



# BURMA PARTNERSHIP

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Strengthening Cooperation for a Free Burma

## Final Announcement from Burma Partnership: As Burma Partnership Comes to an End, Progressive Voice Remains to Amplify Voices from the Ground

Dear Friends, Colleagues and Partners,

This year, Burma Partnership celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Over the last decade, our organization, born out of Burma's border-based movement for democracy, ethnic equality, human rights, peace and justice, has had the privilege to work alongside a vibrant civil society – from inside the country, along Burma's borders, and networks from across the Asia Pacific region and around the world – in mobilizing and coordinating a solidarity movement with a common strategy for a democratic and free Burma. This mandate was bestowed on us by our partners at the inception of the network in Thailand in 2006.

However, since 2011, Burma has experienced a considerable political and economic shift, culminating in the first free elections of 2015. Burma's civil society movement has grown throughout a changing political landscape, expanding and redefining itself constantly to address new challenges or to propel forward new ideas.

Reflecting on these changes in Burma and on the solid linkages formed between civil society organizations, both inside and out of the country, Burma Partnership's mandate to coordinate and mobilize the solidarity movement has come to an end.

As of 10 October, 2016, Burma Partnership is pivoting in a new direction, under the banner of *Progressive Voice*. This new participatory and rights-based policy research and advocacy organization will draw on Burma Partnership's existing strengths, networks and values, as well as the changing political and civil society landscape, to fill the need for a rights-based policy narrative on Burma that reflects the voices from the ground. As in the past, Progressive Voice will continue to produce the *Weekly Highlights*, briefing papers, press releases, as well as disseminating valuable commentary, press releases and reports from our partners in civil society that aims to expose and improve the human rights situation in Burma.

Despite recent political reforms, the need for a participatory and rights-based policy research and advocacy organization could not be more pressing. Ongoing [offensives](#) by the Burma Army against ethnic armed organizations in Kachin State, Shan State Karen State and elsewhere threaten to disrupt an already fragile and problematic peace process. All too often, innocent civilians get caught up in the crossfire, resulting in massive displacement throughout the country and a needless [loss of life](#). Meanwhile, the continuing state-led persecution of the Rohingya and other religious minorities has contributed to dangerous sectarian divides, which has been further [exacerbated](#) by recent violent events. Furthermore, largely unregulated foreign investment, weak labor laws and increased

militarization have contributed to [worsening](#) conflict in ethnic nationality areas, mass displacement, environmental degradation and exploitation of the labor force. The need for the promotion and protection of human rights in Burma cannot be overstated.

True insight into the cause and effect of human rights violations – and thus what is required for them to come to an end – can only come from those directly impacted. Unfortunately, these voices are typically neglected at the decision-making level. Progressive Voice seeks to fill this void and elevate the voices of those whose human rights are adversely affected. To accomplish this, Progressive Voice will continue to work with partner civil society organizations, the government, human rights defenders and all other stakeholders, recognizing that collaboration is fundamental to realizing human rights.

Burma Partnership owes a tremendous amount of gratitude to its partners and supporters – including at the local, regional and international levels – along with those who have supported Burma’s movement for a democratic free Burma over the past ten years. While recognizing considerable positive changes on the ground in Burma during the reform process, Burma Partnership is fully vigilant of significant drawbacks on the human rights front, especially among the ongoing marginalization of vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go to realize the vision of Burma Partnership for Burma to become truly free and democratic. As a result, Progressive Voice looks ahead with its mission to amplify the voices of those vulnerable and marginalized so that they may be included in all future policy and decision-making and contribute towards creating policy solutions that affect the life and livelihood of not only themselves but of future generations. We thank you and we look forward to carrying out this mission with your continued support.

Sincerely,



Khin Ohmar

Coordinator, Burma Partnership

Chair, Advisory Board, Progressive Voice

*Progressive Voice will publish its first ‘Weekly Highlights’ in the week beginning Monday 31 October, 2016. In the meantime, please visit: [www.progressivevoicemyanmar.org](http://www.progressivevoicemyanmar.org).*