



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

DEC
2012

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Rohingya/Rakhine State

3rd December 2012 Anas Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with Burmese authorities on the human rights of the Rohingya.

Mr Swire: I most recently discussed the situation in Rakhine State, the scene of the recent violence between ethnic communities, with the Burmese Minister for the President's Office, U Soe Thane, on 7 November during his visit to the UK. This followed the meeting of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and Burmese President Thein Sein in the margins of the Asia Europe Meeting in Laos on 6 November, where the Foreign Secretary called upon the Burmese Government to put an end to the violence.

I will be visiting Burma in the coming weeks and will continue to raise our concerns about the plight of the Rohingya with the Burmese Government. I also plan to visit Rakhine State to see the situation for myself.

4th December 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma regarding the proposal to expel all ethnic Rohingya from that country.

Baroness Warsi: We are aware of the reports in July that President Thein Sein told a visiting delegation from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees that the Burmese Government would not recognise the Rohingya and that his Government were considering handing over the ethnic group to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. We are extremely concerned by these comments.

We have continued to lobby the Burmese Government to put in place long term solutions to the issues affecting the Rohingya. We also continue to raise the issue of Rohingya refugees and the humanitarian situation in the Bangladesh-Burma border area with the Bangladeshi Government. Encouragingly, in his speech to the UN General Assembly in September, President Thein Sein recognised that "all people in Myanmar have a right to live in peace and with security. We need a solution in the Rakhine State that is both just and consistent with international standards". The international community will be holding Burma to this commitment.

12th December 2012 Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment she has made of the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state, Burma.

Mr Duncan: Around 115,000 people remain in camps following violence between the de facto stateless Muslim Rohingya and the Buddhist Rakhine communities. Many lack food, safe drinking water or adequate sanitation. The UK has allocated bilateral funds to provide water, sanitation and nutrition to more than 58,000 people.

Political Prisoners

20th December 2012 Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth

Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of political prisoners in Burma following the state of emergency in Rakhine state; and what recent representations he has made to the authorities in that country on arbitrary detentions.

Mr Swire: Since the outbreak of violence in Rakhine State December, we have received reports of arbitrary detentions and mistreatment of Rohingya prisoners in Rakhine. It remains challenging to verify these reports or to estimate the numbers of political prisoners across Burma as access to prisons by international agencies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, has previously been withheld.

My recent visit to Burma from 12-15 December allowed me to raise these concerns about political prisoners in Rakhine State and across Burma with senior members of the Burmese Government. I welcomed both the political prisoner review mechanism announced by the Burmese Government in November and their decision to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross access to detention centres across Burma. I also raised with Ministers several of the detention cases that have been highlighted by international non-governmental organisations, including the detention of UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) employee, Nandar Aung, her husband, Maung Maung Than, her father, Dr Tun Aung, and, separately, monk activist U Gambira, now released on bail.

I also pressed for Burma to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and requested support for the upcoming UN General Assembly resolution on the death penalty. We continue to call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners at every opportunity.

Human Rights

4th December 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the comments by the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Hugo Swire, on 30 October (Official Report, col. 156), how they monitor the ability of the Government of Burma to protect human rights.

Baroness Warsi: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) draws on a wide variety of sources to assess objectively the ability of the Burmese Government to protect the human rights of all the people of Burma. This includes assessments and regular reporting from our embassy in Rangoon. Our embassy officials travel around the country on a regular basis, often to ethnic minority areas. Our ambassador has visited Rakhine state twice since the beginning of October. We also meet regularly with members of local civil society, drawing on eye-witness reporting.

We engage with the Burmese Government directly on human rights. Ministers, including the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) have visited Burma to see the situation for themselves. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire) will travel to Burma shortly.

We also meet independent experts in the field of human rights, including the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma, Mr Tomas Ojea Quintana. We consider credible and impartial reporting from, and regularly meet with, relevant human rights organisations, many of whom are based in the UK.

Sexual Violence

11th December 2012 Baroness Goudie: To ask Her Majesty's Government why Burma is not included in their initiative to prevent sexual violence in conflict.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): Despite the best efforts of the international community, the Government believe there is more that can-and must-be done to combat the use of sexual violence in conflict, particularly to address the culture of impunity for these crimes that has been allowed to develop. The Foreign Secretary's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), launched in May, aims to replace the culture of impunity with one of deterrence by increasing the number of perpetrators brought to justice both internationally and nationally; strengthening international efforts and co-ordination; and supporting states

to build their national capacity. We are determined to raise the profile of this issue internationally and to highlight these abhorrent crimes wherever they occur.

As part of the initiative, we have established a team of experts who can be deployed to conflict areas to help combat this problem. These deployments will be to those countries where we have assessed there is the greatest opportunity to work with local organisations to build national capacity and to effect long-term reform to tackle impunity and provide support to survivors. While Burma is not one of the immediate countries, there may be future opportunities for UK PSVI support. We are very concerned by the continuing reports of sexual violence in conflicts by the military in Burma's conflict areas. The Burmese Government have done little to investigate these allegations. The Government therefore welcome the recent UN General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in Burma, which represents a clear commitment by the Burmese Government to work with the international community to take the necessary measures to ensure accountability and end impunity, including by undertaking a full, transparent and independent investigation into all reports of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including allegations of targeted rape and other forms of sexual violence. We will continue to raise this issue with the Burmese authorities at every opportunity; directly with the Burmese Government at ministerial level and through our embassy in Rangoon. We will also continue to raise our concerns about the allegations of the use of sexual violence in conflict with our international partners and with the UN.

Child Soldiers

4th December 2012 Baroness Kinnock: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made an assessment of the credibility of the Joint Action Plan between the United Nations and the Government of Burma, in the light of the refusal by the Burmese military of access to all military bases.

Baroness Warsi: The conclusion of an agreed joint action plan (JAP) between the UN and Burmese Government this year was another important milestone on Burma's path towards democracy. It consists of specific commitments including strengthening identification, registration and vetting procedures to prevent and end the recruitment of children. This marks the most significant development in the international community's efforts to bring an end to the use of child soldiers once and for all in Burma.

We are aware that this remains the beginning of a longer term process. It will be important for the Burmese Government to implement the JAP in a robust manner for it to be effective. We are concerned that in some cases the Burmese military is still refusing access to some of its military bases on the grounds of national security. In other cases, access to military sites where child soldiers may be present is contingent on a notice period of up to 72 hours.

It is imperative for the Burmese Government to facilitate UN access to affected children. We have seen progress in the implementation of the JAP through the recent release and reintegration of 45 children back into the community as a result of efforts by the Burmese Government. We welcome this achievement and will continue to support the implementation of the JAP.

President Thein Sein Prosecution

4th December 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made any assessment of the application of universal jurisdiction relating to the use of torture in relation to the proposed visits to the United Kingdom by President Thein Sein and other officials from Burma.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): The proposed visit of President Thein Sein will be at the invitation of the Government for the purpose of carrying out official government to government business. In particular, it would be an opportunity to engage the president on our issues of concern, to share our own knowledge and experience and support the reforms taking place in Burma.

The conditions for the exercise of universal jurisdiction for torture by the UK courts are set out in Sections 134 and 135 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, and further provision is made in respect of arrest warrants in Section 153 of the Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The UK is obliged under international law to accord relevant privileges and immunities to certain categories of official visitors, and this is reflected in UK law.

Burmese Officials Visit

3rd December 2012 Baroness Goudie: To ask Her Majesty's Government which Burmese Government officials have visited the United Kingdom in the past six months; and what were the reasons for their visits.

Baroness Warsi: U Soe Thane, Minister to the Burmese President's Office, visited the UK from 7-9 November to attend a Wilton Park conference hosted by the Institute of Business and Human Rights and focused on encouraging responsible investment in Burma.

3rd December 2012 Baroness Goudie: To ask Her Majesty's Government which organisations and individuals have been approached by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with regard to meeting President Thein Sein of Burma when he visits the United Kingdom.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): The Prime Minister, my right honourable friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), issued an invitation to the Burmese President, Thein Sein in June and this invitation remains outstanding. Therefore there have been no approaches as yet to organisations or individuals with regards to any meetings. We believe such a visit would be a valuable opportunity to continue the Prime Minister's dialogue with the president and to stress the need to resolve the many issues outstanding as Burma continues on its path to democracy.

Peace and Reconciliation

4th December 2012 Susan Elan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to promote peace and reconciliation in Burma.

Mr Swire: We continue to raise our concerns about the conflict in Kachin and Shan States, and the violence in Rakhine State, with Burmese Ministers and Aung San Suu Kyi. The Government is contributing £27 million for humanitarian support and for peace-building activities in Burma, which draw on our experiences in Northern Ireland.

Press Freedom

20th December 2012 Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the authorities in Burma on the powers of the Press Scrutiny and Registration Department and freedom of the press in that country.

Mr Swire: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), released a statement on 20 August, welcoming the announcement by the Burmese Government of the relaxation of the rules around pre-publication censorship by the Press Scrutiny and Registration Department. This was a significant step forward in the relaxation of press censorship in Burma.

The Burmese Government is due to publish a new media law in early 2013. We understand that this will lead to the complete abolition of the censorship board and its replacement with a new Press Council. It is not clear at this stage what will be the nature of the relationship between the Press Council and the Burmese Government.

The UK Government is contributing to the capacity-building of the media in Burma through overseas development assistance funding, focusing on supporting civil society and independent media outlets. Through Department for International Development funding, BBC Media Action, a UK-based non-governmental organisation, provides support to a weekly radio programme, Lin Lat Kyair Sin, which is broadcast on the BBC Burmese service. This support includes training for local young journalists to strengthen their journalism skills.

The BBC has also conducted a training needs analysis as part of a planned broader work programme with the Burmese State Broadcaster. The UK Government also notes the move by the BBC to begin broadcasting in Burma on three new channels.

Humanitarian Aid

6th December 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the Government of Burma's policies towards provision of humanitarian assistance and healthcare to minority ethnic nationalities in the conflict zones of that country.

Baroness Northover: The Government of Burma have allowed the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative to deliver humanitarian and development programmes to minority ethnic groups in ceasefire areas.

In Kachin, where there is no ceasefire, access to internally displaced people in Kachin Independence Army controlled areas has been restricted. The UK is supporting groups that are able to work around these restrictions and provide critical humanitarian support.

In Rakhine, where there has been a recent increase in communal violence between the de-facto stateless Muslim Rohingya and the majority Buddhist Rakhine communities, the Government of Burma have stated their commitment to enabling access, logistic support where appropriate and ensuring the safety of humanitarian actors. The UK has provided humanitarian support and will, with international partners, continue to monitor the situation.

European Common Position

10th December 2012 Meg Munn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the European Common Position on Burma.

Mr Swire: The European Common Position on Burma was discussed at ministerial level by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) during the review of the EU sanctions on Burma in April of this year. I also discussed the EU position at the UN Friends of Burma/Myanmar, along with our European partners, in September in New York. Officials from member states regularly discuss the European Common Position on Burma during meetings of the EU's Political and Security Committee, the last such discussion being on 13 November.

Officials from member states also discussed Burma intensively during negotiations leading to the UN General Assembly 3rd Committee Resolution on human rights in Burma that was adopted by consensus on 26 November.

ANSWERS TO SPOKEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

4th December 2012

Mr David Burrowes: What representations he has made to the Burmese Government on resolving the situation in Rakhine state.

Mr Barry Sheerman: What steps he is taking to promote peace and reconciliation in Burma.

Richard Fuller: What steps he is taking with the Burmese and Bangladeshi Governments to assist the Rohingya Muslim community.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire): We continue to raise our concerns about the recent violence in Rakhine state, as well as the conflict in Kachin and Shan states, with Burmese Ministers and Aung San Suu Kyi. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised the plight of the Rohingya community in recent discussions with the Burmese President, stressing the need to resolve their citizenship status. Officials continue to emphasise the importance of our humanitarian aid programmes in Bangladesh and Rakhine with the Bangladeshi and Burmese Governments.

Mr Burrowes: I thank the Minister for that response. Does it not surprise him that Aung San Suu Kyi, the most respected and peaceable person in Burma, has been in effect excluded from steps to resolve the

situation in Rakhine? Will he urge the Burmese Government to invite Aung San Suu Kyi to visit Rakhine state as soon as possible to help to calm the situation?

Mr Swire: We very much welcome the statement that Aung San Suu Kyi made on 9 November, as chairman of the parliamentary committee on the rule of law, on the situation in Rakhine state. The issue was raised with her by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary when she was here in June, and our ambassador has raised it with her since. I will travel to that part of the world shortly and I will certainly discuss the issue with her, because I believe she has a role in resolving it and, indeed, all the problems facing Burma today.

Mr Sheerman: We hear what the Minister says, but the situation is of great concern to all of us who care about minorities. I have been a critic in this House of the way in which Christians have been treated by Muslims in Pakistan—that is on the record—but this is a question of Muslims being persecuted in Burma. Can the United Nations and this country's leadership and Government not do something about it?

Mr Swire: Of course we remain extremely concerned about the situation in Burma, but we believe that it is moving in the right direction. We welcome President Obama's recent visit there and I shall be taking a trade delegation on my visit. We believe that engaging with the Government commercially as well as politically is the right way to proceed. We are concerned about the ethnic violence and issues of religion, and we remain concerned—I shall raise these points forcefully when I am there—about the issue of the remaining political prisoners.

Richard Fuller: The Minister has rightly focused on issues regarding the Rohingya community in Burma, but equally there are hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslim refugees in Bangladesh and 20,000 or 30,000 of them in refugee camps. What steps can the Minister take to persuade the Bangladesh Government to begin the registration of undocumented Rohingya refugees and to provide access for non-governmental organisations to the refugee camps?

Mr Swire: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The issue was raised by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary during a meeting with the Bangladeshi Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, on 28 July. The former Secretary of State for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), raised it with Prime Minister Hasina on 12 August. My noble friend Baroness Warsi raised it with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, Dipu Moni, in October 2012 and the British high commissioner has also raised it in Bangladesh. It is important that we get aid to that part of Rakhine and that the Bangladeshis make it possible for that aid to reach the people.

Meg Munn: The development of democracy in Burma will be successful only if it is pluralistic—a position that has long been held by the British Government. Is the Minister satisfied with the position that is being taken within the European Union, and what discussions has he had with his counterparts about ensuring that the common position does not move too quickly towards removing all sanctions and developing trade with Burma until all ethnic groupings are properly involved in its democracy?

Mr Swire: As I have said, we have taken the view that the best way to encourage Burma on the path that we believe the President has set is to engage with them. We have taken a number of trade delegations there and I shall be taking one myself shortly. I have written to the chairman of the all-party group on Burma, the noble Baroness Kinnock, and, when I return from that part of the world—this will be in the new year—I am prepared happily to talk through what I will have learnt on the ground. I think I will be one of the few Ministers to have been to that area, so I will be able to give the hon. Lady a first-hand account of what I think is going on there.

Roger Williams: While the focus has been on the Rohingya people and the atrocities that they have faced, including the destruction of a mosque recently, everybody in the area is suffering as a result of these problems. Will the Minister tell us how the humanitarian aid that we are providing will encourage a resolution to the difficulties?

Mr Swire: I am pleased to say that we have an extremely good track record in that respect. We are one of the largest aid donors to Burma and have allocated £187 million to it over four years, which includes support for the process of ethnic reconciliation. We announced another £27 million in November for the

humanitarian support of refugees and internally displaced people and for peace-building activities, drawing on our experiences in Northern Ireland. We have provided a further £2 million to Kachin, where there are 27,500 internally displaced people. We have a record that is second to none in providing the aid that is sorely needed in that part of the world.

Kerry McCarthy: I know from my visit to Burma in July that the country will welcome the trade delegation that the Minister is leading. However, I am concerned that, from feedback I have had and questions I have asked about other trade delegations that have been led by the Foreign Office in recent months, it seems that very little has been said about human rights on those trips. Will the Minister assure me that the plight of the Rohingya, the fate of political prisoners and other human rights issues in Burma will be very much on his agenda when he goes to Burma?

Mr Swire: I can certainly give the hon. Lady that assurance. Trade is one part of what we are doing, as I have attempted to outline this morning. We believe in trade because, by engaging in it, we can form relationships and show the people of Burma what future they can have. However, that we are trying to increase our bilateral trade does not mean for a moment that we will ignore our drive for increased human rights and the recognition of different ethnic groups in Burma. I shall make those points to all the politicians I meet there. Indeed, I have made those points to the Burmese politicians I have already met.

Topical Questions

12th December 2012

Ivan Lewis: I wish to declare an interest: I have just returned from a visit to Burma with the Burma Campaign UK, where I had the privilege of meeting Aung San Suu Kyi, whose courageous leadership is a source of inspiration and hope for a better future, and I saw for myself the challenges that ethnic communities continue to face. Will DFID Ministers work with the Foreign Secretary to apply maximum pressure to the Burmese Government to protect the Rohingya community from violence, create an urgent and transparent process to establish their citizenship rights, and begin a serious political dialogue with all ethnic communities? [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. May I just remind the House that we are discussing extremely serious matters? This question is about Burma, and it would be a courtesy if Members would listen to the question and to the Minister's answer.

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Mr Alan Duncan): The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), who has responsibility for Burma, will visit Rakhine state this coming Friday and Saturday, when he will see the situation at first hand and meet senior Burmese Ministers.

The Burmese Government have founded an independent commission to investigate the situation in Rakhine state. The UK is very closely engaged with all parties to push for greater humanitarian access and a longer-term political settlement, including on citizenship.

Burma was discussed in the Commonwealth Trade Debate

12th December 2012 Mr Spellar: Trade delegations are important, but we do not need one to Australia. Businessmen, politicians, academics and others are backwards and forwards to Australia and Canada. We should treat trade with such countries as part of our normal trading pattern. It seems to me that trade delegations are to open up markets and relationships. As things proceed positively—we hope—in Burma, we will undoubtedly need to be developing more there. That is the role of trade delegations, but we should be considering how we, our embassies and our high commissions around the world, facilitate the operation of businesses. We should also be moving towards doing normal business, as though going from Birmingham to Brisbane was like going from London to Edinburgh, rather than treating such business as separate, and just part of foreign policy.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121212/halltext/121212h0001.htm#12121231000001>

Burma was discussed in the Foreign Affairs: Global Role, Emerging Powers and New Markets Debate

6th December 2012 Lord Soley: The Minister may know—the noble Lord, Lord Howell, certainly knows, because he has been helpful on this—of the work that I am currently doing with Burma, which is sometimes known as Myanmar. There is an argument within Burma as to which name to use, but I will use Burma for the moment. We are now talking to Burma about similar options on the rule of law. The opportunities are therefore great. We in this House underestimate our strength, which we can use in conjunction with such efforts. I am currently trying to arrange for people with suitable experience to go to Burma to help form good governance because, too often, that country receives visits from people from all over the world who will look at what the Burmese need and then go back to their own country and talk to other people there. We need a more in-depth and continuing involvement.

We have in this House people who have run the Civil Service, others who know about the relationship between a Secretary of State for Defence and the armed forces and police force, and, above all, people who know about the rule of law. We have many ex-Lord Chancellors in this House and, indeed, more lawyers than I can count. I hasten to add that I am not a lawyer. However, the depth of the contribution that we can make is far greater than we envisage, and we should have a structure to do it. That is what I am trying to do, particularly in Burma.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201213/ldhansrd/text/121206-0001.htm#12120659000795>

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT FROM DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID)

Press Release:

FURTHER UK SUPPORT FOR KACHIN STATE, BURMA

The UK will provide additional humanitarian support to those displaced by the ongoing conflict in Kachin State, Burma, the British Development Secretary Justine Greening announced today.

Justine Greening said:

“Violence in Kachin has continued now for over a year and a half, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee their homes. Many are living without basic water and sanitation. We must act now to relieve the immediate suffering and to ensure that conditions do not worsen to cause further loss of life as the winter draws in.

“The UK is stepping up to help, but I call on all donors to do more for the people of Kachin, and on all parties to ensure access for humanitarian agencies.”

The UK support delivered via NGO Trocaire over the next five months will provide:

- 15,997 people with basic food rations;
- 21,479 people with modest supplementary cash grants (£4.68 per adult, per month) for meat and vegetables or the equivalent in cooked meals and basic hygiene support;
- 1,284 people with sufficient shelter;
- 800 children able to access ‘safe areas’;
- 5,000 people accessing psycho-social support, and
- Over 120 humanitarian staff (from local Kachin organisations) trained in providing humanitarian support to international standards.

Note to Editors:

1. Humanitarian partners are reporting a looming shortfall in the food supply in KIA controlled areas
2. Trocaire has been working with a local faith-based organisation – Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS) - to provide humanitarian assistance since the beginning of the conflict in June 2011, and with DFID funding since January 2012.
3. The current package of support is worth £1,526,569. This takes the total DFID allocation to the Kachin conflict to £3.5 million.

4. This is in addition to the £2m of DFID humanitarian support for Rakhine state announced in October, and to the £27.1m package for humanitarian support and wider political reform announced in November.
5. Justine Greening is the UK's Secretary of State for International Development and is the Minister responsible for the Department for International Development (DFID) and the UK's aid programme.

For further information, please contact Press Office <PressOffice@dfid.gov.uk>

All Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma

On 10th December 2012, APPG Burma and APPG Bangladesh organized joint event regarding the persecution of Burma's Rohingya people. Representatives from the Burmese Rohingya Organization UK, Restless Beings and Refugee International, provided an update on the Rohingya crisis, addressed the issue of Burma's 1982 citizenship law, discussed the challenges of providing humanitarian aid for Rohingya refugees, and the need for support and engagement by the British Government.

Since communal violence erupted in June this year in Burma's Arakan State, more than a thousand homes have been destroyed and over 100,000 people have been displaced. This violence has evolved into systematic attacks against the ethnic Rohingya. The President of Burma has proposed that the United Nations arrange for Rohingya people to be removed from Burma and sent to third countries. There is a growing humanitarian and human rights crisis, which is not receiving sufficient international attention.

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

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

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: 32

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

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 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: 20

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: 32

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