

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

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Statement by President Obama on Burma's November 7 Elections

The November 7 elections in Burma were neither free nor fair, and failed to meet any of the internationally accepted standards associated with legitimate elections. The elections were based on a fundamentally flawed process and demonstrated the regime's continued preference for repression and restriction over inclusion and transparency.

One of the starkest flaws of this exercise was the regime's continued detention of more than 2,100 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, thereby denying them any opportunity to participate in the process. The unfair electoral laws and overtly partisan Election Commission ensured that Burma's leading pro-democracy party, the National League for Democracy, was silenced and sidelined. The regime denied the registration of certain ethnic parties, cancelled elections in numerous ethnic areas, and stage-managed the campaign process to ensure that pro-democracy and opposition candidates who did compete faced insurmountable obstacles. Ultimately, elections cannot be credible when the regime rejects dialogue with opponents and represses the most basic freedoms of expression, speech, and assembly.

We will monitor the situation in Burma closely in the weeks and months ahead. The United States will continue to implement a strategy of pressure and engagement in accordance with conditions on the ground in Burma and the actions of the Burmese authorities. We renew our calls for the authorities to: free Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, cease systematic violations of human rights, begin to hold human rights violators accountable, and welcome pro-democracy and ethnic minority groups into a long-overdue dialogue. Only genuine, inclusive dialogue can place Burma on the path to a truly representative democracy which upholds human rights and builds a better future for its citizens.