

The US senate unanimously calls for the Obama administration to review its policy of engagement with the Burmese junta.

WASHINGTON DC—Condemning the continued persecution of pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, the United States Senate has, in an unanimous resolution, urged the Obama administration to review its policy of engagement with the Burmese military junta as it has not yielded any positive move from the country's authoritarian military rulers.

"I will continue working with my senate colleagues to send a clear message that the US expects the military regime to dramatically expand political participation and create an environment free from fear and intimidation before we will consider elections in Burma as anything but a farce," Senator Judd Gregg, sponsor of the bipartisan resolution, said.



I also expect Secretary of State Clinton to engage with governments and organizations that can bring about positive change for the people of Burma, including China, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and even the United Nations Security Council," he said in a statement.

Other co-sponsors of the resolutions were senators Mitch McConnell, Patrick Leahy, Joseph Lieberman, Bob Bennett, Sam Brownback and Susan Collins.

Applauding the US Senate for demanding the US administration strengthen pressure against Burma's military regime and review its policy of engagement, Aung Din, the executive director of US Campaign for Burma, said: "I am hoping that the Obama administration will support the establishment of a UN commission of inquiry to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma and call the regime's election a sham."

Gregg said he regrets that the military regime in Burma continues to display a complete and total disinterest in positive relations with the US, and credible and fair elections for its people. He said that the election rules that were recently announced by the regime leave no opportunity for legitimate political dialogue as they prevent key stakeholders from participating, making the upcoming elections a charade.

"Despite the regime's vicious efforts to undermine the National League for Democracy (NLD), the NLD will forever remain a political party dedicated to democratic values and the voice of freedom in Burma," he said.

Meanwhile, speaking on the senate floor in support of another resolution that seeks renewal of sanctions against Burma, Senator Dianne Feinstein said that the NLD is being forced to disband by an unjust and undemocratic constitution and election law, both drafted in secret and behind closed doors by the ruling military junta to solidify its grip on power.

Feinstein said she "applauded" the courage of NLD leaders not to register the party under flawed electoral laws. "I applaud their courage and their devotion to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. While I am saddened to see the regime close its doors, the spirit and the principles of the NLD will live on in the hearts and minds of the people. I know they will one day be able to elect a truly representative government," she said.

"Now we must send our own signal to the regime that its quest for legitimacy has failed. We must send our own signal to the democratic opposition that we stand in solidarity with them and we will not abandon them" said Feinstein.

"Now is the time to renew the import ban on all products from Burma for another year. Let me be clear—I am disappointed that the ban has not moved Burma any closer to national reconciliation and a democratic government. Indeed, as I have noted, the regime has taken

several steps in the wrong direction. But we have the opportunity to review these sanctions every year," she said.

"Indeed, the standards for lifting the sanctions are clear. The regime must make "substantial and measurable progress" toward ending violations of internationally recognized human rights, releasing all political prisoners, allowing freedom of speech and press, allowing freedom of association, permitting the peaceful exercise of religion, and bringing to a conclusion an agreement between the SPDC and the National League for Democracy and Burma's ethnic nationalities on the restoration of a democratic government," she said.