

country, is responsible for himself or herself. Nobody else is responsible for that person.

So, from that point of view also, you cannot penalize anybody for what his or her adult children do. So, from that point of view, it's illegal, it's against all norms of justice. And from the point of view of democracy, it is not right to discriminate against one particular citizen. You wouldn't like to be discriminated against, would you?

So I think our people support the idea of amending this clause because—not particularly because they want me to be President, perhaps because they do. But I don't think it is so much because of that, but because they realize that this is unfair, unjust, and undemocratic.

*President Obama.* Okay, a question—

#### *Press Freedom in Burma*

*Q.* I thank you. I am—[inaudible]—from 11 Media from Myanmar. And I would like to ask the question to Mr. President. The question is, have you discussed about the journalist situation in Myanmar with the President Thein Sein last night? Because more journalists and politicians have been arrested, persecuted, and sent to the jail under the President Thein Sein administration. And when you discussed about about this, how he did he respond to this discussion? Thank you.

### Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Civil Society in Rangoon *November 14, 2014*

Well, I've just had an opportunity to speak with an excellent cross-section of civil society organizations here in Myanmar: women's organizations, organizations focused on rule of law, you have the press association, the press council represented here, organizations championing the rights of the disabled, labor organizations, student organizations, groups that are concerned with the plight of ethnic minorities here.

And one thing that's become clear from this conversation is that there is a vibrant civil society here, one that is committed to democracy and transparency and accountability. And it is

*President Obama.* I didn't bring up specific cases with him. I brought up a basic principle that I stated earlier, which is that a free press is a foundation for any democracy.

We rely on journalists to explain and describe the actions of our Government. If the Government controls the journalists, then it's very difficult for citizens to hold that Government accountable. It's a fairly straightforward proposition. And I recognize that there is a transition process that's taking place, that there is a more robust debate today than there was the last time I visited. But to go back to what we said earlier, we can't be complacent. And we, as a Government, are going to be troubled when we hear reports of journalists being imprisoned, being killed, being intimidated, or being censored.

And when we engage with this Government—or any Government—and we have evidence that that's taking place, then we're going to raise it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:35 p.m. at the residence of Aung San Suu Kyi. In his remarks, the President referred to Mark Landler, White House correspondent, New York Times; and Stephanie F. Stacy, district judge, Lancaster County, NE.

U.S. policy to make sure that these civil society groups are supported and that they have the space in which to let their ideas and their concerns be expressed.

And as many of you know, I got my start in public life not as a politician, but actually as a community organizer. I very much believe that when ordinary people have the means to make themselves heard and to organize with each other to present their concerns that society is better. And nowhere is that more true than in a country like Myanmar that is transitioning from a military dictatorship to a democracy.

So I very much appreciate all the ideas that have been shared here. I think that what is most important from all the groups is that the laws are applied in a fair way; that we don't see the Government acting with impunity simply because a group may represent ideas that the Government hasn't approved of or that in some ways challenges the status quo, but that everybody's voice is allowed to be heard.

Not everybody at this table, by the way, agrees on every issue. We heard different perspectives on some very controversial issues, including what's happening in Rakhine State. But the fact that you can have open dialogue like this means that those problems can be

solved. And if those ideas are suppressed, then nothing will change.

So I'm very pleased to have spent time with you, and I want to assure you that the United States will continue to be a partner with the people of Myanmar. And we'll continue to engage the Government to provide more space and more opportunity for freedom of the press, freedom of association, rule of law, transparency, and accountability. All right?

Thank you so much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. at the U.S. Embassy.

## Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Town Hall at the University of Yangon in Rangoon November 14, 2014

*The President.* Hello, everybody!

*Audience members.* Hi!

*The President.* Myanmar luu ngae myar mingalarbar!

*Audience members.* Mingarlabar!

*The President.* It's wonderful to be back in Myanmar. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Oh, we've got some signs—"Reform is fake!" "Change"—okay, well, you guys will have a chance to ask questions later. The—yes, you can put them away. And that's why we're here, for a town hall. [*Laughter*] See, that's the thing, when you have a town hall, you don't have a protest because you can just ask the questions directly. [*Laughter*]

Two years ago, I was the first American President to visit this country, and I was deeply moved by the generous hospitality that greeted us here and the sight of children waving the flags of both of our nations. And I was inspired by the incredible diversity and culture and the various religious sites from different faiths and communities. And I was inspired again today, when I had the opportunity to visit the Secretariat, the birthplace of modern Burma; the blueprint for democracy; the home to Burmese, Chinese, Indians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and Christians who lived together

peacefully, an incredible example of multicultural and multifaith diversity and tolerance. And it's a profound symbol of this country's rich diversity and this region's potential.

Whenever I travel the world, from Europe to Africa, South America to Southeast Asia, one of the things I most enjoy doing is meeting young men and women like you. It's more fun than being in a conference room. And it's also more important, because you are the young leaders who will determine the future of this country and this region. So I'm going to keep my remarks short at the top, because I want to take as many questions and comments from you.

As President of the United States, I've made it a priority to deepen America's ties with Southeast Asia, in particular, with the young people of Southeast Asia. And I do this for reasons that go beyond the fact that I spent some of my childhood in Southeast Asia, in Indonesia. And I—that gives me a special attachment, a special feeling for Southeast Asia and this region. But I do it mainly because the 10 nations of ASEAN are home to about 1 in 10 of the world's citizens. About two-thirds of Southeast Asia's population is under 35 years old. So this region—a region of growing economies and