



# Jewelers of America press release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Peggy Jo Donahue  
Director of Public Affairs  
[pjdonahue@jewelers.org](mailto:pjdonahue@jewelers.org)  
(646) 658-5802

Lauren Thompson  
Public Affairs Coordinator  
[lthompson@jewelers.org](mailto:lthompson@jewelers.org)  
(646) 658-5817

## **Jewelers of America Takes Action on Burmese Gemstones**

*JA appeals to Congress and issues advice to members concerning purchases of Burmese gemstones*

New York – Jewelers of America (JA), representing 11,000 member stores in the United States, has sent letters to Congress and issued an advisory to its members, detailing its deep concern about the current unrest in Burma and its military government's longstanding human rights violations.

In light of the continuing lack of democratic freedoms in Burma, as evidenced by recent events in the country, JA has asked Congress to amend the Burmese Freedom & Democracy Act of 2003, which bans the importation of products from Burma, so that it includes gemstones mined in that country. JA also has asked that this amendment remain effective until such time as Burma agrees to the democratic reforms articulated in a proposed January 2007 resolution put before the United Nations Security Council.

The proposed January 2007 U.N. resolution, which did not pass, called for national reconciliation and democratization in Burma, the release of all political prisoners, an end to human-rights abuses in the country, and the inclusion of opposition and ethnic minorities in dialogue leading to a genuine democratic transition. While the majority of the Security Council (including the United States, United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Italy) supported the resolution, others, including China, exercised their veto powers to reject it.

“Jewelers of America has also taken immediate steps to inform its members about the situation in Burma and to advise them to source their gemstones in a manner that respects human rights,” says JA President and CEO Matthew A. Runci. “JA members believe it is their responsibility to support and respect the protection of international human rights within their sphere of influence and to make sure the sourcing of gemstones is not complicit in human rights abuses, in line with the commitments they assume as members of Jewelers of America. These commitments include adherence to the principles of U.N. Global Compact, which JA has agreed to support.”

JA members agree to the association's Statement of Principles, which articulates their support of the U.N. Global Compact. To see the complete Statement of Principles go to: [www.jewelers.org/aboutJA/responsibility.html](http://www.jewelers.org/aboutJA/responsibility.html)

Some of the steps JA has asked its members to take include contacting their suppliers to ascertain whether any of the gems they supply are from Burma. Members should also seek, on all future orders placed, written assurances from their suppliers that they will not knowingly supply any gems mined in Burma, until the process of democratic reform has started in that country.

Jewelers of America is committed to the action plan outlined above and believes this is the quickest way possible to make certain our members can assure themselves, and their customers, that they are doing their part to help end the human rights abuses ongoing in Burma.

For more information about Jewelers of America, visit [www.jewelers.org](http://www.jewelers.org).

**Enclosures:**

- **Burma Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003**
- **Oct. 1 U.S. Senate Resolution on Burma**
- **Oct. 2 U.S. House of Representatives Resolution on Burma**

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