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USCR Policy Analyst Veronika Martin Testifies Before the House Committee on International Relations on Developments in Myanmar (Burma)

U.S. Committee for Refugees Policy Analyst Veronika Martin testified before the House Committee on International Relations on March 25 in a hearing on “Developments in Burma” chaired by Representative James A. Leach (R-IA), Chair of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, and held jointly by that subcommittee and the Subcommittee on International Terrorism, Non-Proliferation and Human Rights.

Ms. Martin raised three main concerns in her testimony:

- the increasing restrictions which Thailand is placing on Myanmar refugees and activists and on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), impeding UNHCR’s ability to exercise its protection mandate;
- UNHCR’s increasingly limited role in protecting Myanmar refugees in Thailand, including UNHCR’s premature recent decision to facilitate repatriations back to Myanmar; and
- continuing human rights violations by the Myanmar government which are the root cause of displacement in ethnic areas in eastern Myanmar.

The subcommittees heard from two panels of witnesses. Testifying on the first panel were Matthew Daley, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and Lorne Cranner, Assistant Secretary of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, both of the State Department.

The second panel featured Daw San San, Member-Elect of Parliament from the National League for Democracy, who fled Myanmar last year; Tom Malinowski, Washington Advocacy Director for Human Rights Watch; USCR Policy Analyst Martin, who focuses on East Asia and the Pacific; David Steinberg, Ph.D., Asian Studies Director at Georgetown University; and Morten Pederson, Senior Policy Analyst at the International Crisis Group.

Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA) asked Ms. Martin to answer questions for the Congressional Record about actions that Congress may take to assist displaced Myanmar refugees.

Transcripts of the testimony of individual witnesses may be found at http://www.house.gov/international_relations/aphear108.htm. Complete transcripts of the three and a half hour-long hearing, including questions and answers, are posted on the congressional websites.

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