

Our Nation is committed to the principle that all people should be treated fairly and with respect. Advancing this goal has long been a cornerstone of American diplomacy, and I am proud that my administration has made advancing the human rights of LGBT individuals a specific focus of our engagement around the world. I am also proud of the great strides that our Nation has made at home in recent years, including that we now have marriage equality as a result of last year's landmark Supreme Court decision.

At the same time, there is much work to be done to combat homophobia and transphobia, both at home and abroad. In too many places, LGBT individuals grow up forced to conceal or deny who they truly are for fear of persecution, discrimination, and violence. All nations and all communities can and must do better. Fortunately, human rights champions and good citizens around the world continue to strive towards this goal every day by lifting up the simple truth that LGBT rights are human rights. The United States honors their work and will continue to support them in their struggle for human dignity.

## Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma

May 17, 2016

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to Burma that was declared on May 20, 1997, is to continue in effect beyond May 20, 2016.

The Government of Burma has made significant progress across a number of important areas since 2011, including the release of over 1,300 political prisoners, a peaceful and competitive election, the signing of a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement with eight ethnic armed groups, the discharge of hundreds of child soldiers from the military, steps to improve labor standards, and expanding political space for civil society to have a greater voice in shaping issues critical to Burma's future. In addition, Burma has become a signatory of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol and ratified the Biological Weapons Conven-

tion, significant steps towards supporting global non-proliferation. Despite these strides, the situation in the country continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.

Concerns persist regarding continued obstacles to full civilian control of the government, the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses in the country, particularly in ethnic minority areas, and military trade with North Korea. In addition, Burma's security forces, operating with little oversight from the civilian government, often act with impunity. We are further concerned that prisoners remain detained and that police continue to arrest critics of the government for peacefully expressing their views. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma.

Despite this action, the United States remains committed to working with both the new government and the people of Burma to ensure that the democratic transition is irreversible.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,  
May 17, 2016.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.