

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 25, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write regarding the arrest of U.S. citizen and journalist Danny Fenster of Huntington Woods, Michigan in Burma. We are gravely concerned for Mr. Fenster's wellbeing and ask that you act urgently to secure his immediate and unconditional release and ensure he is allowed to travel outside of Burma freely.

Mr. Fenster serves as managing editor at *Frontier Myanmar*, an independent magazine and news website. On May 24, *Frontier Myanmar* released a statement concerning Mr. Fenster's detention at Yangon International Airport.¹ He planned to fly to Kuala Lumpur, the first leg of a trip to the United States, where he planned to surprise his parents in Huntington Woods. There is no known cause for Mr. Fenster's detention, and his news organization has been unable to contact him since the morning of May 24. Mr. Fenster has reportedly been transferred to Insein Prison in Yangon. According to CNN, this is "one of the country's most notorious political prisons, known for its deplorable conditions."²

Mr. Fenster is the fourth foreign journalist to be detained in Burma since the February 1 military coup.³ According to the *Washington Post*, the military junta "routinely publishes lists of 'wanted' journalists, accusing them of affecting 'state stability,' and has detained more than 70 journalists."⁴ Just this month, Japanese journalist Yuki Kitazumi was arrested and detained in Insein Prison on the grounds that he violated a newly-enacted law targeting "anyone accused of spreading fake news or criticizing the coup," per the *Washington Post*.⁵ While he was eventually released and deported to Japan, he spent several weeks in Insein Prison, where he says Burmese prisoners were tortured, beaten and denied food; as a foreigner, he says, he was not subjected to this treatment.⁶

On March 19, the House of Representatives condemned the February 1 coup unequivocally, voting overwhelmingly to pass a resolution that included a call for the Burmese military (Tatmadaw) to "allow for freedom of expression, including the right to protest, press freedom, and freedom of movement."⁷ Each of the Michigan Representatives voted in favor of that

¹ <https://twitter.com/FrontierMM/status/1396801249412935685>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/24/world/myanmar-journalist-danny-fenster-intl/index.html>

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/myanmar-american-journalist-detained-coup/2021/05/25/0ccea678-bd01-11eb-922a-c40c9774bc48_story.html

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/134/text>

resolution, authored by Congressman Andy Levin of Michigan's 9th District, which includes Mr. Fenster's home of Huntington Woods. We echo that call today.

We are grateful that the State Department is engaged on this matter and has been in communication with Mr. Fenster's family. We ask, respectfully, that you continue to act with urgency to see that Mr. Fenster is released immediately and unconditionally and allowed to travel freely. We stand ready to work with you to ensure his release and wellbeing.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



ANDY LEVIN
Member of Congress

DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senator

JACK BERGMAN
Member of Congress

BILL HUIZENGA
Member of Congress

BRENDA L. LAWRENCE
Member of Congress

PETER MEIJER
Member of Congress

ELISSA SLOTKIN
Member of Congress

RASHIDA TLAIB
Member of Congress

TIM WALBERG
Member of Congress

GARY PETERS
United States Senator

DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress

DANIEL T. KILDEE
Member of Congress

LISA MCCLAIN
Member of Congress

JOHN MOOLENAAR
Member of Congress

HALEY STEVENS
Member of Congress

FRED UPTON
Member of Congress