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October 20, 2015

H.E. President Thein Sein
Presidential Palace
Zeya Theiddhi Ward
Naypyitaw, Myanmar

H.E. Ambassador U Kyaw Myo Htut
Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
2300 S St, NW
Washington DC, 20008

Dear President Sein and Ambassador Htut:

Since May, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar signed into law four “Protection of the Race and Religion” statutes. These laws place restrictions on marriage, religious conversion, and reproductive freedom of the people within Myanmar’s borders. As an emerging democratic nation, these laws are injurious to secularism and democratic norms, and fuel an ongoing humanitarian crisis afflicting 1.4 million people of the Rohingya ethnic group. The Secular Policy Institute, and the below signed coalition members, calls on the government of Myanmar, President Sein and the Houses of Nationality and Representation to review the Monogamy, Interfaith Marriage, Religious Conversion, and Population Control laws and to support the cause of and human rights.

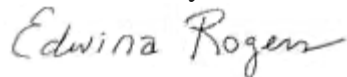
The laws of “Protecting Race and Religion” include the “Monogamy Law” criminalizing cohabitation with an unmarried partner that is not a recognized spouse (signed in law 31 August, 2015); the “Religious Conversion Law” requiring that those wishing to change their religion seek the approval of a board for religious conversion requiring a 90-180 day approval process resulting in a “certificate of religious conversion” (August 26, 2015), with penalties for “forced religious conversion;” the “Interfaith Marriage Law” regulating marriage between Buddhist women to non-Buddhist men, where women under the age of 20 must obtain parental consent and those applying for marriage licenses must publicize their applications with a 14-day window

for objections that are met with litigation (August 26, 2015); and the “Population Control Law” that was passed in May. This final law imposes restrictions on the number of children that married couples (from “certain regions”) may have.

These laws impose significant restrictions on basic human liberties and risk violation of important, internationally recognized, human rights. We call on Myanmar’s diplomatic mission in the United States to arrange a meeting with the Secular Policy Institute to discuss these laws and consider enacting laws and regulations that support the ongoing development of a more just and equitable society.

After 49 years of military rule (1962-2011), Myanmar is in the transitional process of democratic consolidation. Neither under the name of Burma nor Myanmar, has this nation been a signatory to either the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This makes it more difficult to appeal to the standard bearer of global human-rights standards.

Yours sincerely,



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Signatories

ARP Sociedad para el Avance del Pensamiento Crítico - Spain
Atheist Alliance International – Washington, DC, USA
Atheist Foundation of Australia – Lane Cove, New South Wales, Australia
Canadian Secular Alliance – Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Central London Humanists – London, UK
Freethinkers of the Coachella Valley – Palm Desert, California, USA
Humanist Association of San Diego – San Diego, California, USA
Humanist Chaplaincy at American University – Washington, DC, USA
Humanist Society of Redding – Redding, California, USA
Humanists of North Central Florida – Ocala, Florida, USA
Mid-West Humanists – Ireland
Muslimish – Michigan, USA
North London Humanist Group – London, UK

Northern Ohio Freethought Society – Cleveland, Ohio, USA
OMAHA (Omaha Metro Area Humanist Association) – Omaha, Nebraska, USA
The Rationalist Association of New South Wales – Chippendale, New South Wales, Australia
San Francisco Atheists – San Francisco, California, USA
Sidmennt, The Icelandic Ethical Humanist Association – Reykjavik, Iceland
UCTAA (Universal Church Triumphant of the Apathetic Agnostic) - USA
United Coalition of Reason – Washington, DC, USA