



H.RES. 1181 – Expressing condolences and sympathy to the people of Burma for the grave loss of life and vast destruction caused by Cyclone Nargis

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1181 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Joseph Crowley (D-NY) on May 8, 2008. The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but was never considered.

H.Res. 1181 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on May 13, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1181 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Extends its condolences and sympathy to the people of Burma for the grave loss of life and vast destruction caused by Cyclone Nargis;
- Vows its full support of and solidarity with the people of Burma;
- Calls on Americans to provide immediate emergency assistance to cyclone victims in Burma through humanitarian agencies;
- Expresses confidence that the people of Burma will succeed in overcoming the hardships incurred because of this tragedy;
- Calls for the Burmese military junta to consider the well-being of its people and accept broad international assistance; and
- Demands that the referendum to entrench military rule be called off, allowing all resources to be focused on disaster relief to ease the pain and suffering of the Burmese people.

BACKGROUND

On the night of May 2, 2008, through the morning of May 3, 2008, Cyclone Nargis, the first tropical cyclone to make landfall on Burma since Cyclone Mala in 2006, struck the coast of Burma. Cyclone Nargis has caused the death of tens of thousands of people, displaced hundreds of thousands, and is anticipated to affect over a million people.

By May 7, 2008, the news media had reported that the death toll, as accounted by a United States envoy, could reach over 100,000.

Burma is ruled by a military junta. In 1990 the country held multiparty legislative elections that resulted in the main opposition party - the National League for Democracy (NLD) - winning a landslide victory. However, the ruling junta refused to hand over power. The military junta still holds power in Burma, making it almost impossible to get help and supplies into the country.



LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

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The country had agreed to a constitutional referendum scheduled for Saturday, May 10th. This referendum is to adopt a state constitution which is considered corrupted from the onset by the military junta.

Many countries and organizations, including the United States, do not feel this is a legitimate referendum, nor do they feel the country is doing enough to address the plight of its citizens in their time of need. As of May 6, the government agreed to allow only one C-130 plane carrying supplies from the US to enter the country.

In response to this issue, President Bush has instructed the U.S. Treasury Department to freeze assets of Burmese state-owned companies that are held in U.S. banks

More than 30 disaster assessment teams from 18 different nations and the United Nations have been denied permission to enter Burma by the junta. The United States has extended significant support to the people of Burma during this time, including a \$250,000 emergency contribution authorized by the United States Embassy in Burma to be released immediately, and \$3,000,000 in additional aid relief announced on May 6, 2008, by the White House.

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