

## Statement on the Situation in Burma *December 11, 2007*

I am deeply disturbed by the report that U.N. Special Rapporteur Paulo Pinheiro released today in Geneva documenting his findings from his trip to Burma last month. It provides further alarming details about the Burmese authorities' crackdown on demonstrations by monks and democracy activists and the severe reprisals that continue today.

He describes how the regime harassed, detained, and killed many peaceful demonstrators. The Special Rapporteur received reports, for example, that a large number of bodies were burned September 27–30 at the Ye Way Crematorium.

I strongly condemn these actions and the junta's refusal to accept the need for real change in Burma. Even while Mr. Pinheiro was in Burma, the regime continued to arrest and harass monks and democracy activists. The regime has also closed down monasteries, including the Maggin Monastery in Rangoon that served as a hospice and treatment center for HIV/AIDS patients.

Mr. Pinheiro's report demonstrates why the world cannot go back to business as usual with General Than Shwe and his junta. I call on all members of the international community to condemn the atrocities detailed in Mr. Pinheiro's report in the strongest possible terms. Last month, I announced new sanctions on the leaders of the regime and their cronies. Should the regime continue to ignore calls for a true democratic transition and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, the United States is prepared to lead international efforts to place more sanctions on the regime. Laura and I will continue to stand with the Burmese people as they seek the freedom they deserve.

NOTE: The President referred to Senior Gen. Than Shwe, Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Burma; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma.

## Remarks on Presenting the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor *December 12, 2007*

You know, one of the wonderful experiences of being a President is to welcome citizens who have served their communities with valor and compassion. And I—General and I are surrounded by four such gentlemen who have been heroic in their duties. They will tell you they were just doing their job; I'm telling you they did their job with extraordinary courage. And

so it's been an honor to award them this precious medal. And I want to thank you all very much for joining us. Proud to call you fellow citizens.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey.

## Statement on Signing the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007

*December 12, 2007*

Today I signed into law the “Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007,” a bill to reauthorize Head Start. Over the past 40 years, Head Start has provided comprehensive child development services to more than 20 million low-income children and their families to promote school readiness. Because of the National Reporting System, we know that more Head Start programs are helping children gain early reading and math skills. But we must take steps to improve Head Start to ensure that low-income children arrive at school ready to learn.

I am pleased that this bill addresses several longstanding administration priorities, such as increased competition among Head Start providers, improved coordination of early childhood delivery systems, and stronger educational performance standards. Increasing competition for providers will help ensure that we offer the highest quality programs to our Nation’s most vulnerable young children. Greater collaboration among Head Start agencies, schools, and other programs serving young children will help ensure our investments are better aligned and more effective. Stronger educational performance standards and an emphasis on research-based curricula and

classroom practices will increase children’s preparedness for school. I also support the bill’s provisions to strengthen fiscal accountability and program oversight, so that dollars intended to serve children are spent wisely.

I am, however, deeply disappointed that the bill ends the National Reporting System, our only tool to examine consistently how Head Start children are performing in programs across the Nation. We should be working to provide more and better data to parents, teachers, and policymakers, not less. I am concerned that the bill authorizes spending levels higher than those proposed in my budget. Approval of this legislation is not an endorsement of these funding levels or a commitment to request them. I am also disappointed that the bill fails to include my proposal to protect faith-based organizations’ religious hiring autonomy.

I thank Members of both parties in Congress who worked on this legislation. I will continue to work with Congress to ensure that our neediest children are prepared for success in school and a lifetime of achievement.

NOTE: H.R. 1429, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 110–134.

## Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007”

*December 12, 2007*

*To the House of Representatives:*

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 3963, the “Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007.” Like its predecessor, H.R. 976, this bill does not put poor children first and

it moves our country’s health care system in the wrong direction. Ultimately, our Nation’s goal should be to move children who have no health insurance to private coverage—not to move children who already