal principles of human rights, justice, and rule of law. I hope that the government, religious leaders, and civil society will work to push back against speech and activities that incite violence.



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“In Meikhtila, which saw such violence last year, the Union government has worked to return thousands of people to their homes, and camp management committees work to address security, water, food, shelter, and health-related issues. Nevertheless, during my visit there, it was clear more must be done to improve conditions in the camps, and address the issue of permanent housing for displaced communities, given the camps were built for only short-term use and are not equipped to withstand another rainy season.

“As it continues to play a positive role in promoting peace and security in the ASEAN region, we encourage the Union government to promote tolerance and respect for diversity, combat hate speech, and guarantee the human rights of all people. The United States will continue to support the government and civil society leaders in its historic reform efforts.”

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