

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 27, 2017

The Honorable Antonio Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

We write to express our profound concerns regarding the ongoing humanitarian crisis that has forced over 600,000 Rohingya civilians, mostly women and children, to flee Myanmar into Bangladesh to escape violence. We welcome your personal engagement on this issue, including the September letter you wrote to the UN Security Council, and urge you to use your ongoing discussions with Council diplomats to press for targeted sanctions on military officials responsible for abuse. As we just marked the United Nations (UN) International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, we also urge you to highlight the plight of women and children in Myanmar.

You rightly called the crisis “the world’s fastest developing refugee emergency and a humanitarian and human rights nightmare.”<sup>1</sup> After visiting the refugee camps in Bangladesh, your Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten said on November 16 that her “observations point to a pattern of widespread atrocities, including rape, gang-rape by multiple soldiers, forced public nudity and humiliation, and sexual slavery in military captivity directed against Rohingya women and girls, who have been systematically targeted on the basis of their ethnicity and religion.”<sup>2</sup> On November 16, Human Rights Watch issued a report that found Myanmar security forces used rape as a method of ethnic cleansing.<sup>3</sup>

As discussed during an October 24 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the Rohingya crisis, widespread sexual violence suggests that these crimes were not incidental to the so-called “clearance operations,” but a calculated tool of terror.<sup>4</sup> In fact, this is second time in less than a year that the Myanmar army has launched attacks against Rohingya population that employed rape and sexual violence as part of a “calculated policy of terror.”

As we recognized the United Nations (UN) International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, the international community must send an unequivocal signal

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/28/un-chief-calls-for-end-to-myanmar-military-operations-in-rohingya-crisis>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58109#.Wg9ixkqnGUk>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/11/16/all-my-body-was-pain/sexual-violence-against-rohingya-women-and-girls-burma>

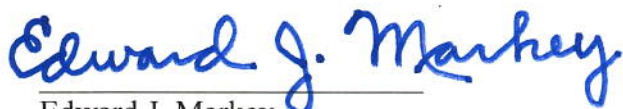
<sup>4</sup> [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/assessing-us-policy-towards-burma-geopolitical-economic-and-humanitarian-considerations\\_102417](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/assessing-us-policy-towards-burma-geopolitical-economic-and-humanitarian-considerations_102417)

that militaries cannot use sexual violence as a tool of war or terror with impunity. We believe the UN Security Council has a key role in this effort, but must go beyond its November 6<sup>th</sup> Presidential Statement, which merely expressed “grave concerns.”

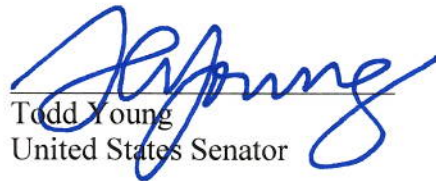
We appreciate the call by the United Nations for Myanmar to adopt specific measures to prevent and mitigate sexual violence and issue clear orders to through the military chain of command to prohibit such crimes in line with Security Council resolution 2106 on sexual violence in conflict. We urge you to work with the United Nations Security Council, in using its authorities under resolution 2242, to adopt targeted sanctions against Tatmadaw soldiers who engaged in or ordered violations and abuses of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward to your reply.

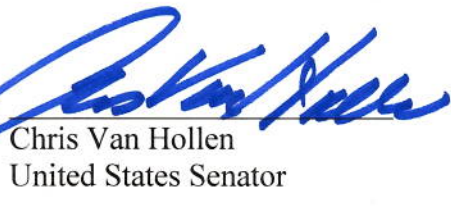
Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



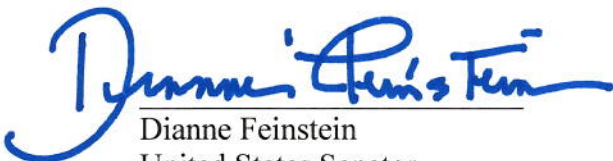
Todd Young  
United States Senator



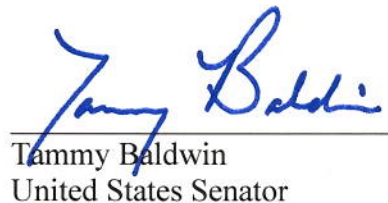
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



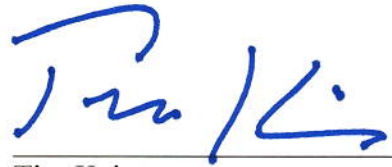
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator




Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator