

<b>RELEASE IN PART</b> <b>B6</b>
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**From:** Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 8, 2011 2:27 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: WSJ Review and Outlook - Will Burma Follow Through?

FYI

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**From:** Nuland, Victoria J  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 07, 2011 09:36 PM  
**To:** Sullivan, Jacob J; Posner, Michael H; Campbell, Kurt M  
**Subject:** Fw: WSJ Review and Outlook - Will Burma Follow Through?

Solid from WSJ.

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**From:** Edwards, Harry G (PACE) [mailto:EdwardsHg@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 07, 2011 08:50 PM  
**To:** PA-Monitoring-Group-DL; EAP-P-Office-DL  
**Subject:** WSJ Review and Outlook - Will Burma Follow Through?

Will Burma Follow Through?  
 DECEMBER 8, 2011. (Not sure of the EST time this was released)  
 Releasing the roughly 2,000 political prisoners would quell doubts..  
 Wall Street Journal Review and Outlook

On the same day U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrapped up her visit to Burma last week, President Thein Sein signed a bill allowing peaceful protests. The new law builds on measures loosening media controls earlier this year, moves the government touts as proof it will tolerate public dissent. However, only the release of journalists and protesters imprisoned for "crimes" that no longer exist will show that the current liberalization is more than what President Barack Obama has called Burma's "flickers of progress."

Take the case of Ngwe Soe Lin. The 30-year-old reporter for the Democratic Voice of Burma was arrested in 2009 and sentenced to 13 years in Rangoon's infamous Insein prison. Mr. Lin's offense was reporting on orphans of Typhoon Nargis, for which he won the Rory Peck Award. DVB video reporter Hla Hla Win was sentenced to 20 years in December 2009.

Last Friday, the Burmese government also agreed to a ceasefire with the rebel Shan State Army-South, one of the largest ethnic armed groups that had never agreed to a ceasefire in the past. This is a positive development. But as Khin Ohmar of Burma Partnership wrote in these pages last week, peace negotiations with ethnic armed groups cannot succeed without broader efforts to accept minorities as equals and respect their rights. Releasing imprisoned minorities such as Shan national leader U Khun Htun Oo would signal Burma is serious about ethnic reconciliation.

Burma's reforms haven't reached the prisons, which remain inhumane. Fifteen political prisoners on a hunger strike for their rights in Insein prison were denied drinking water as punishment early last month, according to U.N. Special Rapporteur Tomas Ojea Quintana. Nor were they allowed to see their families or receive medicine. Some strikers were held in windowless and unhygienic conditions that the prison calls "military-dog cells."

The Burmese government has impressed Western governments, and Friday's announcement shows real promise. But the political opening will be incomplete as long as nearly 2,000 political prisoners are behind bars.

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