

Rhode Island voters approved a general obligation bond of \$250 million dollars—the largest statewide bond ever—to upgrade our public school facilities. However, the State had identified over \$2.2 billion in needed improvements to school infrastructure. Rhode Island is not the only State facing a school infrastructure crisis. In fact, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave public school buildings across the country an overall grade of D+ in their 2017 report card. The scope of the school infrastructure crisis is more than many, States or communities can address on their own. The Federal government can and should be a partner in upgrading our public school facilities.

Addressing this need is not only the right thing to do for our students; it will also give a needed boost to our economy, putting people to work in family sustaining jobs. According to an analysis by the Economic Policy Institute, every \$1 billion spent on construction generates 17,785 jobs.

The Rebuild America's Schools Act of 2019 will create Federal-State partnership for school infrastructure. It will provide, over ten years, a total of \$100 billion in direct grants and school construction bonds to help fill the annual gap in school facility capital needs, while creating nearly two million jobs.

Specifically, the Rebuild America's Schools Act will provide \$7 billion per year in formula funds to States for local competitive grants for school repair, renovation, and construction. States will focus assistance on communities with the greatest financial need, encourage green construction practices, and expand access to high-speed broadband to ensure that all students have access to digital learning. Our legislation would also provide \$30 billion for qualified school infrastructure bonds (QSIBs), \$10 billion each year from FY 2020 through FY 2022, and restore the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABS) that were eliminated in the Republican Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The legislation also eases the matching requirements and expands the authority and eligible purposes of QZABS to allow local education agencies to construct, rehabilitate, retrofit, or repair school facilities. The Rebuild America's Schools Act also supports American workers by ensuring that projects use American-made iron, steel, and manufactured products and meet labor standards.

I would like to thank the broad coalition of educators, community organizations, unions, civil rights advocates, and employers that have provided feedback and support for this legislation, including the American Federation of Teachers, Association of Educational Service Agencies, Association of School Building Administrators International, Brick Industry Association, Californians for School Facilities, Council of Great City Schools, Healthy Schools Network, International Union of Operating Engineers, International

Union of Painters and Allied Trades, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Federally Impacted Schools, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Concrete Masonry Association, National Education Association, National PTA, National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium, National Rural Education Association, National Urban League, North America's Building Trades Unions, Organizations Concerned About Rural Education, Public Advocacy for Kids, Rebuild America's Schools, Rural School and Community Trust, Secure Schools Alliance, Teach Plus, Twenty-First Century Schools Fund, and U.S. Green Building Council. We look forward to expanding this coalition in the weeks and months ahead. We have no time to waste in fixing our deteriorating school infrastructure. In the words of a student activist in Providence, "Students cannot learn in a crumbling building, a school that isn't fit to uplift our minds." We need to listen to our students, strengthen our communities, and improve our school buildings. I urge all of our colleagues to support the Rebuild America's Schools Act and press for its passage.

#### SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

**SENATE RESOLUTION 34—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF BURMA AND BANGLADESH ENSURE THE SAFE, DIGNIFIED, VOLUNTARY, AND SUSTAINABLE RETURN OF THE ROHINGYA REFUGEES WHO HAVE BEEN DISPLACED BY THE CAMPAIGN OF ETHNIC CLEANSING CONDUCTED BY THE BURMESE MILITARY AND TO IMMEDIATELY RELEASE UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED JOURNALISTS, WA LONE AND KYAW SOE OO**

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. COLLINS, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. TILLIS, Ms. WARREN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. COONS, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. HARRIS, and Mr. PETERS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

#### S. RES. 34

Whereas, on August 25, 2017, attacks on security posts in Burma by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army militant group resulted in a brutal, systematic, and disproportionate reprisal by the Burmese military and security forces on Rohingya villages in Rakhine State;

Whereas approximately 700,000 Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh since the Burmese military commenced its scorched-earth campaign, with the burning of villages and local monuments, and reports of widespread gang rape, starvation, killing, and forcible deportation;

Whereas the August 2018 United Nations report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar states in paragraph 87 that "the Mission concluded . . . that there is sufficient information to warrant the investigation and prosecution of senior officials in the Tatmadaw chain of command, so that a competent court can determine their liability for genocide in relation to the situation in Rakhine State";

Whereas, on August 28, 2018, then-United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley reported to the United Nations Security Council that the Department of State had conducted interviews with 1,024 Rohingya refugees in camps throughout Cox's Bazar and that the results of the interviews were consistent with the United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar;

Whereas, on September 24, 2018, the Department of State report titled, "Documentation of Atrocities in Northern Rakhine State", concluded that the military's attacks in Burma's Northern Rakhine State were "large-scale, widespread and seemingly geared toward both terrorizing the population and driving out the Rohingya residents" and that the "scope and scale of the military's operations indicate that they were well-planned and coordinated";

Whereas, on December 3, 2018, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum concluded that "there is compelling evidence that the Burmese military committed ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and genocide against the Rohingya";

Whereas the Government of Burma has consistently denied access to the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar established to investigate human rights violations around the country;

Whereas the fundamental operational principles of voluntary repatriation are safety, to include legal and physical safety, and dignity, to include treatment with respect and full acceptance by their national authorities, including the full restoration of refugees' rights;

Whereas approximately 236,000 Rohingya refugees returned to Burma from Bangladesh under the terms of a 1992 agreement after a previous bout of violence against the Rohingya forced them to flee, only to continue to be denied citizenship, face prejudice, violence, and persecution, and in many instances be forced to live in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps with their freedom of movement restricted;

Whereas Burma's 1982 citizenship law stripped Rohingya of their Burmese citizenship, rendering them stateless;

Whereas the Government of Burma continues to systematically discriminate against the Rohingya people, a long-persecuted Muslim minority within Burma, including by continuing to restrict registration of Rohingya births and to deny them freedom of movement, access to healthcare, land, education, marriage, voting rights, and political participation;

Whereas the Government of Burma has repeatedly abused land use laws to unjustly seize land from Rohingya refugees;

Whereas the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) is working closely with the Government of Bangladesh and partners to provide protection and assistance to the Rohingya refugees and to support the host populations affected by the influx;

Whereas, on November 23, 2017, the Government of Burma and the Government of Bangladesh signed an agreement, known as the "Arrangement", on the return of displaced persons from Rakhine State, which is modeled after the 1992 repatriation agreement between Burma and Bangladesh;

Whereas the Arrangement includes references to restoring normalcy and human rights in Rakhine State, for refugee returns to comply with international standards of safety, dignity, and voluntariness, and to commencing a process to address root causes in line with the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations;

Whereas the Department of State has assessed that Burma has not made progress on the “more crucial” of the 88 recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission that are identified by Rohingya refugees as prerequisites to repatriation including freedom of movement, civil documentation, and a transparent pathway to citizenship;

Whereas, on June 6, 2018, the Government of Burma reached a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the UNHCR and the United Nations Development Agency (UNDP) on its role in the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of Rakhine State refugees;

Whereas Rohingya refugees currently hosted in Bangladesh demonstrated in protest against an initial November 2018 repatriation plan between the Governments of Bangladesh and Burma, citing concerns for their security and the lack of meaningful political reforms in Burma to include full citizenship;

Whereas UNHCR, on January 4, 2019, reported that conditions in Burma’s Rakhine State remain “not conducive to return” on the heels of the Government of India’s regrettable decision to repatriate 16,000 Rohingya to Burma without having first ascertained the “voluntariness of their decision to return”;

Whereas, throughout this process, the Government of Burma has restricted media freedom and jailed journalists;

Whereas, on December 12, 2017, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, two journalists reporting and documenting atrocities against the Rohingya, were arrested and on January 10, 2018, formally prosecuted with violating the “Official Secrets Act”;

Whereas Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo had uncovered a massacre of 10 Rohingya men perpetrated by Burma’s security forces and aided by local Buddhist villagers in the village of Inn Din in Rakhine State;

Whereas, on September 3, 2018, Yangon northern district judge Ye Lwin ruled that Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo breached the colonial-era Official Secrets Act and sentenced them each to seven years in prison with hard labor;

Whereas, on January 11, 2019, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo’s appeal of their conviction before the Yangon Regional High Court was denied;

Whereas Time Magazine named Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo as co-recipients of 2018 Time Magazine’s “Person of the Year” in recognition for their courageous reporting;

Whereas Vice President Mike Pence tweeted his concern over the sentence against Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo for “doing their job reporting on the atrocities being committed on the Rohingya people”;

Whereas United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley described the conviction as “another terrible stain on the Burmese government” and called for “their immediate and unconditional release”;

Whereas the Department of State’s annual Human Rights Report on Burma for the year 2017 states that—

(1) “legal provisions that allow the government to manipulate the courts for political ends, and these provisions were sometimes used to deprive citizens of due process and the right to a fair trial, particularly with regards to the freedom of expression”;

(2) “The government continued to detain and arrest journalists, activists, and critics of the government and the military during the year.”; and

(3) “Threats against and arrests of journalists increased . . . Freedom of expression was more restricted during the year compared with 2016. This included a higher number of detentions of journalists using various laws, including laws carrying more severe punishments than those used previously.”;

Whereas, according to PEN America, the discontinuation of Radio Free Asia’s broadcasting in Myanmar on a domestic channel constitutes a further shrinking of the space for free expression in the country; and

Whereas, additionally, PEN America reports that—

(1) there continues to be increased legal threats, imprisonment, and physical harassment of journalists;

(2) there continues to be restrictions on the ability to report from and receive information on conflict areas; and

(3) the lack of reform of media laws and institutions is driving a decline in media freedom; Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the violence and displacement inflicted on Burma’s Rohingya and other ethnic minorities;

(2) urges the Secretary of State to make a determination whether the actions by the Myanmar military constitute crimes against humanity or genocide and to work with interagency partners to impose targeted sanctions on Myanmar military officials, to include Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, responsible for these heinous acts through existing authorities;

(3) condemns the attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army militant group;

(4) calls on the Government of Burma to allow full access to Rakhine State and ensure the full participation of UNHCR, the internationally endorsed organization tasked with ensuring that refugee returns are voluntary, safe, dignified, and meet international refugee and human rights standards, and that the voices of refugees are represented in order to ensure the sustainability of such returns and to prevent further waves of displacement;

(5) commends the positive role of the Government of Bangladesh in receiving Rohingya refugees to date and urges the Government of Bangladesh to continue allowing the full participation of UNHCR and human rights organization in accessing refugee camps;

(6) calls on UNHCR and international non-governmental organizations to continue to play a role in monitoring repatriation efforts by the Governments of Bangladesh and Burma to ensure a process that meets international norms for voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriation;

(7) agrees that any return of Rohingya should include guarantees that any returns of refugees will be voluntary and dignified, that there will be no threats to protection or security upon return, that refugees will be able to return to their places of origin or other locations as desired, and be able to enjoy equal rights with others in Burma, including the restoration or granting of full citizenship, freedom of movement, and access to basic services;

(8) recognizes that any forced relocation of Rohingya refugees into temporary settlements, IDP camps, “model villages”, or other areas not of refugees’ choosing is unacceptable;

(9) calls on the Government of Burma to allow for a flexible and practical approach to dealing with evidence of Rohingya residence in Burma, recognizing that the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh possess a wide range of documents and that some refugees have no documents and will need to establish their residence by other means;

(10) calls on the Government of Burma to address root causes consistent with the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations and fully implement all of the recommendations of the Commission, including providing equal access to full restoration or granting of full citizenship for the Rohingya population;

(11) calls on the Government of Burma to acknowledge and address the issue of statelessness for the Rohingya, the deprivation of rights, and institutionalized and pervasive discrimination of the Rohingya population in order to bring about any sustainable solutions;

(12) commends the Government and the people of Bangladesh for their extraordinary generosity and efforts to provide shelter and relief for nearly 1,000,000 Rohingya refugees forced to flee their homes in Burma;

(13) calls on the Government of Bangladesh to ensure all refugees have freedom of movement and under no circumstances are subject to unsafe, involuntary, precipitous, or uninformed returns to Burma;

(14) calls for all the convictions against Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo to be nullified, for the similar charges against many other journalists currently awaiting trial to be dropped, and for the immediate and unconditional release of these journalists;

(15) expresses concern about the Government of Myanmar’s crackdown on journalists and press freedom throughout the country;

(16) reaffirms the central role that independent and professional journalism plays in strengthening democratic governance, upholding the rule of law, mitigating conflict, and informing public opinion around the world; and

(17) calls upon the United States Government to continue the United States status as a top global donor nation to the humanitarian response in Burma and Bangladesh and for the President’s fiscal year 2020 budget request to reflect that longstanding United States commitment.

#### AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 59. Ms. McSALLY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1, to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriation of funds to Israel, to reauthorize the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Act of 2015, and to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 60. Ms. McSALLY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1, *supra*; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 61. Mr. KENNEDY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1, *supra*; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 62. Mr. KAINES submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1, *supra*; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 63. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1, *supra*; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 64. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1, *supra*; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 65. Mr. MCCONNELL (for himself, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BURR, Mr. ROMNEY, Ms. ERNST, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SASSE, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. WICKER, Mr.