



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

APRIL
2013

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Rohingya

15 April 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the conditions and treatment of Rohingya refugees in Thailand.

Mr Swire: On 15 March, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) released a statement highlighting its concern about the treatment of Rohingya by the Thai authorities. This year the UNHCR estimates that 7,000 Rohingya have made the dangerous journey across the bay of Bengal to various destinations.

Since January, the UNHCR estimates that more than 1,800 boat arrivals—the vast majority Rohingya from Rakhine State—have been accepted on Thai soil and have been provided with assistance in shelters and immigration detention facilities mainly in the south. The UNHCR has welcomed the Thai Government's decision to provide them with six months of temporary protection while solutions are sought. It has requested that the Government investigate the claims of mistreatment by the Thai navy.

On 8 March, our ambassador to Bangkok raised with a senior Thai Minister the need to provide full access to health services for all migrants in need, including the Rohingya. We continue to lobby the Thai authorities, calling for an open and transparent investigation into the navy's treatment of the boat off Phang Nga province and to treat Rohingya in line with international humanitarian standards.

15 April 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of the treatment of Rohingya prisoners in Buthidaung Prison in Burma following recent allegations of torture and abuse.

Mr Swire: We have regular discussions with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana. These meetings cover the full range of human rights issues in Burma, including the issue of political prisoners.

Mr Quintana's report on 6 March highlighted concerns about the practice of torture in places of detention in Burma. It set out allegations that Muslim prisoners detained in Buthidaung prison in Rakhine State after last June and October's violence had been tortured and beaten to death. Beyond the Quintana report, our officials in Rangoon have sought to clarify the veracity of allegations of torture in Buthidaung prison and believe that in some cases these allegations are credible.

On 7 March, our ambassador discussed the plight of Rohingya prisoners in Buthidaung jail with the Burmese Minister for Border Affairs. On 20 March, an EU-sponsored resolution at the Human Rights Council called for the Burmese Government to sign the International Convention against Torture. The UK has lobbied steadily about this and we will continue to press the Burmese Government to implement the Convention.

16 April 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of the restrictions on Muslim villagers' freedom of movement in Northern Rakhine State in Burma.

Mr Swire: We continue to receive reports from the UN and non-governmental organisations, including Human Rights Watch that detail discrimination and human rights abuses faced by the Rohingya in Rakhine State. Rohingya communities continue to face restrictions, including of their freedom of movement, owing to their lack of citizenship rights. The British Government has strongly and consistently lobbied on this issue, and we continue to do so at the highest levels.

I am the only EU Minister to have visited Rakhine State, having been there in December 2012, where I lobbied the Burmese Government and local authorities to ensure that they guaranteed the security of all communities and looked for a longer term solution to the question of citizenship for the Rohingya. While there, I was able to visit a Muslim community in Sittwe whose movements were seriously restricted. Our ambassador in Rangoon has frequently visited Rakhine State, most recently in February. Our chargé d'affaires most recently lobbied the Burmese Minister for Immigration, with responsibility for Rakhine State, on 8 April, raising with him questions around the long-term plans for the resettlement and reintegration of the displaced communities in Rakhine State.

17 April 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps her Department is taking to ensure that access to adequate food and water is provided to refugee camps in Burma ahead of and throughout the rainy season in that country.

Mr Duncan: DFID humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State is focused on water, sanitation, hygiene and nutritional assistance to 58,000 internally displaced people (IDPs). This month we deployed a humanitarian adviser to Rakhine State to assess the priority needs of the IDPs there, and to assess any gaps in current programmes of assistance and preparedness in advance of the approaching rainy season. We continue to work with Government and the United Nations to ensure that adequate resources are devoted to addressing these needs.

17 April 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps her Department is taking to provide adequate healthcare for unregistered internally displaced people in Rakhine State in Burma; and what reports she has received of internally displaced people in the region not receiving the assistance that is delivered to official camps.

Mr Duncan: We continue to press for all internally displaced people (IDPs) and vulnerable populations to receive adequate humanitarian assistance. The United Nations now recognise a caseload of 140,000 IDPs in Rakhine State, which includes the previous caseload of 125,000 as well as a number of people not hitherto officially recognised as IDPs. The UK's humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State is focused on water, sanitation, hygiene and nutritional assistance to IDPs.

17 April 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps her Department is taking to facilitate the safe passage of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people's camps in Rakhine State, Burma.

Mr Duncan: DFID staff conduct regular visits to camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Rakhine State to assess the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and are in daily contact with humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the United Nations agencies on the ground. Senior DFID and Foreign Office officials, including the ambassador, meet the Burmese Government on a regular basis to stress the importance of humanitarian assistance reaching those who need it most.

The UK has provided £2 million of humanitarian assistance through NGO partners, delivering improved water, sanitation, hygiene and nutritional assistance to IDPs.

17 April 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his Burmese counterparts to encourage local authorities in Rakhine State to prevent the harassment of humanitarian staff.

Mr Swire: The British Government remains extremely concerned by the humanitarian situation in Rakhine State. We have received reports from international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the UN regarding humanitarian access and the operating environment for those providing much needed assistance. The chargé d'affaires at our embassy in Rangoon joined representatives from the UN, EU, US

and Australia to meet with the Burmese Minister with responsibility for Rakhine State, Khin Yi, on 8 April and raised our concerns about the situation, including restrictions affecting NGOs.

24 April 2013 Lord Patten: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the security of minority ethnic groups in Burma.

Baroness Warsi: We are concerned by reported human rights violations committed in Burma's ethnic areas. We note the recent report by UN Special Rapporteur, Tomas Quintana, to the UN Human Rights Council in March, where he highlighted concerns over human rights abuses in Burma's ethnic areas, and the plight of the Rohingya community in Rakhine State.

The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire) visited Rakhine State in December 2012, being the only EU Minister to have done so, and raised the importance of ensuring security for all communities there. We regularly lobby the Burmese Government to sign the international covenant on civil and political rights, which would codify a guarantee for all ethnic peoples to civil and political rights in the country.

During recent meetings with the Aung Min, Minister for the Burmese President's office on the 15 and 16 April, the Foreign Secretary, my right honourable Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and I raised our concerns about the recent violence in Central Burma; the need for urgent co-ordination of humanitarian aid to Rakhine state; and for a long-term solution to the Rohingya's citizenship that guarantees their human rights.

The EU-sponsored Resolution at the UN Human Rights Council in March 2013 also called on the Burmese Government to sign the international covenant on civil and political rights.

The UK continues to be one of the most vocal members of the international community in calling for action in Rakhine state. We regularly raise specific allegations of human rights abuses with the Burmese Government at the most senior levels, pressing for adequate humanitarian provision and security to prevent any further violence. We are also clear that those responsible for acts of violence should be held to account, and ultimately the issue of citizenship for the Rohingya people must be resolved.

Most recently the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and I made these points to a senior delegation of Burmese Ministers visiting London, including the Burmese Minister for the President's Office, during meetings on 15 and 16 April.

15 April 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on allegations that the Thai navy sold Rohingya refugees travelling by boat to human traffickers.

Mr Swire: The British Government has received no specific reports alleging that the Thai navy has sold Rohingya refugees to human traffickers. In January 2013 we received reports that a number of military officers attached to Thailand's Internal Security Operation Command were investigated for their role in relation to people smuggling of Rohingya through Thailand and on to Malaysia. During the investigation, two senior army officials were suspended from their posts.

We continue to lobby the Thai Government to ensure that they adhere to international protocols governing the treatment of refugees by offering protection and assistance to those who land on their shores.

Alongside other partners and civil society organisations, we are also pressing them to ensure full access to detained Rohingya refugees by the International Organisation of Migration and the UN High Commission for Refugees.

25 April 2013 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to European Union member states about speaking out publicly on progress on Rohingya rights in Burma; what representations they have made to the Government of Burma about such rights; and whether they have raised the issue in international forums.

Baroness Warsi: The Government meet regularly with EU member states to discuss the situation in Burma, most recently during EU Foreign Ministers' discussion on Burma sanctions on 22 April. In the discussion, the UK highlighted the need for greater international action to resolve the serious situation in Rakhine state, and called for future EU engagement with Burma to place human rights at its centre.

At the UK's request, Vijay Nambiar, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Burma, briefed the Security Council on the situation in Burma on 18 April 2013. The briefing followed his visit to Burma in late March and included his assessment of the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state which he found "deeply disturbing."

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and I also met Aung Min, Minister for the Burmese President's office, and Khin Yi, Minister for Rakhine State, in meetings on 15 and 16 April. We made clear our concerns about the need for urgent co-ordination of humanitarian aid to Rakhine state and a resolution to the Rohingya's citizenship status which is consistent with helping them to achieve their human rights.

The UK will continue to be one of the most vocal and active members of the international community in supporting those calling for human rights and democracy in Burma, including in respect of the rights of the Rohingya community.

25 April 2013 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma about allowing the United Nations special rapporteur on Burma to conduct an independent investigation into alleged abuses in Arakan State; and what steps they are taking to promote an office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in Burma with a full protection, promotion, and technical assistance mandate, and sub-offices in states around the country, including in Arakan State.

Baroness Warsi: We have not made a specific request for UN representatives to investigate allegations of human rights abuses in Rakhine state. However, UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Tomas Quintana visited Burma in February 2013. His report following his visit highlighted allegations of human rights violations in Kachin and Rakhine states.

Vijay Nambiar, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Burma, briefed the Security Council on the situation in Burma on 18 April 2013. The briefing followed his visit to Burma in late March and included his assessment of the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state which he found "deeply disturbing."

We are clear that all those who are guilty of instigating, inciting or carrying out violence in Rakhine state need to be held accountable for these crimes. This should be done through a clear and transparent investigative and prosecutorial process.

During my meeting on 15 April I pressed Aung Min, Minister for the Burmese President's office, to follow up on the commitment made by President Thein Sein to open an office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), reiterated this point during his meeting with Aung Min the following day. We continue to make clear that an OHCHR office in Burma would be a crucial means for maintaining more constructive relations between the international community and the Burmese Government on human rights.

25 April 2013 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma about permitting diplomatic missions in Burma to travel to areas affected by communal violence and ethnic tensions, including displaced person sites.

Baroness Warsi: Officials at our embassy in Rangoon have visited Rakhine state on many occasions since the outbreak of violence last June, including accompanying the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), in December 2012 when he was the first EU Minister to go to Rakhine following last year's violence, and visited five camps for internally displaced people.

Most recently on 8 April our chargé d'affaires joined representatives from the UN, EU, US and Australia on

a visit to Rakhine state, and met the Burmese Minister with responsibility for Rakhine state, Khin Yi, to raise our concerns about the situation, including restrictions affecting non-governmental organisations. We will continue to follow up on this issue to ensure that the humanitarian effort is facilitated effectively.

25 April 2013 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support reconciliation efforts between the Arakan and Rohingya populations in Arakan State; and what representations they have made to the Government of Burma regarding (1) the reform of the 1982 Citizenship Law in order to bring it into line with international standards, and (2) discrimination against that country's ethnic minorities.

Baroness Warsi: The UK has been one of the most vocal members of the international community in calling for action in Rakhine state. We remain concerned about persecution of all minority religions in Burma, but in particular the situation in Rakhine state and the recent violence in central Burma, which points to a worrying trend of targeting Muslim communities. We have offered our support to help the Burmese Government to strengthen the rule of law, and we are funding work to promote interfaith dialogue.

We regularly raise ethnic reconciliation and allegations of human rights abuses with the Burmese Government at the most senior levels. Most recently, in meetings on 15 and 16 April with Aung Min, Minister for the Burmese President's office, and Khin Yi, Minister for Rakhine state, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and I made clear our concern about the need for urgent co-ordination of humanitarian aid to Rakhine state; and a long-term resolution to the Rohingya's citizenship status which is consistent with helping them to achieve their human rights. Our officials in Burma have been liaising with the UN High Commission for Refugees, which is currently conducting a review into Burma's 1982 citizenship law and its conformity with international standards.

25 April 2013 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what financial and technical support is available to United Nations agencies and humanitarian organisations providing assistance in Arakan State and for Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers in Bangladesh.

Baroness Northover: The UK provides core contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—the lead UN agency for displaced and refugee populations in Bangladesh and Rakhine (Arakan) State, Burma—and to the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) which has contributed \$7.15 million to the UN humanitarian response in Rakhine state since 2012.

The UK has also provided £2 million in direct humanitarian funding to a consortium of non-government organisations in Rakhine State to provide water, sanitation and nutrition support to over 58,000 internally displaced persons and vulnerable people affected by the unrest there.

Kachin State

22 April 2013 Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much her Department will spend in 2013-14 to assist internally displaced Kachin people in government and non-governmental controlled areas of Burma.

Mr Duncan: UK assistance to internally displaced Kachin people in government and non-government controlled areas of Burma is currently under consideration for 2013-14. DFID humanitarian aid to people affected by the conflict in Kachin totals £3.5 million. We are the largest bilateral humanitarian donor to Kachin State. This is helping to meet the needs of around 27,000 internally displaced people.

Religious Violence

15 April 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of recent communal violence in the Burmese city of Meikhtila; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Swire: We are extremely concerned by the recent violence in Meikhtila which spread to other parts of Burma. We are particularly concerned about the way in which the violence seemed to target Muslim

communities. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), issued a statement on behalf of the British Government on 21 March, calling on all parties to end the violence immediately and urging the Burmese Government to take all necessary action to protect civilians and to work with communities to tackle the hostility behind the attacks.

We are encouraged that the violence has since ceased. I welcomed the statement by President Thein Sein on 28 March, which called for accountability and freedom of religion, stated his readiness to maintain public order and protect all of the different communities in Burma, and to work for reconciliation between communities.

15 April 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Burma to address the recent communal violence in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Swire: Our ambassador to Rangoon called on senior members of the Burmese Government on 22 March to urge the Government to protect civilians and ensure security in Meiktila and the other towns affected by the recent violence in central Burma. He also met with a senior Buddhist leader, the Sitagu Sayadaw, and welcomed his public calls for monks to prevent violence. He has also discussed the violence with Aung San Suu Kyi. Our ambassador was the first diplomat to visit Meiktila in the wake of the violence, which he did on 25 March, to see the situation there.

Senior officials in London have raised our concerns with the Burmese Government, including Burma's ambassador to London.

We remain in close contact with members of the Muslim community in Burma, our counterparts in Rangoon's diplomatic community, and with others in the international community including the EU and UN. We call upon all of Burma's political and civil society leaders to speak up for peace.

Religious Freedom

10 April 2013 Lord Patten: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of religious freedoms in Burma.

Lord Newby: We remain concerned by the apparent systematic destruction of mosques during the violence in Rakhine state in 2012. More recently mosques were attacked during the recent unrest in central Burma in late March. We also note reports of the destruction of places of worship in Kachin state during the ongoing conflict and continued restrictions on freedom of worship in Chin state.

The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), visited Rakhine state during his visit to Burma in December 2012 and pressed the Burmese Government to prevent human rights abuses. We continue to encourage the Burmese Government to issue a formal invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion and Belief to visit Burma and assess the situation.

We continue to call on the Burmese authorities to sign up to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which includes commitments on protecting religious freedoms. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), raised this issue with the Burmese Foreign Minister during his visit to the UK in February. Subsequent to this discussion, officials met the Burmese Foreign Minister on 15 February and were informed that the Burmese Government had been advised by the Burmese National Human Rights Council on 10 December that they should consider ratifying the ICCPR. We will continue to follow developments on this issue closely.

24 April 2013 Lord Patten: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the religious freedom of Muslims in Burma.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and

Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): We were extremely concerned by the violence against Muslims in Burma, which began in Meiktila on 20 March. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my honourable friend the member for North East Bedfordshire, (Mr Burt), issued a statement on behalf of the Government on 21 March, calling on all parties for an immediate end to the violence and urging the Government to take all necessary action to protect civilians and to work with communities to tackle hostility.

Our ambassador in Rangoon visited Meiktila on 25 March to see the situation there for himself. There have been no further reported attacks since the end of March, and we cautiously welcome the relative calm, though tensions remain.

During recent meetings with Aung Min, Minister for the Burmese President's office on the 15 and 16 April, the Foreign Secretary, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and I raised our concerns about the recent violence in Central Burma; the need for urgent co-ordination of humanitarian aid to Rakhine state; and for a long term solution to the Rohingya's citizenship which guarantees their human rights.

We welcomed the statement by President Thein Sein, pledging to ensure that the security forces protect all communities in Burma, and emphasising the importance of dialogue and integration between the different faiths there. We also welcomed the statement by the Sittagu Sayadaw on behalf of the Buddhist community, condemning violence and calling for peace. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Forced Labour

16 April 2013 Alex Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports his Department has received of the use of forced labour by Light Infantry Brigade 115 of the Burmese Army in Chin State, Burma.

Mr Swire: Our embassy in Rangoon raised this matter with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), tasked with investigating all allegations of forced labour in Burma. The ILO had not previously heard of this specific allegation. We continue to monitor its investigation.

We welcome the agreement between the Burmese Government and the ILO to establish a complaints mechanism to investigate forced labour cases, which was referenced by Tomas Quintana, UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma, in his report to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2013.

Land Confiscations

18 April 2013 Alex Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what support her Department provides to those affected by land confiscation in Burma.

Mr Duncan: DFID is working with civil society organisations to help establish procedures for access to legal aid over land disputes. DFID is also working through the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund with United Nations Habitat to pilot mapping technology, linked to the registration and digitisation of land ownership records, and to help formulate a prioritised land reform agenda including land tenure, development and administration.

Burmese Army withdrawal

18 April 2013 Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has discussed with his Burmese counterpart the issue of withdrawal by the Burmese Army from ethnic states of Burma.

Mr Swire: We continue to emphasise to all sides involved in Burma's ethnic conflicts that only comprehensive political negotiation will lead to a sustainable peace across Burma. The role of the military in that process is an important part of those discussions. We acknowledge the progress the Burmese Government has made in signing 10 ceasefire agreements with ethnic armed groups. We continue to encourage the Burmese authorities and the Kachin Independence Organisation to move towards securing

the last outstanding ceasefire agreement in Kachin State.

As part of our support to the peace process, we are working with experts with experience of inter-communal trust- and peace-building in Northern Ireland to support the peace process in Burma and to encourage Burma's own reconciliation efforts. The Senior Minister of State, my noble Friend the right hon. Baroness Warsi, met with a delegation of Burmese Ministers, including the lead negotiator for the peace process for the Government, Aung Min, on 15 April to discuss the peace process and how the UK can best support it.

Aid

18 April 2013 Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate she has made of the proportion of people made homeless by Cyclone Nargis in Burma who have now been rehoused.

Mr Duncan: DFID does not hold recent data on this issue. The fourth and final report prepared by the Tripartite Core Group in July 2010 assessed the status of repairs to dwellings for households who continued to live in the same compound as before Cyclone Nargis.

Of those households reviewed that were living in the same compound, 63% of shelters were fully repaired; 13% were almost fully repaired; 21% were partially repaired and 4% were not repaired.

Refugee Camps in Thailand

17 April 2013 Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what reports she has received on whether ration cuts are forcing women from Burma in refugee camps in Thailand to leave those camps to work illegally in Thailand.

Mr Duncan: DFID has not received any such reports.

Defence

18 April 2013 Alex Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the role of the new defence attaché to Burma includes responsibility for meeting non-state military forces in that country.

Dr Murrison: UK officials in Rangoon meet regularly with both Government Ministers and representatives of a range of ethnic minority groups to discuss the peace process. The defence attaché may meet a similar range of interlocutors in the course of his duties.

Sanctions

10 April 2013 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the progress on meeting the benchmarks of (1) the ending of conflict in Burma, (2) improved humanitarian assistance, in particular in Kachin and along the eastern border, and (3) addressing the status and wellbeing of the Rohingyas, as set by the European Union Council conclusions on 26 April 2012; and whether they will vote in favour of the lifting of sanctions against Burma at the meeting of the European Union Foreign Affairs Council on 22 April.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): In April 2012, the EU suspended all sanctions on Burma, with the exception of the arms embargo and the restrictions on equipment which could be used for internal repression. This was in recognition of the positive progress against EU benchmarks as laid out in Council Conclusions of January 2012. In addition, the EU Council Conclusions of 23 April 2012 committed to respond positively to further progress and set out clearly that the EU expected the unconditional release of remaining political prisoners and looked forward to the end of conflict and substantially improved access for humanitarian assistance-in particular in Kachin-as well as to addressing the status and improving the welfare of the Rohingya.

There has been further progress. Many more political prisoners have been released. Despite an escalation

in the conflict in Kachin at the end of last year, tentative discussions between the Government and ethnic groups are continuing. We hope that these discussions, along with the Burmese Government's existing reconciliation efforts, will be successful. There have also been some improvements in humanitarian access to conflict areas. However, some new issues have arisen since last April. The outbreaks of violence in Rakhine State have led to a grave humanitarian situation, and the recent violence in Meiktila points to a troubling trend. We are seriously concerned about persecution of minority religions. The Government in Naypyidaw need to make further progress on the rule of law, transparency and accountability.

It is in this wider context that the EU will review sanctions on Burma. The Foreign Affairs Council's decision on 22 April will be a marker for both how far Burma has come and where challenges remain.

Whatever the outcome of the April decision, which is contingent on securing unanimity, we want the EU to strengthen its future engagement with Burma, to catalyse deeper, irreversible reform and to use its collective influence for forward-looking collaboration with Burma on human rights, responsible trade, development, electoral and constitutional reform. We will argue for an EU policy framework which sets out how we will both work with the Burmese Government and encourage them to address the many challenges that they face.

17 April 2013 Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the EU Foreign Affairs Council will next meet; and whether the suspension of sanctions on Burma will be discussed at that meeting.

Mr Swire: The EU Foreign Affairs Council will next meet on 22 April 2013. The dates for all upcoming EU Council meetings are published on the Europa website at the following address:
<http://europa.eu/newsroom/calendar/>

On 22 April, EU Foreign Ministers will discuss the situation in Burma in the context of reviewing the EU's restrictive measures, most of which were suspended on 23 April 2012. The arms embargo and restrictions on the supply of equipment which could be used for internal repression remain in place.

ANSWERS TO SPOKEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

G8 Foreign Minister
15 April 2013

Rohingya

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab): I was grateful that the Foreign Secretary in his statement and the G8 communiqué referred to Burma and to the need to end religious and ethnic tensions there. I am sure he is aware that, in recent weeks, there have been more reports of sectarian violence against the Rohingya community and other Muslim communities. The root of much of it is Rohingya citizenship. What pressure, through the G8 discussions, can he bring to bear on Burma both to recognise Rohingya citizenship and to safeguard the human rights of all religious minorities in Burma?

Mr Hague: The focus of what we did on Burma at the G8 was supporting responsible investment in the country—responsible with regard to the population of Burma—but we are active in any case in pursuing the hon. Gentleman's point. I met last month the Burmese Foreign Minister and made very strongly the point about sectarian violence in Burma and the need for the state to ensure that it comes to an end. I also discussed the matter by telephone last week with Aung San Suu Kyi, because it is important to pursue the matter with both the Government and the opposition in Burma. We will absolutely maintain our efforts on that.

Discussion about Burma in Business of the House Debate
18 April 2013

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): Next Thursday, theoretically, I shall initiate an end-of-day debate about the appalling human rights situation in Burma. It is particularly appalling for the Rohingya

people, who are being slaughtered daily. The European Union will decide on Monday whether to end sanctions against Burma. May we have an early statement to confirm that, while approving of political reform, the EU does not approve of ethnic cleansing in Burma?

Mr Lansley: I know that the issue raised by my hon. Friend is causing concern throughout the House. The British Government regularly raise our human rights concerns with the Burmese Government, and both the Foreign Secretary and Baroness Warsi did so this week during meetings with members of a visiting Burmese Government delegation. We have always said that when serious crimes have been committed, those who have perpetrated them must be held accountable for their actions.

If my hon. Friend were to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, he might have an opportunity to raise the issue during Foreign and Commonwealth Office questions on Tuesday, and, given the business that I have announced, I personally imagine that he will have an opportunity to initiate his debate on Thursday.

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): The Leader of the House suggests that we should wait until Foreign Office questions on Tuesday to raise the issue of Burma, but that might be too late. Human Rights Watch's report on crimes against humanity and against the Rohingya people in Burma is out on Monday and the sanctions will be discussed on Monday, so Tuesday will be too late. Will the Leader of the House urgently raise the subject of the report with the Foreign Secretary before he goes into the debate on EU sanctions?

Mr Lansley: I am grateful to the hon. Lady and I will of course ask the Foreign Secretary or Foreign Office Ministers about that issue and, if appropriate, whether there is any update that they can give the House when it sits on Monday.

Discussion about Burma in Sexual Violence in Conflict Debate **23 April 2013**

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): The Foreign Secretary will be aware of ongoing concerns, which have been expressed not least in the Human Rights Watch report published yesterday, on Burma, sexual violence, and what Human Rights Watch says amounts to ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people.

Given the lifting of sanctions, what representations has he made on the profoundly concerning human rights breaches against the people of Burma?

Mr Hague: It is important for us to keep up the work and the pressure on those subjects, which I discussed last week with one of the President of Burma's most senior Ministers and advisers—a Minister of the President's Office. In particular, we discussed addressing the stateless position of the Rohingya people. The UK and other EU countries have a role to play in offering police training in dealing with ethnic violence. Keeping up the pressure on human rights issues will be part of the EU's continuing approach.

Topical Questions **23 April 2013**

Political Prisoners

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): Human rights organisations were alarmed when sanctions against Burma were lifted. Could the Foreign Secretary use this as a lever to ensure that the United Nations can establish its human rights office in Burma, and to ensure that Burma releases all political prisoners, including Aung Naing?

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire): It is worth pointing out to the hon. Lady that, yes, we agree with what she says, but human rights will be at the heart of the lifting of sanctions in Burma. We did it with the advice of Aung San Suu Kyi, because we believe that engagement with the Burmese Government is the way forward. We are deeply concerned about human rights and we remain deeply concerned about ethnic conflict, but we believe that now is the appropriate time to lift sanctions.

Written Ministerial Statement: Foreign Affairs Council

18 April 2013

Ministers will discuss the situation in Burma in the context of reviewing EU restrictive measures, which are currently suspended apart from the arms embargo and restrictions on the supply of equipment which could be used for internal repression. We expect conclusions to welcome the significant reforms and highlight the challenges that remain, including the situation in Rakhine state and the plight of the Rohingya; the need to reach a ceasefire with the Kachin, and move towards political dialogue with all Burma's ethnic groups; and to release remaining political prisoners. We will emphasise the importance of a more comprehensive approach to future EU engagement with Burma in the run up to and beyond national elections in 2015.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130418/wmstext/130418m0001.htm#13041819000001>

Burma was mentioned in a Written Statement: EU: General Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Defence Foreign Affairs Councils

Baroness Ashton outlined the remarkable progress made in Burma over the past 18 months. Significant challenges remained, but the EU was working closely with the Burmese Government and Aung San Suu Kyi to begin a new chapter in relations. To that end, Ministers agreed to lift sanctions, except the arms embargo and restrictions on equipment for internal repression, and adopted conclusions on the future of EU-Burma relations. Baroness Ashton also stated she would launch a task force to provide further political and economic support. Commissioner Georgieva welcomed the Burmese Government's engagement on development assistance and outlined plans to share EU expertise on ethnic integration; provide political and financial support to the Rohingya; and continue to pressure the Government for humanitarian access to Kachin and Rakhine State.

Ministers discussed the importance of keeping human rights central to the EU's planned comprehensive approach to Burma, and the need to develop a coherent framework for EU engagement with Burma, focusing on human rights and the resolution of ethnic and religious tensions. The UK also highlighted the need for greater international action to resolve the serious humanitarian situation in Rakhine State, and welcomed President Thein Sein's commitment to renounce military ties with the DPRK.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201213/ldhansrd/text/130425-wms0001.htm#13042549000175>

All Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma

On 17th April 2013, APPG Burma organized a Global School's Partnership-Our Burma Film show, made by pupils from Campie Primary School in East Lothian. Baroness Kinnoch and Fiona O'Donnell MP co-hosted the Film show.

Since 2009, Campie Primary School in Musselburgh, East Lothian has been in a partnership with the Child Development Centre (CDC) a Burmese refugee school in Thailand. Last year, the UK Government ended the Global Schools Partnership (GSP) and replaced it with Connecting Classrooms. Campie's link does not qualify for this, as the new scheme does not cover Thailand or Burma. The school made the film when they heard that the GSP was ending to show the Government how much our link means to them. It was made by a parent and the children, who were helped with the editing by Carina Scott from the local FE college, Jewel and Esk.

In the meeting, the children from Campie Primary School who are travelling from Musselburgh to Westminster presented their experience with Child Development Centre (CDC).

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

MYANMAR ROHINGYAS AT RISK IN MONSOON SEASON

Date tabled: 22.04.2013

That this House is shocked by recent video footage showing the Myanmar police standing by or joining in

brutal attacks on members of the Muslim Rohingya community in Myanmar; condemns the government of Myanmar over its treatment of the Rohingya Muslim minority; is deeply concerned that the Government has dismissed a United Nations report calling for urgent action to protect tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees this monsoon season; notes that over 120,000 Rohingyas are currently in tented refugee camps which are likely to flood; further notes that the Myanmar administration has reaffirmed that the Rohingyas will not be granted citizenship despite UN pressure; and calls on the Government to bring what pressure it can on Myanmar to protect this persecuted minority and to give them full citizenship rights.

Total Signatures: 9

BURMESE ARMY IN KACHIN STATE

Date tabled: 13.02.2013

That this House notes the actions of the Burmese army in shelling Kachin which has killed civilians including children; further notes the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities; calls on the Burmese government to cease attacks on civilians and to actively protect Christians from persecution; and calls on the UK Government to influence and promote true religious freedom throughout Burma.

Total Signature: 27

BURMA - THAILAND REFUGEE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING CRISIS

Date tabled: 05.02.2013

That this House is alarmed that, whilst the government of Thailand has agreed in principle to allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) access to hundreds of Rohingya refugees that have fled Western Burma's continuing sectarian violence, permanent access has still not been granted; welcomes the government of Thailand's pledge to work with the UNHCR to find a long-term solution but is further alarmed by recent statements indicating that that government is considering deporting refugees after six months, despite warnings that they will face persecution; expresses serious concern that human trafficking of refugees from Burma is a lucrative criminal activity and that traffickers are taking advantage of the violence and fuelling the growing wave of refugees; is especially concerned by a recent BBC report revealing that Thai officials have been selling refugees to traffickers; calls on the Government to urge the government of Thailand to grant the UNHCR full and permanent access to conduct refugee screening and to work with the European Union to push for a regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations-led response to the crisis; further calls on the Government to raise the Thai officials' reported selling of refugees to traffickers with the Thai government; further notes that growing numbers of refugees are risking their lives on smugglers' boats due to mounting frustration over the lack of immediate solution to their plight; and therefore again calls on the Government to work to ensure that unrestricted humanitarian access is granted by the Burmese authorities to Rakhine state.

Total number of signature: 64

WAR IN KACHIN STATE, BURMA

14.01.2013

That this House condemns the Burma Army's military offensive against the ethnic Kachin; expresses grave concern over the recent use of aerial bombardment in the offensive; notes with serious concern the significant escalation in the conflict, including a major increase in Burma Army troops and use of landmines on the frontlines; further condemns the continuing use of rape as a weapon of war; expresses serious concern about the displacement of over 100,000 people and the humanitarian crisis developing as a result of restrictions imposed by the government of Burma on international aid to the affected areas; calls on the government of Burma to stop attacks immediately and to engage in a meaningful political dialogue with the Kachin Independence Organisation to establish a peace process; further calls on the Government to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs arising from the conflict by increasing humanitarian assistance to internally-displaced people in Kachin State via local community organisations on the ground; and further calls on the Government to work within the EU to halt relaxation of economic sanctions and new trade and investments in Burma if there is not an immediate cessation of attacks.

Total Signatures: 25

ATTACKS AGAINST ROHINGYA IN BURMA

11.12.2012

That this House is concerned by the ongoing attacks against the Rohingya Muslim ethnic minority in Burma; notes that attacks have now begun against the Kaman Muslim ethnic minority; further notes that police, state security and national Burmese Army soldiers are reported to be taking part in some of the

attacks; is further concerned by President Thein Sein's request for international assistance in deporting all Rohingya from Burma which gives encouragement to alleged mobs carrying out the attacks; calls on the Government to support the placement of UN-mandated international observers in Rakhine State; further calls on the Government to work to ensure unrestricted humanitarian access is granted to all Rohingya areas, to support a United Nations Commission of Inquiry into the violence, and to encourage the government of Burma to repeal or amend the 1982 citizenship law which deprives the Rohingya of citizenship.

Total number of signatures: 69

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN KACHIN STATE, BURMA

22.11.12

That this House is alarmed that whilst the world is celebrating the political reforms made in Burma, ethnic violence and persecution carried out by the Burmese military persists, largely unacknowledged, in Kachin State; notes that this includes the targeted killings of civilians, torture and the burning of 1,000 villages, illustrating the severe human rights violations the Kachin people are being subjected to by the Burmese Army; and urges hon. Members to ask the Government to put pressure on the international community to provide much needed humanitarian aid for the Kachin people, to put pressure on the Burmese government to stop attacking Kachin civilians and to allow international humanitarian organisations access in Burma to provide aid and to urge the United Nations to instate a UN envoy in Kachin to monitor and improve this worsening situation.

Total number of signatures: 21

IDENTIFICATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BURMA

15.10.2012

That this House recognises the importance of identifying all the remaining political prisoners in Burma and recommends that a review mechanism should be initiated, with assistance from the United Nations and civil society; and believes that upon identification an individual should either be charged with an internationally recognised offence and tried by proceedings recognisable with international fair trial standards, or released without charge.

Total number of signatures: 38

HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

06.09.2012

That this House calls on the Government to work with the international community to encourage the Burmese government to use this period of political transition to take action to improve the human rights situation in that country; and congratulates the excellent work being done by Aung San Suu Kyi and other Burmese human rights campaigners to bring to the world's attention the greatly troubling situation that has persisted for many decades, and tragically still continues, in Burma.

Total number of signatures: 44

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN BURMA

16.07.2012

That this House sends condolences to the families and friends of all those killed and affected by recent communal violence in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma; expresses concern that the government of Burma and local community leaders have not taken sufficient action to stop continuing sporadic violence; is deeply concerned by reports of widespread rape and of mass arrests, predominantly against the ethnic Rohingya minority; calls on the government of Burma to stop obstructing international agencies from delivering desperately needed humanitarian assistance to around 90,000 displaced people; further calls on the government of Burma to stop obstructing ethnic Rohingya from returning to their homes and villages; further calls on all parties in Burma to reform the 1982 citizenship law, which discriminates against ethnic minorities in Burma; and requests that the Government ensures the swift delivery of aid to the region.

Total number of signatures: 34

AUNG SAN SUU KYI AND VISIT TO PARLIAMENT 21 JUNE 2012

23. 05. 2012

That this House welcomes Aung San Suu Kyi's election into Pyithu Hluttaw, the Lower House of the Burmese Parliament, as an indication of change in the country; congratulates the National League for Democracy on its success in the by-election; welcomes change in the Burmese government; notes that

Burma still holds a considerable number of political prisoners, who should be released immediately; welcomes Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to speak to both Houses of Parliament on 21 June 2012; and calls on the Government to continue actively to promote the transition to free democratic government in Burma.
Total number of signatures: 44

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