



June 16, 2008

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Diane Feinstein  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John McCain  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators McConnell, Feinstein, and McCain:

On behalf of the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), I applaud your stand against the repressive military junta ruling Burma by sponsoring S.J. Res 41 to renew the import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003. This renewal will send a clear and unmistakable message that the United States is not interested in doing business with regimes such as the one that brutally enslaves the people of Burma.

The Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 included a total ban on imports from Burma. As you know, the import ban will expire unless Congress passes, and the President signs into law, legislation to renew the ban by July 26.

Despite our efforts, the ruling military junta in Burma has shown no willingness to address the many problems that made these sanctions necessary. Indeed, as the most recent U.S. State Department Human Rights Report, which echoes more than a decade of similar reports, states, "The government's human rights record worsened during the year [2007]." Moreover, "The government routinely infringed on citizens' privacy and restricted freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement."

Recently, the international community reacted with horror at the ruling military junta's response to Cyclone Nargis. In this latest demonstration of repression, Burma's regime deliberately prevented relief from reaching affected areas and millions of survivors. According to the State Department's June 2 Humanitarian Assistance Fact Sheet, only 54 percent of the approximately 2.4 million people affected by the cyclone have received "some humanitarian assistance." Additionally, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reported on June 1 that "six IFRC staff continue to wait for the Government of Burma's (GOB) permission to access the Ayeyarwady Delta."

Now is the time to reinforce our sanctions tools against Burma's government, and, more importantly, actively seek similar steps from other countries as unilateral sanctions have only a limited effect if other countries continue to trade with Burma. We hope that we can also work together to capitalize on heightened international awareness of the plight of the Burmese people and press our allies in the region and around the world to impose similar sanctions against this brutal regime. Only when Burma's government is confronted by a world united, will freedom truly come to the Burmese people.

We look forward to working with you to see this renewal swiftly considered and enacted.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Burke  
President and CEO  
American Apparel & Footwear Association