

Statement on Burma, H Con Res 200

October 2, 2007

Madame Speaker, I rise in opposition to this legislation not because I do not sympathize with the plight of the oppressed people of Burma , particularly as demonstrated by the continued confinement of Aung San Suu Kyi. Any time a government represses its citizenry it is reprehensible. My objection to this legislation is twofold. First, the legislation calls on the United Nations Security Council to “take appropriate action” with regard to Burma and its internal conditions. This sounds like an open door for an outside military intervention under the auspices of the United Nations, which is something I do not support.

More importantly, perhaps, I am concerned that while going around the world criticizing admittedly abhorrent governmental actions abroad we are ignoring the very dangerous erosions of our own civil liberties and way of life at home. Certainly it is objectionable that the Burmese government holds its own citizens in jails without trial. But what about the secret prisons that our own CIA operates around the globe that hold thousands of individuals indefinitely and without trial? Certainly it is objectionable that the government of Burma can declare Aung San Suu Kyi a political prisoner to be held in confinement. But what about the power that Congress has given the president to declare anyone around the world, including American citizens, “enemy combatants” subject to indefinite detention without trial? What about the “military commissions act” that may well subject Americans to military trial with secret evidence permitted and *habeas corpus* suspended?

So while I am by no means unsympathetic to the current situation in Burma , as an elected Member of the United States House of Representatives I strongly believe that we would do better to promote freedom around the world by paying better attention to our rapidly eroding freedom here at home. I urge my colleagues to consider their priorities more closely and to consider the much more effective approach of leading by example.