

Tibet and to enter into a substantive dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama to find a negotiated solution that respects the distinctive language, culture, religious identity, and fundamental freedom of all Tibetans, I would have proudly voted "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 167, on the Grijalva Amendment to H.R. 2016, The National Landscape Conservation System Act, I would have voted "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 168, on the Bishop (UT) (#3) Amendment number 3 to H.R. 2016, The National Landscape Conservation System Act, I would have voted "nay."

On rollcall vote No. 169, on the Bishop (UT) (#4) Amendment to H.R. 2016, The National Landscape Conservation System Act, I would have voted "nay."

On rollcall vote No. 170, on the Bishop (UT) (#5) Amendment to H.R. 2016, The National Landscape Conservation System Act, I would have voted "nay."

On rollcall vote No. 171, on the Altmire/Carney Amendment to H.R. 2016, The National Landscape Conservation System Act, I would have voted "aye."

On rollcall vote No. 172, on the Pearce Amendment to H.R. 2016, The National Landscape Conservation System Act, I would have voted "nay."

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PRAIRIE CENTER HEALTH SYSTEMS, INC.

HON. TIMOTHY V. JOHNSON

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 14, 2008

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the 40th anniversary of the Prairie Center Health Systems, Inc. (Prairie Center) in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. The Prairie Center has provided affordable, effective drug and alcohol education and treatment to the communities of Illinois since 1968.

The Prairie Center originated in 1968 with three grassroots organizations: the Mustard Seed Club, the Champaign County Council on Alcoholism and the Gemini House. Today, the Prairie Center is responsive to the needs of Ford and Vermilion County as well as the 7,000 annual residents in need of substance abuse services.

The Prairie Center provides a variety of substance abuse services. These services include school-based prevention education, community education, early intervention counseling, outpatient care, DUI services, adult inpatient care and detoxification care. Regardless of the service the Prairie Center follows their vision to help people improve their lives.

Today the Prairie Center has expanded to three locations and provides numerous outreach services throughout Central Illinois. On behalf of the people who have benefited from these services, I thank the Prairie Center for their work and look forward to their next 40 years.

I hope all of you will join me in recognizing the services provided by the Prairie Center that restore the lives, families and communities of Illinois.

THE ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 14, 2008

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, the bloody crackdown on innocent, peaceful protesters by Burma's brutal regime last fall shocked the world. Over 30 people were killed, hundreds were injured, and as many as 1,000 people arrested during and after the protests. It was startling even by the standards by which we have come to judge this military regime.

Last week the Congressional Human Rights Caucus welcomed three courageous witnesses to this travesty, U Kovida, U Gawsita, and U Pannysasiri, Burmese Buddhist monks who were beaten and abused by this regime, but have become advocates for their people. I would like to submit their testimonies for the record.

After the initial outrage over the government's actions last fall, I'm afraid that many people moved on, and the plight of the Burmese people has passed again from public consciousness. This is why it was so important for us to hear these distinguished witnesses, peaceful and courageous men who stood up for their people in the face of this violent suppression. By giving them an opportunity to describe what they went through—and what their countrymen and women continue to go through—we can help refocus attention on Burma.

In February, the regime announced that it would hold a national referendum on a new constitution in May 2008. They said that if the constitution were approved, they would hold a "multi-party election" in 2010. I, for one, however, have no faith in pronouncements from these thugs that they are ready to end military rule; the closed process of drafting the constitution and the extensive ongoing military role in the proposed system are obvious problems. And, of course, the exclusion of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi—still locked up under house arrest—is completely unacceptable.

Meanwhile, we search for ways to compel this regime to respect human rights. We in Congress have addressed the issue many times since the 1988 massacres. I have chaired multiple hearings on human rights abuses in Burma and we have addressed the situation through legislation aimed at the regime. Just this fall, I was honored to co-sponsor legislation authored by that great friend of Burma, Chairman TOM LANTOS. The Block Burmese JADE act would level new restrictions on the military government.

But the emboldened dictators continue their course of abuse—extra-judicial killings, torture, rape, forced labor, and of course, tight control over speech, the press and assembly.

They are supported by patrons in Beijing, who are happily preparing for the Olympics as they bankroll these thugs to the tune of \$2 to \$3 billion in military aid since the early 1990s, \$200 million of economic aid annually, and billions of dollars in investment and trade.

Congress has discussed the role of the Chinese in Darfur, and recently Madam Speaker, I co-sponsored your timely resolution calling upon the Chinese to end their violent crack-

down in Tibet. However, we cannot forget the Chinese role in supporting repression in Burma.

When the world watches the Olympic games from China, I hope at least some of the viewers think of the Burmese political prisoners—perhaps 1,800 of them—suffering in the prisons that the Chinese support. They are enduring what one former prisoner has called the closest thing to hell on earth that he could imagine.

TESTIMONY OF U KOVIDA BEFORE THE CONGRESSIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS, APRIL 10, 2008

Honorable Congressmen, staff members, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like, first of all, to offer my sincere THANKS to all of you who have given me a chance to share what I have experienced and those who are here to listen and pay attention to what I have to say. Secondly, I would like to thank the President of the United States and the American people for giving me this opportunity to explain the predicament and dire situation the people are facing in Burma on behalf of our leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the oppressed Burmese.

I am, as you all know, one of the participants during the so-called "Saffron-Revolution" in September 2007. Burma is infamous for its violation of Basic Human Rights, disrespect to the freedom of religion, one of the least developed and poorest countries in the world with the lowest living standard where the civil war has been going on for the past 50 years.

These are the reasons why we, people of Burma, have wanted a change in the government system. We have wanted to have a higher live standard, and live in a better and developed country. The people in Burma have struggled and fought for change since 1962. We have struggled and fought to achieve such change throughout the history and the demonstrations and protests in 1962, 1974, 1988, 1996, 2003, and 2007 are significant. But all of our voices, pleas and struggles were answered by the brutality of the military government which used weapons, brutal suppressions, torture, and imprisonments.

The international community witnessed the brutal suppression of monks who demonstrated peacefully in September 2007. But there have been many incidents of oppressions, violation and torture that have been going on inside Burma without anyone knowing for many decades.

What I would like to point out here in the harmless and helpless Burmese have very high hope and are depending on the assistance and intervention from the United Nations and the international community in the past 20 years. Sadly and unfortunately, there hasn't been any positive effect on the people of Burma. There were so many decisions by the United Nations. There were many U.N. representatives who have visited Burma, but the future looks bleak. We were greatly discouraged by the fact that the Security Council merely suggested the military which was killing its own people and monks, to engage in talks. What I am saying to you now is exactly what the people of Burma would like to speak out.

Ladies and gentlemen, the people of Burma are not only suffering from extreme poverty, hardship, substandard in health care, education and social services but also facing oppression by the military government on a daily basis. When monks in Burma understood, realized, and felt the hardship the people had to go through, we decided to protest peacefully on behalf of the people. And everyone knows how we were dealt with. We appreciate that you are trying to oppose the constitution drafted by the military and its

hand picked representatives. We strongly support your effort at the UN to reject any referendum and constitutions without the participation of all people concerned.

Right now the military government is planning to have a constitutional referendum in May. In many areas in Burma, people are illegally forced as well as offered financial incentives to vote. In other areas, people are threatened. Some of the activists were brutally beaten up by unknown assailants very recently. The closer the May referendum is, the more scared and concerned the people are about their safety and security. Securities have been tightened inside Rangoon. Police and security forces are deployed on the main streets of Rangoon.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to emphasize the fact that we need help and assistance in order to change the government system in Burma. We cannot accept the constitutional referendum and planned general election in 2010 organized by the military government which totally ignored the results of people's voices in 1990 general election, and whose sole aim is to prolong and ensure the military influence in Burma politics for many more years to come. We strongly urge you to reject any effort by the military government to legitimize itself.

In conclusion, I would like to thank once again the international community, governments and administrations, respected congressmen as well as the people who love democracy and who are supporting our course. I thank the Refugee International to facilitate my appearance here at the Congress.

UNITED STATES CONGRESSIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS BRIEFING ON BURMA, APRIL 10, 2008, TESTIMONY OF U GAWSITA

Honorable Congressmen, Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to thank all of you for here today and allowing me to speak.

My name is U Gawsita, a Buddhist Monk from Burma. Until before I left from Burma, I was at the Maggin Monastery, in Thingan Gyun Township in Rangoon, studying Buddha's teaching of Dharma and working social assistance works. The Maggin Monastery was not only a religious center, but also a sanctuary for orphans and HIV/AIDS infected persons, who were ignored by the military government. Our monastery was also a gathering place of democracy activists and human rights defenders, and therefore, it was constantly watched by the junta.

On September 5, 2007, Buddhist monks in Pakkoku Township in Upper Burma, who marched in the streets peacefully with reciting the Metta Sutra, Buddhist teaching of Loving-Kindness, were severely attacked, arrested and tortured by the authorities. As we couldn't tolerate such an insult to the monks, who are highly respected by the people of Burma, and to respond the injustices done by the junta, Buddhist monks all over the country founded a coalition called the "All Burma Monks' Alliance (ABMA)" on September 9, under the leadership of six leading monks. I was a founding member of the ABMA since its inception. The ABMA issued an ultimatum to the military junta, calling it to apologize to the monks, whom they have insulted in Pakkoku, no later than September 17. ABMA also claimed that if they do not, ABMA would start an ex-communicative boycott, which we called in Pali, Patta Nikuzana Kan, against the Burmese military junta and their family members. The Patta Nikuzana Kan is a strong action of monks against those who have insulted or attacked the members of religious order. Since the day this action is effective, monks refuse to accept food offer and donation from those who attacked and insulted the Bud-

dism and Buddhist monks, and refuse to perform religious blessing on them. I and my fellow monks made copies of this ABMA statement and distributed among the public secretly.

As the authorities refused to apologize to the monks, and they even accused that these monks in Pakkoku were bogus ones, the ABMA instructed all monks in the country on September 18 to begin an ex-communicative boycott against the junta. As instructed, I organized other monks and to take a vow to participate in the ex-communicative boycott at an ordination center inside the compound of Kyaikkasan Pagoda on September 18, 2007.

As we all, over 70 monks, gathered, over 150 security forces, police and intelligence officials came to us and threatened to disperse. We then left from that place, moved to another Pagoda, called Kyauk Sardaw, and took a vow together. Then, as we have planned before; we all marched towards the Sule Pagoda in downtown Rangoon while reciting the Metta Sutra. It was the beginning of the peaceful protests led by Buddhist monks in Burma that shocked not only the country, but also the world. Since September 18, monks in various parts of the country gathered at one particular place, marched in the streets towards a prominent Pagoda in the town, with reciting Metta Sutra, daily. In Rangoon, we gathered at the Shwedagon Pagoda and then peacefully marched towards the Sule Pagoda in downtown Rangoon while reciting Metta Sutra. People from all walks of life welcomed and helped us wholeheartedly and since September 24, they also joined with monks in the march in hundreds of thousands.

From September 26, the military junta began to crack down on the peaceful march by use of violence. Security forces threw tear gas canisters at the crowd, beat the protesters with rubber sticks and shot them with automatic rifles. Under the excessive use of violence by the junta, nearly 200 monks and lay people were killed and over 7,000 were arrested nationwide. I was also beaten on my head. We continued the peaceful march on September 27 and security forces brutally attacked the protesters at least three places in Rangoon, in front of the Sule Pagoda, in the Wayzayanda Street in South Okkalapa Township and in front of State High School No. 3 in Tamwe. Security forces raided about 60 monasteries and arrested over 2,000 monks. Monks were forced to disrobe in interrogation centers and severely tortured. At least 20 more monks were killed during the interrogation.

Maggin monastery was raided twice, on the nights of September 26 and October 3, by the security forces and almost all of monks and civilian assistants were arrested. I was hiding in some place, and therefore, escaped from the arrest. On November 29, the authorities forcibly shut down the Maggin monastery and forced the 80-year-old senior monk Ashin Nandiya, some novices and HIV/AIDS patients to leave the monastery. I hid in many places before I reached to Thai-Burma border on December 5, 2007. As assisted by the U.S. Government and Congress, I was permitted to resettle in the U.S. and arrived here on March 11, 2008.

I am now at a safe and secure place. However, my fellow monks and the people of Burma are still suffering a lot under the oppressive rule of the brutal military junta. Therefore, I would like to urge the United States to lead an initiative to have an effective action from the U.N. Security Council.

I heard that late Congressman Tom Lantos and Senators Joseph Biden and Mitch McConnell have introduced two legislations, banning importation of jades and precious stones from Burma, imposing more targeted

financial and banking sanctions against the Burmese generals, family members and crony businesspersons. It has been more than six months since the bloody crackdown on my fellow citizens in Burma by the brutal military junta. But, final decisions on these legislations have not been reached yet. Therefore, I would like to urge members of Congress to adopt these legislations as soon as possible.

In coming May, the military junta will forcibly approve its constitution, designed to legalize the military dictatorship, though the referendum. I would like to urge the U.S. and international governments to not recognize this sham constitution. I know that Congressmen Holt, Berman and Ros-Lehtinen have introduced legislation, calling for the United States to not recognize the junta's constitution. I also want to urge the Congress to adopt this resolution as soon as possible.

Thank you.

UNITED STATES CONGRESSIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS BRIEFING ON BURMA, APRIL 10, 2008, TESTIMONY OF U PANNYAR THI RI

Honorable Congressmen, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to thank all of you for here today.

My name is U Pannayar Thi Ri, a Burmese Buddhist monk from Zay Ta Wun Monastery in Tha Ke Ta Township in Rangoon.

When the Burmese military junta has suddenly increased gas and fuel prices in August 2007, and subsequently the people of Burma began to stage peaceful walks in the streets, I was studying Buddhist teaching of Dharma at a Monastery in Thar Ke Ta Township in Rangoon. I have witnessed the brutal crackdown by the military junta against the peaceful protesters led by the 88 Generation Students. I also learned that my fellow monks in Pakkoku Township in Upper Burma were beaten and arrested by the authorities on September 5, while they were walking in streets, reciting Metta Sutra (Loving-Kindness) to help the suffering of the people of Burma. As I can't tolerate these injustices, I joined with my fellow monks in Rangoon in the peaceful walks, by reciting the Metta Sutra, since September 22, 2007.

I would like to tell you one of my own experiences which happened on September 26. When I was at nearby the Shwedagon Pagoda together with my fellow monks that day, hundreds of security forces came in, surrounded us and blocked the streets. Then they threw tear gas canisters at us. When we were demobilizing under the smoke and dark, they attacked us with rubber sticks. Then they also burned a motorcycle and claimed that it was burned by monks. We dispersed for a moment under the attack, but later remobilize again and marched towards the Sule Pagoda in downtown Rangoon, where we intended to meet with other monks. Many monks were injured and blood-stained, but they kept their peace constantly and citing the Metta sutra continuously.

On September 27, even under the attack and blockade by the security forces, I and five other monks led a peaceful protest, with the participation of nearly 100,000 people, which ended at the Sule Pagoda. While marching in the street, Japanese reporter Kanji Nagai was along with us, taking pictures of the protest. When we reached an overpass nearby the Sule Pagoda, security forces arrived with three army trucks and shot in the air and among the crowd with their automatic rifles.

In front of my eyes, Japanese reporter Nagai and another protester were fatally shot and a monk was shot in his arm. The

marching crowd was dispersed under the flying bullets and I had to hide in a restaurant. And the wife of the restaurant owner sent me back to the monastery in Tha Ke Ta at 7 p.m. with her car. At that night, security forces came in with five army trucks and tried to raid the monasteries in Tha Ke Ta. As alarmed by the monks, hundreds of people from the neighborhood came in time to intervene the attempts of security forces, and therefore they left without success. And again, on September 29, at 1 a.m., security forces came to raid the monasteries with 10 army trucks. Local residents gathered quickly and defended the monasteries from the raid of the soldiers, and therefore, they withdrew. However, a civilian was shot to death and his body was stolen by the security forces.

Therefore, I fled to Taung Twin Gyi Township on September 30 to hide. When I came back to Rangoon stealthily on October 8, I met with a monk, who is friend of mine, was arrested on September 27 and then released. He told me that he was forced to disrobe in prison and beaten throughout interrogation. The interrogators show him photos of monks leading the protest and asked him to expose who they are. He saw my photo among them. And that's why, he suggested me to run away and hide. Therefore, I left Rangoon immediately and then led a secret journey to Thai-Burma border, where I reached on November 7, 2007. Then, as assisted by the United States Government and Congress, I arrived to the United States on March 11, 2008, as a refugee.

The objectives of the peaceful protests in Burma, led by Buddhist monks, students and people are for releasing of all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and realizing of a meaningful and time-bound dialogue between the military junta and democratic forces for mutually acceptable political changes. As long as the military junta continues to listen to the voices of the people of Burma and oppress the people by using violence, peaceful protests by monks and the people will continue. The only way to stop the violence of the military junta is an effective and decisive action from the U.N. Security Council. Therefore, I would like to request the United States Government to try to get the effective resolution from the UNSC by organizing the members

of the UNSC, especially China and Russia, to help the people of Burma.

Thank you.

HONORING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY ACTION AS THEY CELEBRATE THEIR 40TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 14, 2008

Ms. DELAURO. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to join the New Haven community in celebrating the 40th anniversary of Christian Community Action. For four decades this outstanding agency has been providing invaluable services to those most in need and I am proud to wish them the very best as they mark this important milestone.

The story of Christian Community Action begins with a home on Congress Avenue destroyed by fire and a group of ecumenical Catholics and Protestants looking for a way to help. Since that time, Christian Community Action has grown and evolved into a well-respected resource for individuals and families in need as well as a vocal advocate for the impoverished, working to change the systems which perpetuate poverty and injustice. Through the extraordinary vision and commitment of its leadership, Christian Community Action has made all the difference in the lives of many.

Reverend David Nehring became the first director of Christian Community Action in 1967 and it was under his direction that the organization's mission was developed and their first emergency food program was started. Just 3 years later, Reverend Nehring supervised the agency's move to its current home at 168 Davenport Avenue, adding five apartments which were used to provide emergency shelter. It was under the direction of the center's second director, Reverend Phil Grigsby, that the agency became involved in the develop-

ment of the New Haven Fuel Bank and that the adjacent property at 166 Davenport Avenue was purchased providing three additional apartments. Reverend Karl Hilgert became the agency's third director in 1981. It was through his vision that Christian Community Action opened the Sylvan Avenue Shelter site adding another ten emergency apartments and that the agency began increasing its social service and case management programs for the residents of its emergency housing.

In 1988, Christian Community Action's fourth and current director, Reverend Bonita Grubbs, took the helm and it has been under her nearly 20 years of outstanding leadership that the agency has substantially grown. Today, Christian Community Action not only provides emergency food, housing and support for those facing unexpected crisis such as fires and evictions, but is now actively involved in helping families to attain self-sufficiency through a myriad of innovative initiatives. The Stepping Stone Transitional Housing Program, Health Advocacy Voices Emerging Network, Mothers for Justice, and the Program for Internships, Vocational Opportunities and Training program are just a few examples of how Christian Community Action is identifying needs within our community and working to actively address those issues impacting the poor and those who often cannot find a voice.

For the last 40 years, Christian Community Action has been a beacon of hope for those most in need. Through their advocacy and social services, this organization has touched the lives of thousands throughout Greater New Haven and across Connecticut. I am proud to stand today to extend my sincere and heartfelt congratulations to all of those, past and present, whose involvement with Christian Community Action and commitment to its mission has made this organization such a success. It is difficult to imagine what our community would be like without that compassion and generosity. Happy 40th anniversary and my very best wishes for many more years of continued success.