

April 18, 2008

Dear Friends,

Happy Myanmar New Year. This is the season of choice for the "Burmese" outside of Myanmar to return to Myanmar and enjoy the festivities. It is the peak travel season from the US to Myanmar. Every year many take to the streets in Myanmar to partake in the "Thingyan" Water Festival. This annual tradition has been repeated for thousands of years. This sort of repetition is enjoyable and entertaining. The festival welcomes the new year and new possibilities. However, sometimes repetition is not a good thing. For example, every year broad based sanctions are re-imposed upon Myanmar hurting the ordinary people. Every year Congress mechanically agrees to follow bad foreign policy advice. Burma policy is outdated and out of touch with the Myanmar people. With this new year, USC hopes to move forward on Burma policy especially through humanitarian activities.

"Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following page(s), are not yet sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor; a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defence of custom. But tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason." I borrow these words from Thomas Paine the author of "Common Sense." Indeed there is no fashion, nor taste, nor prevailing good judgement to engage with the Myanmar government at this time. And definitely there will be insinuation of collusion with Myanmar officials if one does, but these claims must be disputed in defense of oneself. And in time, they will. For so long has the US policy toward Burma gone in the wrong direction, that it has to be thought of as right and the only way. Time has shown us all the results of such policy - failure.

"I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past." I borrow these words from Patrick Henry as he addressed the House of Burgesses in 1775. The Myanmar government has replied in kind to the treatment of the United States. The United States is a leader among all nations and should justify her position by treating Myanmar with greater wisdom and interest and effort. It seems the people of Myanmar have been "betrayed with a kiss" in the form of sanctions. Letting it be said, and letting it be done with, the Burma-problem is resolved with ease. If this be the way of the future, because it has so been the way of the past since so long ago 1988, then I see nothing but the same sad results for US policy toward Burma.

Sanctions have hurt the Myanmar people. Practicing failed policy of sanctions is equal to practicing a policy of indifference. The US as the world leader should guide, and educate, and entice Myanmar back into the international community. The best way is to increase humanitarian efforts in the country. The international community is increasing and monitoring the aid for humanitarian aid to Myanmar. The US should also increase its aid. US Collection speaks for all the people who wish to see progress for Burma. It is right to speak up if Burma policy is failing and tell our Congressmen and Senators there is a new way to solve the Burma problem.

For this New Year I wish that the U.S.A. may respond with great wisdom to its Burma policy. It is my hope that US senators and congressman too will no longer be sanctioned from travelling to Myanmar. If there is such a travel ban how shall we ever get to learn, and influence, and know each other? US Collection gives us a new way forward toward assisting the needy in Myanmar. US Collection believes that through humanitarian activities, we can save lives, strengthen civil society, and secure peace, and friendship with Myanmar.

Sincerely,

Thet Win
Founder
US Collection, Humanitarian Corps