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## **Burmese-in-Exile, Democracy Supporters Call on Largest U.S. Pension Fund to Support Human Rights in Burma**

### ***Over 100 TIAA-CREF-holders Call for Unocal's Withdrawal From Burma, Dump Singapore Tech. Stock***

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NEW YORK CITY and CHARLOTTE, N.C. - Members of New York's Burmese community plan to protest outside TIAA-CREF's New York offices today to call on the \$260 billion pension fund to take action on two of its investments which support Burma's ruling military junta. Burmese democracy-advocates are calling for TIAA-CREF to use its influence to urge the oil giant Unocal to break off its business with the junta, and they also want TIAA-CREF to dump its shares in Singapore Technologies, a subsidiary of which is a key arms supplier for Burma's military. Their demands are echoed by over 100 TIAA-CREF holders, who have signed an open letter to the new Chairman and CEO, Herbert M. Allison, Jr.

The protest will occur simultaneous with the TIAA-CREF annual shareholder meeting, this year being held in Charlotte, North Carolina, possibly moved in an attempt to escape protests that dogged last year's meeting. Free Burma Coalition members plan to attend the meeting and challenge the TIAA-CREF board on its investments in Unocal, which is being sued for human rights violations associated with its project in Burma, and Singapore Technologies.

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"Most people who have money in TIAA-CREF would be shocked if they knew that their money was being used to make guns for Burma's military, or going to a company on trial for rape and murder," says Zaw Win of the New York Free Burma Coalition.

The open letter to TIAA-CREF signed by over 100 shareholders suggests that Zaw Win is correct. Faculty from universities and colleges have joined with high school and elementary school teachers and NGO workers in calling on the administrators of their pension fund to end its complicity in human rights atrocities in Burma. Signers include prominent professors such as Noam Chomsky, Richard Falk, Father Robert Drinan, and Burma expert Josef Silverstein.

"We recently learned that through our retirement funds invested in TIAA-CREF, we have been made inadvertent supporters of the forced labor, forced relocation, rape, torture, and murder of people living in the Southeast Asian country of Burma," the letter states. "We do not want our retirement funds, or any TIAA-CREF funds, to be generated from repression and abuse."

The Free Burma Coalition will be joining other groups in the protest as part of a larger movement calling for TIAA-CREF to "Get out of the bad; get into the good" with its investments.

Another of the letter's signers, University of Pittsburgh Professor Dennis Brutus, the anti-apartheid campaigner who spent time in prison on Robben Island for opposing the racist apartheid government in South Africa, says, "Not only interest, but the interests of the people must be borne in mind when making sound and moral decisions." ##

Free Burma Coalition is dedicated to restoring freedom, democracy and basic human rights in Burma.