



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

A summary of Burma-related issues
in the British Parliament and Europe

APRIL
2011

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Human Rights

5 April 2011 Baroness Goudie : To ask Her Majesty's Government how many times in 2009 and 2010 the Burmese ambassador to the United Kingdom has met with officials and Ministers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to discuss human rights.

Lord Howell of Guildford : Our officials and Ministers regularly meet the Burmese ambassador at Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) London Committee meetings. According to our records, the Burmese ambassador or the charges d'affaires attended seven ASEAN London Committee meetings between March 2009 and February 2011. During these meetings, the Government raised concerns over a number of human rights issues: the detention of political prisoners, the suppression of the democratic and ethnic-based opposition and the lack of fundamental freedoms. The Government continue to make these points directly to the Burmese ambassador, with officials in Burma and with other ASEAN member states who have influence with the Burmese regime.

Attacks on Karen

5 April 2011 Paul Blomfield : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of attacks by the Burma Army on civilians in the Manorone area of Ta Naw Tha Ri township, Karen state.

Henry Bellingham : The Government were concerned to read of the Free Burma Rangers report and other reports from February which documented the aftermath of attacks on Karen communities, and the Burmese regime's continuing persecution of and violence towards ethnic groups such as the Karen. The UK helped secure a robust resolution at the March UN Human Rights Council which called on the Burmese regime to take urgent measures to end their violations of international human rights and humanitarian law including the targeting of civilians in ethnic areas.

5 April 2011 Paul Blomfield : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British Ambassador to Burma has raised with the government of Burma the circumstances of the execution on 19 November 2010 by Border Guard Force soldiers of a 75 year old man from Dtra Greh township, Pa'an district, Karen state.

Henry Bellingham : We were concerned to read the Karen Human Rights Group bulletin which reported this incident. Our embassy in Rangoon is speaking with groups in Burma to corroborate the report. Our ambassador regularly raises with the Burmese authorities the Government's serious concern over the regime's human rights violations.

Dams & Kachin

28 April 2011 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of forced relocation of ethnic Kachin people in advance of the construction of the Myitsone dam in Burma.

Jeremy Browne : The Government remain deeply concerned about the impact on human rights and on the environment of the construction of the Myitsone dam. Officials from our embassy in Rangoon visited Kachin state in February and April and met people in the affected area. Our embassy is in regular contact with local and international organisations working to highlight the social and environmental consequences of the dam's construction. We understand that construction of the dam, and extensive logging in the area, may mean that 15,000 Kachin villagers are relocated against their will to areas that will not support their livelihoods. We urge those involved in the dam's construction to apply the highest standards of corporate social responsibility and ensure that their investment benefits Burma's people.

4 April 2011 Paul Blomfield : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether his Department has assessed the humanitarian needs of ethnic Kachin people relocated to the Myitsone Aung Mye Thar model village in Kachin state, Burma.

Alan Duncan : We are aware of many cases in Burma where people have been displaced as a result of conflict or to make way for development projects. Humanitarian needs are vast right across the country. The Department for International Development (DFID) is expanding its programme of assistance to the Burmese people significantly over the next four years, focusing on health, education, livelihoods of rural families, civil society and people affected by conflict. Our aid is provided through the United Nations, non-governmental organisations and civil society rather than the Burmese central Government.

28 April 2011 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether staff from the British embassy in Burma have visited Kachin State in the last 12 months.

Jeremy Browne : Staff from our embassy in Rangoon most recently travelled to Kachin State in February and April 2011 to visit health care and conservation projects that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is funding. Officials also met local people to discuss issues connected with the construction of the Myitsone dam.

Rohingya

5 April 2011 Baroness Goudie : To ask Her Majesty's Government what meetings United Kingdom government officials have had with representatives of the Rohingya ethnic minority in Burma.

Lord Howell of Guildford : The Government are deeply concerned about the situation facing the Rohingya people. Foreign and Commonwealth officials in London often meet with the Burmese Rohingya Organisation and the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation-most recently on 10 March 2011. Our embassy in Rangoon meets on a regular basis with a wide range of ethnic groups. The Government remain committed to advocating fundamental freedoms and greater respect for human rights for all ethnic groups in Burma including the Rohingya.

5 April 2011 Baroness Goudie : To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the United Nations Department of Political Affairs to ensure that United Nations envoys to Burma meet and consult with ethnic Rohingya representatives.

Lord Howell of Guildford : The UK Mission to the United Nations (UN) in New York most recently raised Burma with the UN Department of Political Affairs on 7 March 2011. The UK regularly speaks with the UN about the importance of national reconciliation across all ethnic groups in Burma and the need to address human rights abuses. The UN special rapporteur on human rights in Burma travelled to Rakhine state, where many Rohingya live, in February 2010. He has subsequently made specific references to the human rights abuses the Rohingya have suffered in his three human rights reports. The UN special envoy to Burma met with several ethnic political parties, including the Rakhine political party in November 2010, and has discussed wider ethnic issues with our officials in New York. The Government are deeply concerned over the treatment of the Rohingya and other ethnic groups in Burma and continue to raise their situation in the UN and with international partners.

Political Prisoners

5 April 2011 Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether

he has made representations to the Government of Burma on the (a) detention of and (b) access to medical treatment of Ko Mya Aye.

Henry Bellingham : Our ambassador to Rangoon most recently reiterated the need to release all political prisoners, especially those in poor health such as Ko Mya Aye, on 26 January 2011 during a meeting with Burmese officials in Naypyitaw. Our embassy regularly raises concerns over prison conditions with senior regime officials and works with prisoner support networks and non-governmental organisations to assist the families of prisoners who ask for our assistance. The Government helped secure a tough resolution at the Human Rights Council in March 2011 which called for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience.

34 Resistance Fighters

28 April 2011 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indian Government on the detention of democracy activists from Karen and Rakhine State in Burma.

Jeremy Browne: We understand from non-governmental organisation (NGO) sources that 34 Burmese ethnic activists may have spent the past 13 years in prison in India following allegations of gun running. NGO reports suggest that the charges against them were dropped last year but that the group remain in detention while the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees considers granting them refugee status. We are also aware of NGO reports that allege that the authorities may be seeking to deport them. Our high commission in New Delhi drew these reports to the attention of the Chief Secretary of West Bengal last November. We will continue to follow up with the Indian authorities.

War Crimes

5 April 2011 Paul Blomfield : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on EU support for a UN commission of inquiry into possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma.

Henry Bellingham : The Government most recently discussed the prospect of a UN Commission of Inquiry in Burma at official level with other EU member states in March 2011. Officials have in recent weeks also raised this issue bilaterally with Swedish, Danish, Dutch, Irish and Lithuanian counterparts. The Government continue to support the UN Special Rapporteur's recommendation for the UN to consider the idea of a Commission of Inquiry, and is working with other countries to build international support.

UN Security Council

26 April 2011 Valerie Vaz : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how often Government representatives raised issues relating to Burma in meetings of the UN Security Council in 2010.

Jeremy Browne : As President of the UN Security Council during November 2010, the UK raised Burma in Security Council meetings on 5 November, 18 November and 22 November 2010. The UK also raised our concerns during UN Security Council meetings on 24 March 2011 and 6 December 2010, and British officials in New York speak to their international counterparts in the UN about Burma on a regular basis. Both the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) and the Prime Minister discussed the matter with the UN Secretary General in November. The UK Government will continue to highlight the situation in Burma through all avenues in the UN, including through the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and directly with the Secretary General.

Sanctions

26 April 2011 Emma Reynolds : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what objectives he has set for the outcome of discussions on a common position on sanctions against the Burmese government at the next meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council.

Jeremy Browne : The Government's objective at the Foreign Affairs Council was to secure the renewal of tough but targeted EU restrictive measures that strengthened the position of Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratic opposition groups with the Burmese regime. On 12 April 2011 EU Foreign Ministers agreed to renew EU sanctions for a further 12 months.

General

27 April 2011 Lord Kennedy of Southwark : To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the new Government in Burma.

Lord Howell of Guildford : The inauguration of Burma's new government, announced on 30 March 2011, does not disguise the fact that the military continue to dominate, with the vast majority of senior positions taken up by military or ex-military personnel. National reconciliation in Burma cannot be achieved while key stakeholders, particularly Aung San Suu Kyi and a number of ethnic groups, remain excluded from the political process and whilst over 2,000 political prisoners remain in jail.

Earthquake

28 April 2011 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the recent earthquake in Shan State, Burma.

Jeremy Browne : An earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale struck the Thai/Burma/Laos border area on 24 March 2011. There are reports that about 75 Burmese people died and a further 125 were injured. About 18,000 were affected in the area of the earthquake and infrastructure in Shan State was badly damaged. The relief effort continues and is focused on health, shelter and water and sanitation needs. Approximately £2 million has been contributed or pledged by bilateral donors, the private sector, individuals and other organisations. Department for International Development officials are in close contact with UN agencies and non-governmental organisations working on the ground and have assessed that immediate critical needs are being adequately met.

28 April 2011 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what emergency relief he has provided to people affected by the earthquake in Shan State, Burma.

Alan Duncan : The Department for International Development (DFID) has consulted closely with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on the ground in the area of Shan State struck by an earthquake on 24 March 2011. DFID carefully considered the case for emergency aid and concluded that most immediate critical needs were being met adequately by the Burmese authorities along with other donors including UN agencies, international and local NGOs, neighbouring countries and the private sector.

DFID will continue to keep the humanitarian situation in Burma closely under review. Over the next four years DFID will provide £185 million for the Burmese people, working through UN agencies and NGOs and focusing on health, education, livelihoods, civil society and people affected by conflict.

Aid

4 April 2011 Baroness Goudie : To ask Her Majesty's Government what support the Department for International Development has provided to the people affected by the Giri Cyclone in Arakan State, Burma.

Baroness Verma : The Department for International Development is providing food for 41,000 people, clean water and sanitation for 90,000 people, bednets for 43,000 people and health consultations for 50,000 people. We are also helping affected communities rebuild their livelihoods and repair embankments that protect agricultural land and fish farms from sea water. Our total response for people affected by Cyclone Giri will be £6 million in 2010 and 2011.

26 April 2011 Valerie Vaz : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what representations he has made to the government of Burma on restrictions on the delivery of aid to Burma.

Alan Duncan : Department for International Development (DFID) staff and the British ambassador in Rangoon are in frequent contact with the Burmese authorities regarding UK aid for Burma. All our aid is channelled through UN agencies, international non-governmental organisations and Burmese community-based organisations. With strict monitoring, we are confident that it reaches its intended recipients effectively. DFID also provides aid cross-border from neighbouring countries to people in conflict-affected areas of Burma who cannot be reached from within the country.

26 April 2011 Valerie Vaz : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what reports he has received of the policy of the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria on funding projects in Karen state, Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Alan Duncan : We expect the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to fund projects across Burma where its staff and agents are able to monitor its activities, including in parts of Karen state. It will not however fund projects in areas where access is restricted as a result of conflict.

A number of alternative means are available for delivering aid to conflict-affected areas of Burma cross-border from neighbouring countries. In 2010 the Department for International Development (DFID) provided £825,000 in cross-border health sector aid to ethnic minority groups inside Burma.

26 April 2011 Valerie Vaz : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what reports he has received on changes made to aid delivery by the government of Burma in order to enable the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to operate in that country.

Alan Duncan : The decision by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) in November 2010 to resume its work in Burma was informed by the success of the multi-donor Three Diseases Fund which was established following GFATM's withdrawal from the country in 2005. The Three Diseases Fund has demonstrated that it is possible to deliver aid effectively in Burma through United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organisations and local community-based organisations. GFATM's operations in Burma will be modelled on those of the Three Diseases Fund.

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

Early Day Motion 112: Human Rights in Burma

John Pugh

30.05.2010

Signed by 147 MPs

That this House sends its best wishes to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who will spend her 65th birthday in detention on 19 June 2010; calls for the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Burma; rejects the elections planned by Burma's generals later this year which, due to election laws and ongoing repression in Burma, cannot be free and fair; condemns Burma's new constitution which is designed to maintain dictatorship in civilian guise and does not grant rights or protection to Burma's ethnic minorities; notes that all diplomatic efforts to reform the dictatorship's sham roadmap to democracy have failed; recalls that the United Nations Security Council, General Assembly, Secretary General and Human Rights Council have all stated that the solution to the problems in Burma lies in dialogue between the dictatorship, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, and ethnic representatives; and calls on the Government to support a United Nations-led effort to pressure the dictatorship to enter into such dialogue.

Early Day Motion 787: Aung San Suu Kyi and Elections in Burma

Valerie Vaz

11.10.2010

Signed by 41 MPs

That this House acknowledges reports that Burmese political prisoner Aung San Suu Kyi may be released on the completion of her current term of arrest on 13 November 2010; is concerned that, as this date falls six days after scheduled elections in Burma on 7 November, Ms Suu Kyi may not be permitted to utilise her

vote; is further concerned that her National League for Democracy party will play no part in the election, having boycotted it on the grounds of Ms Suu Kyi's and others' continued political imprisonment, her exclusion from political office and party membership and the Burmese junta's new election laws, which ban groups including civil servants and Buddhist monks from joining a political party; firmly believes that Aung San Suu Kyi should be released unconditionally as a matter of urgency; and calls on the Government to condemn strongly the Burmese junta's recent election laws as obstacles to the free and fair conduct on democracy.

Early Day Motion 788: BBC World Service and Human Rights

11.10.2010

Valerie Vaz

Signed by 56 MPs

That this House considers the BBC World Service to be not only a world-class broadcasting network, but also a lifeline for political prisoners and other suppressed persons; strongly believes that any move to cut this service, for example in Burma, will remove vital access to current and impartial information from those such as Aung San Suu Kyi who have no alternative source of unbiased news; further believes that such cancellation would constitute a failure of the Government to promote or support human rights on the international stage; and urges the Government to strongly oppose any reduction in this important service.

Early Day Motion 989: Elections in Burma and Advance Voting

11.11.2010

Valerie Vaz

Signed by 26 MPs

That this House notes with concern reports of widespread manipulation of advance votes during the recent Burmese elections, boycotted by the National League for Democracy; believes that this is yet another blow to the prospects for democracy in Burma; dismisses this election as no more than a sham to reinforce the ruling regime's power; and urges the Government to make further representations for the immediate and unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 2,200 other prisoners of conscience currently detained in Burma.

Early Day Motion 1014: Release of Aung San Suu Kyi

16.11.2010

Valerie Vaz

Signed by 47 MPs

That this House welcomes the unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from her house arrest in Rangoon on 13 November 2010; supports her calls for a peaceful revolution and for dialogue with the ruling regime in order to work towards change in Burma; urges continued international attention to the political system in Burma; and further supports Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's belief that nothing can be achieved without the participation of the people.

Early Day Motion 1034 : Imprisonment of Zarganar by Burmese Authorities

17.11.2010

Tom Harris

Signed by 58 MPs

That this House condemns the treatment by the Burmese regime of the actor, director and comedian, Zarganar, who in 2006 was banned from any public performance and who in 2008, after speaking out on behalf of millions of Burmese citizens left homeless by a cyclone, was convicted of public order offences and sentenced to 59 years imprisonment, this sentence being reduced on appeal to 35 years; believes that Zarganar has suffered a grievous miscarriage of justice; and calls on the Burmese government to release him at the earliest possible opportunity.

Early Day Motion 1125 : RELEASE OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI (No. 2)

02.12.2010

Ritchie, Margaret

Signed by 23 MPs

That this House welcomes the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and calls for the release of her fellow pro-democracy campaigners Htay Kywe, Mie Mie and Zaw Htet Ko Ko, who have all been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment away from their families; and urges the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to keep their plight to the fore of any discussions he has with the Burmese Ambassador and Burmese government officials.

Early Day Motion 1649 : BURMA AND THE EU

23.03.2011

Vaz, Valerie

Signed by 34 MPs

That this House notes that despite holding an election in November 2010, Burma has failed to meet the requests of the EU Common Position, last renewed on 26 April 2010, which called on Burma to take steps to bring about a peaceful transition to a democratic, civilian and inclusive system of government, to release political prisoners, to provide for free and fair elections, to engage with the international community and to respect international human rights and humanitarian law; further notes with concern that these requests have not been met; further notes that the November 2010 elections were widely dismissed as neither free nor fair, and that although Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been released more than 2,000 political prisoners remain in detention; and calls on the Government to make representations in support of a UN Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma, ahead of the EU Council Position renewal in April 2011.

Early Day Motion 1659 : BURMA EARTHQUAKE

28.03.2011

Vaz, Valerie

Signed by 29 MPs

That this House notes with grave concern reports of an earthquake of magnitude 6.8 in north east Burma near to the Thai border; sends its sincere condolences to those affected by the fatalities, casualties and destruction of homes and infrastructure; acknowledges the logistical and political challenges of providing assistance in this situation; and calls on the Government to take all possible steps to offer emergency aid and assistance to the people of Burma.

Early Day Motion 1739 : AUNG SAN SUU KYI AND THE BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

26.04.2011

Vaz, Valerie

Signed by 9 MPs

That this House welcomes Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as guest director of the 2011 Brighton Festival; notes that although Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will not attend the festival she plays a significant role in inspiring the programme through her plea to 'use your liberty to promote ours'; congratulates the Festival organisers for their choice of guest director and planning of a wide-ranging and vibrant programme; looks forward to a dynamic celebration of arts, culture and freedom over the three weeks of the Festival; and urges the Government to maintain pressure on the Burmese regime to free the more than 2,000 political prisoners still in detention and to move towards free and fair democracy in Burma.

**Published by Burma Campaign UK, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT
www.burmacampaign.org.uk tel: 020 7324 4710 fax: +44 20 7324 4717**



**for Human Rights, Democracy
& Development in Burma**