

Press Releases: Briefing by Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asia W. Patrick Murphy on Burma

Special Briefing
W. Patrick Murphy

Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma

Washington, DC
October 24, 2017

MS NAUERT: Thank you, all of you, for coming today. I know a lot of you are interested in the issue of Burma and what is happening with the Rohingya there. We have talked about it a lot from this podium about our level of engagement at the State Department on that issue. We have been proud to have announced \$104 million in 2017 that has gone to both internally and externally displaced people. We've talked quite a bit about the good work that the Government of Bangladesh has done in accepting so many of those refugees.

So because of that, because of the focus on this and I know your intense interest, I brought our Deputy Assistant Secretary Patrick Murphy. He was on the Hill earlier today briefing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with assessment of our U.S. policy toward Burma. That included the geopolitical, economic, and humanitarian considerations. He's going to join us for just a short briefing. He has a very tight schedule today. He'll take a couple of your questions, and then I'll handle the rest of the briefing from there.

So with that, I'd like to welcome Deputy Assistant Secretary Murphy. Thank you so much for coming on in today, sir. Go right ahead.

MR MURPHY: Thank you very much, Heather. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Indeed, Burma has preoccupied us quite significantly since August 25th when armed attacks took place on security forces, and the ensuing humanitarian crisis is of epic proportions. Many of the challenges in Burma have preoccupied us for decades, but this current crisis has been quite devastating. I had a very good morning joined by colleagues from our refugee bureau and USAID with the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as we did a couple of weeks ago with their counterparts on the House side of Congress.

Let me give you a few top lines of our discussion today, where we are with regards to our actions addressing the crisis, and then take your questions. Burma's long struggle defied authoritarian rule to transition to a democratic society. The terrible Rakhine State crisis has exacerbated longstanding suffering of Rohingya and other populations, and threatens this peaceful transition as do other challenges the elected civilian authority inherited just 16 months ago. Our efforts seek to end the violence, support the displaced and their return home, and address the conditions that sparked this colossal population movement. We also want accountability for atrocities.

As we announced here last night, we have identified new and ongoing actions to hold responsible those who have committed violence, including the following measures, and let me share them with you: suspending travel waivers for military leaders; assessing existing authorities to consider options to target individuals responsible for atrocities; finding that all units and officers involved in operations in northern Rakhine State are ineligible for U.S. assistance programs; rescinding invitations for Burmese security leaders to travel to U.S.-sponsored programs; maintaining a longstanding arms embargo; consulting on accountability options at the United Nations, the Human Rights Council, and other venues; and pressing for access for the UN Fact-Finding Mission – a mission that we helped support the establishment of.

There is also a need to address long-term causes of instability in Rakhine State. We support Burma in implementing the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Rakhine Advisory Commission to take on underdevelopment, lack of services, access to justice, and a citizenship process for all people in Rakhine State.

At the same time, Burma's overall success is very important for the peoples of Burma, for the region, indeed, for U.S. national interests. We will continue to work with the democratically-elected civilian leadership, Burma's diverse populations and other stakeholders inside the country, and the region on this crisis and other daunting challenges in the post-military era of that country.

Today, as I said, we testified before the Senate and several weeks ago before the House. There have been many questions there about how best to describe the appalling treatment of the Rohingya. I want to be very clear: We are not shying away from the use of any appropriate terminology. We have a deliberative process to examine facts and a policy to support the pursuit of additional information to make such determinations, thus our support, for example, for the UN Fact-Finding Mission.

In the meantime, as Secretary of State Tillerson said, the violence has been characterized by many as ethnic cleansing. Our Ambassador to the United Nations Haley has said that action – actions appear to be a brutal, sustained campaign to cleanse the country of an ethnic minority.

There is no question in our minds that atrocities have been committed, and we will work with the international community and Burmese stakeholders to pursue all means available to hold accountable those responsible for these acts.

Thank you. With that, I'll take a few questions.

MS NAUERT: Thanks. We'll start with Josh Lederman from AP.

QUESTION: Thank you for being here. You mentioned the considerations about ethnic cleansing terminology. Are you also considering whether the terms "crimes against humanity" or "genocide" are appropriate in this case?

MR MURPHY: I refer in general terms to any terminology to best describe this human tragedy, disaster, and collective set of atrocities. There are a variety of terms. Some of this is legal in assessing the best terminology, so all options are on the table on how best to describe this.

In the meantime, I want to emphasize we're not waiting for any determination on what best to call it to take actions. We see that atrocities have been committed. Accountability is necessary to both end the violence, ensure that responsibility is taken for actions and acts that have been committed, and to forestall future violence in this complicated part of the country.

MS NAUERT: Warren from Reuters.

QUESTION: So if the U.S. Government does decide to use the words "crimes against humanity" or "genocide," does that cause you to have to take certain policy steps? I remember during the debate over Darfur several years ago, there was a debate about whether to use the term "genocide." The U.S. Government eventually did, but I don't think it kind of precipitated necessary policy action.

MR MURPHY: I'm actually not the expert on it. I think there are some legal issues involved with what obligations there might be with any particular determination. What I can say as a matter of policy, we've assessed that atrocities have been committed and we must pursue accountability. And to do so we're working with members of the international community, but equally as important stakeholders inside the country. And I want to emphasize here that there are many stakeholders when it comes to perpetuating violence and taking responsibility to end it. There's the government, the armed forces, local authorities in Rakhine State, and the general population across Burma; all of them have some responsibilities to contribute to ending the violence, helping reveal all of the facts necessary for accountability going forward.

MS NAUERT: Nike, go ahead.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS NAUERT: And this has to be our last question. Thanks.

QUESTION: Sure. Just to follow up on Warren's question, does the determination of ethnic cleansing give you authorization for new sanctions? And separately, do you know when is the last time Secretary Tillerson called Aung San Suu Kyi? Did they ever talk after October 12th?

MR MURPHY: Listen, I've – over the course of my career, sadly – have encountered many humanitarian crises of a very serious nature around the world, and I understand the frustrations and the emotions in trying to describe them with the strongest terms possible. What I have offered for you,

what we've seen inside Rakhine State, is a collection of serious atrocities. There's no question about that. There has been violence. There have been many individuals and entities contributing to that violence. We don't have all the facts. Security forces have responsibility and they have responded to the initial attacks in August in a disproportionate manner. They also have a responsibility to protect civilians, and we assess they have had some shortcomings.

There are other contributors to violence, including Rohingya militants, local vigilantes, and the like. Our effort now is to stop the violence and to pursue accountability, so the terminology is really not a factor for us. We know that violence has been committed and acts associated with atrocities have been undertaken, and we are pursuing and encouraging voices in the international community and inside Burma to provide the information necessary to come about with the measures leading to accountability. We view that, I think, as our most important priority.

MS NAUERT: Thank you.

QUESTION: Can I have just a follow-up on –

MS NAUERT: We've got to go.

QUESTION: On one thing? Just a really quick follow-up on –

MS NAUERT: Any questions I – Said, any questions, I can collect them and get them for you later. Okay?

MR MURPHY: Thank you very much.

MS NAUERT: And I neglected to say you're East Asia and Pacific Affairs, so.

MR MURPHY: Great. Thank you very much, Heather. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

MS NAUERT: Thank you, sir. Thank you. Great to see you, and thank you, everybody.

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Press Releases: Status of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program

Fact Sheet
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
October 24, 2017

Based on Section 6(a) of Executive Order 13780, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," the U.S. government undertook a 120-day review of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) to identify and implement additional security screening processes in order to uphold the safety of the American people.

As a result, the President has issued a new Executive Order that provides for the general resumption of the USRAP.

While the Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence have jointly determined that the screening and vetting enhancements to the USRAP are generally adequate to ensure the security and welfare of the United States and therefore that the Secretary of State and Secretary of Homeland Security may resume that program, they have also concluded that additional in-depth review is needed with respect to refugees of 11 nationalities previously identified as potentially posing a higher risk to the United States. Admissions for applicants of those 11 potentially higher-risk nationalities will resume on a case-by-case basis during a new 90-day review period.

For family members who are "following-to-join" refugees that have already been resettled in the United States, additional security measures must also be implemented for all nationalities. Admissions of following-to-join refugees will resume once those enhancements have been implemented.

The United States will continue to resettle more refugees than any other country in the world, and we will continue to offer protection to the most vulnerable refugees while upholding the safety and security of the American people. The United States remains the world's leader in humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons, providing more than \$8 billion in FY 2017.

For further information, please contact PRMPress@state.gov.

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Press Releases: United States and Ukraine Hold Nonproliferation Working Group Meeting in Kyiv

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
October 24, 2017

The United States and Ukraine held a Nonproliferation Working Group Meeting in Kyiv, Ukraine, on October 24. The regularly-held meeting is one of several exchanges the United States and Ukraine hold each year to strengthen bilateral cooperation to address the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, advanced conventional weapons, and sensitive dual-use technologies.

Interagency experts from both sides met to discuss a range of nonproliferation, counterproliferation, and strategic trade control challenges and how the countries can best cooperate to address those challenges. In light of the growing threat from the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile program, this meeting put special emphasis on promoting effective and robust implementation of strategic trade controls and all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, including 2270 and 2321.

For further information, contact Maria Dudding at ISNPressQueries@state.gov or visit www.state.gov/t/isn, Twitter [@StateISN](https://twitter.com/StateISN) and Facebook [@StateDepartment.ISNBureau](https://www.facebook.com/StateDepartment.ISNBureau).

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Press Releases: Response to Protests in Togo

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
October 24, 2017

The United States is deeply concerned about rising levels of violence and restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly in Togo related to protests over proposed constitutional reforms. We are particularly troubled by reports of excessive use of force by security forces and reports that Government-sponsored vigilantes are using force and the threat of force to disrupt protests and intimidate civilians. The United States is also concerned with the Government of Togo's decision to restrict demonstrations during the workweek and to arrest a prominent imam in the city of Sokode.

We call on the Government of Togo to uphold its citizens' human rights, notably their freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and internet freedom and to ensure that all those arrested during demonstrations are afforded the right to due process.

The United States deplores the violence that has claimed the lives of protesters and security forces alike. We urge all parties to renounce violence. We encourage the Government and opposition to engage in dialogue without preconditions, which is the only solution to the current impasse.

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[Press Releases: Remarks at a Meeting With Employees and Family Members of U.S. Embassy Islamabad](#)

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

U.S. Embassy Islamabad

Islamabad, Pakistan

October 24, 2017

AMBASSADOR HALE: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us. I don't think that – if there's one person who does not need an introduction at an American embassy, it's the Secretary of State, so I feel a little superfluous. But just to take one moment, before you, Mr. Secretary, is an extraordinary team, one of – has to be one of the hardest working, most highly motivated and most disciplined groups under your command. And we're very grateful that you'd take time out of one of those three-country days to spend a few moments with all of us. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, thank you. Thank you very much, Ambassador Hale, and thank you for the leadership that you provide over here to both our embassy here, but also the three consular offices. I think we have someone of theirs – some of them joining us, I think, by VTC back there. Yeah, okay. They're waving; they can see. Nice to see you.

Well, it is a – it's a real pleasure to have the opportunity to touch down here in Pakistan on what's a fairly torrid pace, if you've been following our travels over the last few days, but a very important stop as we're – we've come to the country to talk further with the leadership about President Trump's South Asia strategy. And Pakistan has an incredibly important role in that South Asia strategy. The country is very important to us. The security,

the stability of the country is very important to us. And many of the solutions to the regional challenges are – have to be found here as well in dealing with the leadership in Pakistan, and so we're here to have further discussions about that.

This mission, obviously extremely important to us. We know the challenges that you live with day in and day out. It's not an easy place. It's challenging from a work standpoint, we know, but it's also challenging from a personal standpoint. And I'm mindful of the situation that many of you are serving under here, long way away from family; you've got family members back home. And I know what it means to miss a lot of important events with families, whether it's birthdays or weddings or graduations. Regrettably, I missed a few over my life as well when I was in some locations that I could not take my family to live with me either. But really appreciate your service, your commitment, your willingness to provide what you do on behalf of the United States of America.

The most important thing you provide is that face of what the American people mean to the rest of the world, our commitment to the rest of the world, our commitment to a secure world, our commitment to a prosperous world, and most importantly, and what many of you do, is a commitment to a hopeful world. And so all the work you do, whether it be on educational, health, providing capacity around the country, just really speaks to the compassion of the American people, and the fact that we do care about this part of the world and we do care about Pakistan. And so how you go about that is extremely important to us.

Also want to recognize the importance of our locally employed staff. Many of you are the continuity of this place. As your colleagues from the U.S. come and go – and they do come and go on a fairly frequent basis – your continuity that you provide, you maintain a lot of the capability for us. You allow us to get the things done that are necessary to do, and you provide many of the continuity with important relationships as well. And so your value to our ability to achieve mission is something that I cannot overstate.

I think this is a – obviously, it's a very active mission with so many agencies represented here and in our consular offices around the country, a strong military relationship here and cooperation. And so the posture you're in here is extremely important, again, to the United States.

So we're looking forward to having productive discussions with the leadership of the country. We're going to be very open, very frank about the challenges that we see, how we need to work together to address those challenges, certain things we really need for the Pakistan leadership to undertake, but we also want them to understand we're here to work together as partners, and we should be working toward the same objective. I know everyone wants a peaceful, stable, secure Pakistan with great opportunity for economic growth. And we do see great opportunity for U.S.-Pakistan economic growth as well. And having a stable environment is really important to promoting the opportunities for U.S. businesses to come to Pakistan, invest, conduct business, and also to invite Pakistani businesses to invest in the United States.

So once again, I want to thank all of you for the important role that you play for us here in Pakistan. You'll recall, if you saw my address when I joined the State Department, the day I entered the building I had three things that I told you are important to me that I wanted to make important to all of you. And first is your safety and security, and the safety and security that I want you to assume responsibility for yourself and for those standing around you. Each of us have a responsibility in that regard.

The second is accountability. We hold ourselves accountable for our results; we hold ourselves accountable for our mistakes; we hold ourselves accountable so that we can learn. And lastly, is respect for one another. We have to treat each other with respect every day, in every activity. If we hold ourselves accountable, we can hold others accountable that we're dealing with. If we treat each other with respect, it's a great habit of how to treat others with respect as we go about carrying out the important work here in Pakistan.

So I appreciate, again, the opportunity to just say a few words to you. I'd like to make the crowd and shake every hand in here. I don't know that I'm going to be allowed to do that, but again, thank you for everything you do. And again, thank you Ambassador Hale for your leadership.

(Applause.)

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