

LEBER JEWELER INC

ESTABLISHED IN 1921

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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At Leber Jeweler Inc, we are greatly disappointed by President Obama's announcement that he will end all sanctions on Burma (aka Myanmar), including the ban on the importation of Burmese ruby and jadeite. These gemstones continue to fuel ongoing conflict in places like the Burmese state of Kachin, financially reward many individuals who have long fought against democracy in favor of military rule, and allow the exploitation of innocent men, women, and children, including the victims of Burma's rampant human trafficking.

If our country is to lay claim to being a champion of human rights, it must never falter in this pledge. With the premature ending of the sanctions on Burmese ruby and jadeite, first enacted by the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE Act of 2008, the United States has failed in this regard. Many large US corporations, who have lobbied for years to be allowed free and unfettered access to Burma, view this country in starkly economic terms and are salivating at the self-enriching monetary opportunities that lay in store for them. Burma has been described as a country rich in natural resources with abundant low wage labor. With the ending of sanctions along with the elimination of corporate reporting requirements, one can safely assume these same resources will be plundered and the labor exploited by corporations soon free to partner with individuals and entities who are currently identified on the SDN (Specially Designated Individuals) list and recognized by the US government as human rights abusers, narco-terrorists, and criminals.

We strongly encourage Congress to work in cooperation with civil society groups to draft strict standards that support the National League for Democracy-led efforts to reform and mainstream Burma's extractives sector and to bring it under good governance standards, lest the dire conditions that inspired the sanctions continue unchecked. It is our recommendation that such standards be in place and enforced before imports begin. We have said in the past that, until the day when Burma's vast yet finite gemstone resources truly benefit the average person in Burma, they should stay safely in the ground. At Leber Jeweler Inc, we stand firm in this belief. Very soon, Burmese ruby and jadeite will again enter the US and be offered for sale in jewelry stores across America. While it may become legal, it does not make it ethical.

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