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U.S. Government Must Ensure Accountability and Transparency
**RIGHTS GROUPS EXPRESS STRONG CONCERN ABOUT WEAK
REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. INVESTMENT IN BURMA**

(Washington, D.C.) — After submitting a detailed [comment](#) to the U.S. Department of State expressing concern over weak reporting requirements for U.S. companies considering investing in Burma, EarthRights International, Freedom House, Physicians for Human Rights, U.S. Campaign for Burma and United to End Genocide issued the following statement:

“We continue to be deeply concerned by the U.S. government’s decision to lift all remaining sanctions, and allow corporations unrestricted investment access to Burma despite widespread corruption, ongoing human rights violations and a total lack of rule of law. Although U.S. companies will be required to report on their investments, the current requirements lack specificity about enforcement and consequences for non-compliance. Further, existing loopholes enable companies to designate information as ‘confidential’ as a way to avoid public scrutiny. The U.S. government should take immediate steps to ensure that there is a strong regulatory framework that can effectively promote accountability and transparency.

“Evidence shows that there is a direct correlation between foreign investment and human rights abuse in Burma, particularly in the resource-rich ethnic minority areas. As investment floods unfettered into the country, there are real risks that American companies will find themselves complicit in rights violations unless the U.S. government enforces regulations that mitigate some of the negative impacts of investment. There is already growing concern about increasing land grabs, authorized by the Burmese government for the purpose of creating industrial zones to entice foreign investment, which have displaced farmers and local communities throughout Burma.

“Despite claims from the U.S. business community that their entry into Burma will raise the overall human rights standard in the country, history demonstrates that American companies are not models of corporate responsibility, especially when it comes to extractive industries.

“Companies that are poised to be the first in the country are keen to invest in Burma’s extractive resource sector, which lacks transparency and suffers from pervasive corruption. Profits generated by the sector are known to have funded military operations in ethnic areas and contributed to the exacerbation of these conflicts. Additionally, the cronies who have controlled this sector for the last several decades routinely engage in forced labor practices, land confiscation and evictions of indigenous communities, and a host of other human rights violations.

“We strongly urge the U.S. government to implement the recommendations outlined in the comment submitted by our organizations and others, which are designed to strengthen accountability and transparency of U.S. corporations investing in Burma.”

The joint comment to the State Department regarding the Reporting Requirements on Responsible Investment in Burma was submitted on behalf of EarthRights International, Freedom House, Physicians for Human Rights, U.S. Campaign for Burma and United to End Genocide as well as a dozen other organizations.

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