



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

FEB
2011

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Parliament

7 February 2011 Gregory Campbell : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will work with his international counterparts to inform the Government of Burma of concerns about the Burmese Parliament's rules on freedom of speech and scrutiny.

Jeremy Browne : The Government are deeply concerned by reported restrictions on freedom of speech and scrutiny in Burma's Parliament. It has been reported:

(i) that the Speaker of the Lower House can reject parliamentary questions that he judges will affect international relations, or which undermine the interests of the state;

(ii) that it is a criminal offence, punishable by at least two years in prison, to publish or disclose information relating to parliamentary business.

Our ambassador to Rangoon raised the issue directly with the Burmese Minister for Agriculture on 26 January 2011.

We have raised our concerns over the restrictive and undemocratic nature of the regime's political process with our international partners, including in recent weeks with China, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. We will again underline our concerns at the forthcoming session of the Human Rights Council in March.

Trade Unions

1 February 2011 Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding his Department has provided to trade unions from Burma in the latest period for which figures are available.

Alan Duncan : The Department for International Development (DFID) has provided no funding to trade unions from Burma.

Overseas Aid

1 February 2011 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment he has made of levels of poverty in Burma.

Alan Duncan : I refer the hon. Member to my answer to Fiona Bruce, on 31 January 2011, Hansard, columns 611-12W.

28 February 2011 Gregory Campbell : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps are being taken to ensure appropriate scrutiny of the recently announced increase in aid to Burma to reduce the risk of misappropriation of funds.

Alan Duncan: Future UK aid to Burma will continue to be delivered through the United Nations and reputable non-government organisations (NGOs) which have in place stringent monitoring mechanisms. UK funds will not be channelled through the Burmese central Government. Department for International Development (DFID) staff will monitor the delivery of our aid through field visits, direct contacts with beneficiaries, clear reporting requirements for recipient organisations and a close examination of their budgets and annual audited statements. UK aid will also be subject to independent evaluations. Large programmes in Burma will have mechanisms that enable beneficiaries to raise concerns and have them investigated.

Political Prisoners

14 February 2011 Lord Kennedy of Southwark : To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma about the case of Su Su Nmay.

Lord Howell of Guildford : We remain deeply concerned about the continued imprisonment of Su Su Nway and all other political prisoners in Burma. Their immediate and unconditional release remains one of the international community's long-standing demands. Our ambassador in Rangoon most recently raised political prisoners directly with the Burmese authorities on 26 January and will continue to highlight our concern in future discussions with them. We also helped to secure a strongly worded human rights resolution at the UN General Assembly in November that demanded the release of all political prisoners. We highlighted this issue again during an examination of Burma's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review on 27 January. Our embassy in Burma is in touch with the International Labour Organisation and others close to Su Su Nway to ensure that she receives appropriate attention, in particular regarding her health.

General

14 February 2011 Lord Kennedy of Southwark : To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the situation in Burma since the release from house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Lord Howell of Guildford : We remain deeply concerned by the regime's continued refusal to respond to Aung San Suu Kyi's call for dialogue and national reconciliation. Without an inclusive and just political settlement, peace, stability and economic development will continue to elude Burma. We are concerned that restrictive laws controlling freedom of expression in the new Parliament do not promote accountability and good governance but instead will hamper opposition parties from playing an effective role in policy reform. We expect that senior government positions will be filled by military figures from the existing leadership. This and the Government's recent rejection of the National League for Democracy's appeal against dissolution leaves little room for doubt that the military's intention is maintain their grip on power.

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

Early Day Motion 112: Human Rights in Burma

John Pugh
30.05.2010
Signed by 148 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 46 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.

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**for Human Rights, Democracy
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