



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

A summary of Burma-related issues in the British Parliament

FEB
2015

Answers to Written Parliamentary Questions

Military training

9 February 2015 Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of providing training courses for the Burmese Army to date; and what funding for that purpose has been allocated for (a) 2014-15 and (b) 2015-16.

Mr Mark Francois:

Holding answer received on 05 February 2015

To date, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has spent £105,905 on Defence Education activity with Burma. The MOD's allocated funding for financial year 2014-15 is £139,530 whilst funding for financial year 2015-16 is still under review.

23 February 2015 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any review of the training being provided to the Burmese Army has examined concerns about the shooting and killing of Sai Sarm Tip in eastern Shan State on 12 December 2014 by Burmese army troops from Light Infantry Brigade 573.

Lord Astor of Hever: We have not conducted a formal review of the education provided to the Burmese Army (Tatmadaw) since the killing of Sai Sarm Tip in eastern Shan State on 12 December 2014, about whose death we were concerned. Incidents such as this highlight the continued requirement for fundamental reform of the Burmese military. We do not provide any training that enhances the combat capability of the Tatmadaw. Since December 2014 we have delivered two educational courses to the Tatmadaw focusing on democratic accountability and rule of law which included modules on human rights issues. We have consulted extensively with members of ethnic armed groups, civil society and the political opposition led by Aung San Suu Kyi, and there is support of our approach. Aung San Suu Kyi also attended an event during our latest education course in January. While we recognise that defence education remains a sensitive issue, without engaging with the Tatmadaw our ability to influence their behaviour and bind them into a long term process of political reform, including improving their human rights record, will be limited.

23 February 2015 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they plan to spend on providing English language training courses for the Burmese Army.

Lord Astor of Hever: For 2015 the Ministry of Defence has committed £74,210 for the provision of English Language Training at the Defence Services Academy of Burma.

Rape and sexual violence

9 February 2015 Ms Diane Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what offers were made to the government of Burma of expert help with the investigation of the rape and murder of two ethnic Kachin teachers on 20 January 2015.

Mr Hugo Swire: We have raised our concerns about the incident with the Burmese government, and have urged a rapid investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice. We will be closely monitoring the outcome of this investigation.

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2 February 2015 Mr David Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the government of Burma has taken steps to implement the declaration to end sexual violence which it signed in June 2014.

Mr Hugo Swire: While we welcomed the Burmese government's endorsement of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and attendance at the Global Summit in June 2014, their implementation of the commitments contained within it has been limited.

We continue to raise the issue of sexual violence with the Burmese government, as I did when I met Deputy Foreign Minister U Thant Kyaw in June 2014. Most recently, my Right Hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Lynne Featherstone), in her capacity as Champion for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, discussed sexual violence with senior members of the Burmese government and civil society during her visit to Burma in January.

While there have been some developments, such as the conviction in a civilian court last year of a Burmese soldier for the rape of a minor, there is much more that can and should be done. We continue to encourage the Burmese government to take concrete action, by strengthening legislation, reducing impunity for perpetrators, and improving access to justice for survivors.

The Declaration also commits the international community to support conflict-affected states in strengthening their capacity to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict. The UK has allocated over £300,000 to projects doing this in Burma. The prevention of sexual violence in conflict is also a key element of our defence engagement with Burma and is included, along with the importance of human rights and the rule of law, in any education courses we deliver to the military in Burma.

Education reform

16 February 2015 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government how much funding has been provided, directly or indirectly, towards assisting the government of Burma to reform education services in Burma.

Baroness Northover: The UK Government does not provide any funds directly to the government of Burma. DFID has provided £3million through UNICEF to improve the education system in Burma by increasing access and raising learning levels in government schools. This programme has funded teacher training, provided essential learning materials to pupils and funded technical inputs to the Burmese Ministry of Education's evidence-based review of the education sector. UNICEF channels funds through project bank accounts and does not use government of Burma financial systems.

16 February 2015 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what meetings have been held by the British Embassy in Rangoon with (1) the National Network for Education Reform in Burma, and (2) the Action Committee for Democratic Education.

Baroness Northover: The British Embassy and DFID officials, together with UNICEF and officials from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, met with a representative of the Education Seminar Initiative Group (ESIG) in 2012 to discuss plans for the Comprehensive Education Sector Review. The ESIG, together with the National League for Democracy Education Group, went on to set up the National Network for Education Reform in January 2013.

16 February 2015 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Burma regarding the reform of the National Education Law in that country.

Baroness Northover: DFID have not held any direct discussions with the Government of Burma regarding the reform of the National Education Law. A DFID official attended a briefing with the Burmese Minister of Education on the recent dialogue around the National Education Law on 9 February, but did not provide any comments. DFID's Minister of State met with Burma's Deputy Minister for Education in January and encouraged the government of Burma to consult widely on further rules relating to the National Education Law. DFID, together with other International Development Partners, has funded technical support for the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR). This review has informed the development of the National Education Law.

10 February 2015 Diane Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assistance the Government gave to the Ministry of Education in Burma on that country's National Education Law.

Mr Desmond Swayne: The UK Government has not provided any funding directly to the government of Burma in developing the National Education Law. DFID, together with other International Development Partners, has funded technical inputs to the Burmese Ministry of Education's evidence-based review of the education sector. This review has informed the development of the National Education Law. I met with Burma's Deputy Minister for Education in January and encouraged the government of Burma to consult with donors and civil society on further rules relating to the National Education Law.

Rohingya

13 February 2015 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the analysis by Human Rights Watch of the effects of Burma's citizenship law on the status and rights of the Rohingya.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We share Human Rights Watch's concerns over Burma's 1982 Citizenship Law and its impact on the Rohingya community. We have consistently urged the Burmese authorities to undertake rapid action to address the citizenship status of the Rohingya through a transparent, inclusive and consistent process in line with international standards. We have always been clear that, regardless of citizenship status, the human rights of all individuals in Rakhine must be fully respected.

9 February 2015 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made representations to the government of Burma about reported human trafficking involving removing Rohingya to other countries in the region.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK makes regular representations to the Government of Burma about the living conditions faced by the Rohingya in Rakhine State, which is the key driver of their migration to third countries. We have also raised it with our international partners in the region. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), discussed the trafficking of the Rohingya people with the Bangladeshi Foreign Minister at the Asia-Europe meeting in Milan in October last year. We have also raised with the Thai authorities the importance of treating Rohingya refugees in Thailand in line with international humanitarian norms and standards. We continue to make it clear to the Government of Burma that the humanitarian situation in Rakhine must be addressed as a matter of priority. The UK is one of the largest bilateral aid donors to Rakhine, providing £12m since 2012 for humanitarian assistance.

Ministry of Home Affairs

11 February 2015 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have signed any Memoranda of Understanding or other agreements with the Ministry of Home Affairs in Burma.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The British Government does not have any Memoranda of Understanding or similar agreements with the Ministry of Home Affairs in Burma.

Religious freedom

10 February 2015 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they support the remarks of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Yangjee Lee, on the "significant human rights concerns" of Burma's new laws and her warning that they would "legalise discrimination, in particular against religious and ethnic minorities and against women".

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We strongly support the mandate and work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma, Yangjee Lee. While her full report has not yet issued, we share her concerns about the proposed so-called protection of race and religion bills. Like her, we have concerns about the discriminatory effect these laws could have in Burma, particularly for religious and other minority groups and women, were they to be enacted. We have voiced our concerns over this proposed legislation

to members of the Burmese government and parliamentarians. Most recently, Minister of State at the Home Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Lynne Featherstone), raised the issue when she met Deputy Foreign Minister Thant Kyaw during her visit to Burma in January. The UK also endorsed a statement issued by EU Heads of Mission in Rangoon in January reiterating those concerns and calling on the Burmese government and parliament to ensure that all new legislation is fully compliant with Burma's international human rights obligations.

More widely, the British Government deplores the hateful and abusive language used by a prominent monk against Ms Lee following her recent visit. Such sexist abuse and intimidation of human rights defenders emphasises the need for the Burmese government to increase its efforts to strengthen respect for universal human rights and tackle hate speech. We call on the Ministry of Religious Affairs to act on the matter.

5 February 2015 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on human rights and religious liberties of Burma's new Religious Conversion Bill and of other new bills in that country aimed at the protection of race and religion and which focus on restricting inter-faith marriage, monogamy and population control; and what representations they have made to the government of Burma on the matter.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Restrictions on interfaith marriage, religious conversion and population growth are currently being debated in the Burmese parliament. We are concerned that, if enacted, these laws could harm religious tolerance and respect for diversity in Burma, and contravene international standards and treaties to which Burma is a signatory.

We have voiced our concerns over this proposed legislation to members of the Burmese government and to Burmese parliamentarians. Most recently, Minister of State at the Home Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Lynne Featherstone), raised the issue when she met Deputy Foreign Minister Thant Kyaw during her visit to Burma in January. The UK also endorsed a statement issued by EU Heads of Mission in Rangoon in January reiterating those concerns and calling on the Burmese government and parliament to ensure that all new legislation is fully compliant with Burma's international human rights obligations. We will continue to raise this issue in our dealings with the Burmese authorities, both in public and in private.

4 Feb 2015 Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom's Report, Burma: Religious Freedom and Related Human Rights Violations are Hindering Broader Reforms, published in November 2014.

Mr Hugo Swire: We share the Commission's concerns on freedom of religion in Burma, the situation of the Rohingya, the rise in hate speech and the draft faith-based legislation, along with how these are affecting Burma's reform process. We have raised our concerns in detail on the proposed so-called 'protection of race and religion' laws both bilaterally and in company with our partners in the European Union. We work closely with civil society on these issues in Burma, particularly during our visits to Rakhine state, where the UK is one of the largest bilateral donors of humanitarian assistance. Our Annual Report on Human Rights details the full range of our concerns, and the actions we are taking to address them.

Aid

16 February 2015 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent changes to the level of international aid and development support to Burma.

Baroness Northover: Aid from the international community to Burma is increasing both in volume and number of donors. For example, following the cancellation of Burma's outstanding debt payments to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, both are now starting to design and implement major programmes of support. As one of the few donors with a long established presence in Burma, DFID plays an important role in seeking to coordinate donors, co-chairing both the Development Partners Working Committee and the Development Partners Group, and playing a leading role in Myanmar Development Cooperation Forum on the 7-8 February 2015.

Trade and Investment

10 February 2015 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the cost of preparation of the recent report "Opportunities for British companies in Burma's oil and gas sector".

Lord Livingston of Parkhead: The report was prepared & published by UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) staff members at the British Embassy in Rangoon as part of their normal work in advising UK companies on how to do business in the market. £260 was spent on the printing of hard copies of the report for distribution.

Human Rights

25 February 2015 Lord Kennedy of Southwark: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their latest assessment of the human rights situation in Burma.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Burma remains a human rights Country of Concern for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and features in the FCO's annual Human Rights and Democracy report. A copy of the latest quarterly update to that report on Burma is attached, which highlights the humanitarian situation in Rakhine, continuing conflict and sexual violence in Kachin, political prisoners and restrictions on freedom of expression.

Answers to Oral Parliamentary Questions

Rape and Sexual Violence

12 February 2015 Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): May we have an urgent debate on Burma? I understand there is no time for constitutional reform before the Burmese elections, but in a written answer I was told that the British Government are giving money to the Burmese army, some members of which were responsible for raping and killing two teachers in Kachin state. Will the Leader of the House look into this matter?

Mr Hague: These are very important issues. Under the auspices of the preventing sexual violence initiative, which I continue to work on, we have worked hard to bring Burma into the initiative by getting the Burmese Government to sign up to its principles. That is partly so that the world will be able to expect a better performance and behaviour from the Burmese army. It is always difficult to make decisions about whether to give training to an army where crimes have been committed or alleged, but part of the argument for that training is to ensure that such crimes are not committed in future. That is why such decisions have been made in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. FCO questions are on 3 March. The hon. Lady may be able to pursue this matter further then.

Mr Speaker: There can never be too many debates on Burma in this House.

Burma mentioned in Westminster Hall Debate on Gaza

25 February 2015 Mr Ward: (...) The international community would allow no other country to treat anybody the way Israel treats the Palestinians. Such a country would be ostracised and treated as a pariah state; at the very least—as in the case of Myanmar, Russia and South Africa—we would impose sanctions. I have an online petition with more than 80,000 names calling on the Government to be an agent of change and to consider sanctions as part of bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict. (...)

For full debate, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150225/halltext/150225h0002.htm>

Burma mentioned in IDC Oral evidence on DFID's annual report and accounts 2013-2014

4 February 2015 Chair: We saw that we benefited very much from the language skills of one of the

Foreign Office officials in Burma. It would have been good to have somebody of that capacity in the DFID team. He was very good indeed.

For full evidence, see: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/dfids-departmental-annual-report-and-accounts-201314/oral/18046.pdf>

Burma mentioned in the Government's response to the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2014–15, The Extractive Industries

19 February 2015

RECOMMENDATION 12: THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

We welcome the fact that the UK has now signed the EITI. However, the lengthy delay in doing so has lessened the benefit of the initiative. The Government must now take the role of a vocal advocate of the adoption of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative to encourage other industrialised countries to sign up. (Paragraph 86)

Response to recommendations 11 and 12

The Government is responsible for implementing EITI and is working with the Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG), which consists of industry, civil society and other government departments to implement EITI. We are committed to delivering an EITI that reflects domestic and international objectives and I am pleased that the MSG has decided that petroleum revenue tax will be reported at the project level and that beneficial ownership information will be included in our first report. The UK is also sharing lessons with other countries that have recently joined the EITI, for example Burma.

For full response, see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmbis/939/93904.htm>

Written Statements

Violence against Women and Girls Overseas

5 February 2015 The Minister for Crime Prevention (Lynne Featherstone): I would like to update the House on my work as the ministerial champion for tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) overseas.

Since moving back to the Home Office as the Minister for Crime Prevention, I have been able to strengthen my ministerial champion role by ensuring the Government continue to take a coherent approach across international and domestic work to tackle violence against women and girls.

The scale of the challenge of ending violence against women and girls continues to be considerable.

Since my appointment as the international champion, I have made a series of overseas visits, including to South Sudan, Somalia, Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates, India and Burma, working in partnership to encourage and drive action to address VAWG in these countries. I have also represented the UK at a number of key international forums such as the Commission on the Status of Women, making the case for VAWG to be recognised in the post-2015 millennium development framework. I have also met, and built up strong alliances, with many in the wider community working on these issues including passionate activists and campaigners from non-governmental organisations and grassroots organisations, and diaspora communities in the UK.

In January, I undertook my final overseas visit—to India and Burma. I first visited India in my role as ministerial champion in 2011 and the progress that has been made since my last visit was encouraging. I was pleased to be able to secure Ministers' agreement to sending written support for the Girl Summit charter to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) in a generation. In Burma, I met Government Ministers, civil society groups, women's rights campaigners, and Aung San Suu Kyi, to discuss how violence against women and girls can be tackled, and how they could gain an

equal voice in the peace process and political reforms. One thing was clear to me. They are all dedicated to making their country a better place for all Burmese people. Much of the violence against women and girls in Burma is as a result of conflict. I was encouraged to hear of the work under way to tackle this, and saw a preventing sexual violence initiative-linked training session for the Burmese Army, supported by the UK's Defence Academy, on the UNSC 1325 commitments on women, peace and security.

I am proud of the role the UK has taken in supporting Burma, India and so many other countries to address violence against women and girls. I am also extremely proud of the achievements we have made since 2010. The UK is now positioned as a true world leader on tackling violence against women and girls. I would like to outline just a small selection of these achievements:

We have hosted three ground-breaking global summits on addressing VAWG: (1) the "call to action" to tackle violence against women and girls in humanitarian emergencies; (2) "ending sexual violence in conflict", and (3) the "Girl Summit" focused on tackling child, early and forced marriage, and ending female genital mutilation (FGM) both in the UK and worldwide.

These summits galvanised a huge range of financial and political commitments to act, including a groundbreaking communiqué to agree that early action to protect girls and women in emergencies saves lives—signed by 50 Governments and organisations; an international protocol on the investigation and documentation of sexual violence; and a Girl Summit charter on FGM and child, early and forced marriage (with 470 signatories, including 36 Governments).

I launched a flagship FGM programme in 2013—for which the UK is the largest donor in the world—working in 17 countries to support the Africa-led movement to end FGM, aiming to see a 30% reduction of FGM in 10 countries over the next five years. The momentum this generated led to the Girl Summit being held in London the following year.

The UK has significantly scaled up its work to tackle VAWG overseas. For example, the Department for International Development has seen a 63% increase in programmes addressing these issues since 2012. We now have bilateral VAWG programmes in 29 countries.

We have committed up to £25 million for a new programme to end child, early and forced marriage in 12 countries.

We have seen a six-fold increase in programmes addressing VAWG in humanitarian situations. For example, the UK is now supporting a programme working across the DRC, Ethiopia, and Pakistan called "Protecting Adolescent Girls against Violence in Humanitarian Settings", which will directly benefit 8,615 adolescent girls.

We are investing £25 million over five years in a flagship research and innovation programme that will find out what works to prevent violence in developing countries, with a component focused on conflict and humanitarian contexts.

I am committed to continuing to address these issues here and around the world. The Government are committed to publishing a review of our VAWG action plan this session, which will set out the progress we have made, domestically and internationally, over the course of this Parliament.

We are making progress at home too. Since we launched our strategy, "A Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls", in 2010 we have criminalised forced marriage in England and Wales; introduced new stalking offences; rolled out Clare's law and domestic violence protection orders to protect victims of domestic violence and announced a new offence of domestic abuse of controlling and coercive behaviour; and driven a step change in our efforts to end female genital mutilation. Our national prevention campaign—"This is Abuse"—encourages teenagers to rethink their views about rape, consent, violence and abuse, contributing to the wider cultural awareness that violence is unacceptable.

But there is still more to do. I am continuing to drive progress. Since the Girl Summit we have issued a consultation on mandatory reporting of FGM and we are now considering the responses with a view to bringing forward legislation this session. We have also established the FGM unit to drive a step change in

nationwide outreach on FGM with criminal justice partners, children's services, health care professionals and affected communities.

The statement is available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150205/wmstext/150205m0001.htm#15020547000013>

Early Day Motions

BURMA (Early Day Motion 182)

Date tabled: 25.06.2014

That this House supports the call for action for peace in Kachin State signed by 55 organisations worldwide; further supports calls from 80 organisations for Burma to scrap proposed legislation that would unlawfully restrict the right to freely choose a religion; notes that it has been over three years since the Burma Army broke a 17-year ceasefire with the Kachin Independence Army; calls on the government of Burma to cease its attacks in Kachin State; further notes since June 2011 over 120,000 Kachin people have been displaced and over 200 villages have been destroyed; condemns the human rights abuses and breaches of the Geneva Conventions in Kachin State, especially the use of sexual violence; acknowledges the need for further peace talks between the Burmese government, the Burma Army, Kachin Independence Organisation and the Kachin Independence Army; welcomes Charles Bo, the Archbishop of Yangon's call for the rights of all ethnicities and religious faiths to be protected and his message of peace; call on the Government to provide humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced people in Kachin and Northern Shan States; and further calls on the Government to establish an independent investigation into the use of rape and sexual violence.

Signatures: 21

70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BURMA CAMPAIGN (Early Day Motion 285)

Date tabled: 22.07.2014

That this House recognises with respect and gratitude all who fought in the war in Burma 70 years ago; notes that this was the longest land campaign of the Second World War; salutes the memory of nearly 40,000 British and Commonwealth Service personnel who died in the fighting, as well as the thousands more killed in captivity; and commends the work of The Not Forgotten Association, a tri-service charity for the wounded in keeping alive the memory of such sacrifices.

Signatures: 65

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT IN BURMA (Early Day Motion 587)

Date tabled: 02.12.2014

That this House condemns the continuing use of rape as a weapon of war and the recent escalation in military attacks in Kachin, Northern Shan and Karen States; notes the recent report by the Women's League for Burma detailing evidence of the continuing use of rape and sexual violence; calls for a nationwide ceasefire and an end to the use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war by the Burmese army; further calls on the Government to urge the government of Burma to engage in genuine political dialogue with ethnic nationalities without preconditions; further calls on the Government to urge the government of Burma to uphold its obligations under international law to end impunity and ensure accountability; further calls on the Government to urge the government of Burma to amend the constitution of that country to remove the current disqualification of Burmese citizens with foreign children becoming President; further calls on the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict to address the issues in Burma highlighted by the Women's League for Burma's Report; and further calls on the Government to support an independent international investigation into rape and sexual violence in Burma and to provide funding to women's organisations from Burma which document sexual violence by the Burmese army and assist survivors.

Signatures: 35

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN BURMA (EARLY DAY MOTION 748)

Date tabled: 29.01.2015

That this House condemns the rape and murder of Maran Lu Ra, aged 20 and Tangbau Hkawn Nan Tsin, 21, by members of the Burma Army; notes that these two women were Kachin teachers working with the Kachin Baptist Convention; further notes that local police have taken no action; further notes that the Kachin Women's Association Thailand has documented over 70 cases of gang-rape, rape and attempted sexual violence by Burma Army troops in Kachin and northern Shan states since the Burma Army broke a 17-year ceasefire with the Kachin Independence Army in June 2011; also notes that the government of Burma signed the Declaration to End Sexual Violence in Conflict last year but has failed to implement its provisions; calls on the Government to urge the government of Burma to stop immediately the military offensives in these ethnic areas and bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice; and further calls on the Prime Minister to enact provisions in the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative to send a team of experts to Burma to hold an inquiry and investigate this case.

Signatures: 24

All Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma

On 25 February, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma was addressed by Sally Thompson, Executive Director of The Border Consortium (TBC), Luiz Kaypoe from the Karenni Refugee Committee (KnRC) and Naw Ta Mla Saw from Karen Women's Organization (KWO).

The three speakers talked about the current situation for the refugees on the Thai-Burma border, and for displaced people inside Burma. All three urged the international community in general and the UK government in particular to continue to fund the refugee camps until the refugees themselves feel secure enough to return to Burma.

Both Luiz and Ta Mla Saw, as representatives of the refugee community, emphasised that many refugees feel pressurised into returning prematurely, and that a decline in provisions to the camps means that many feel starved back to Burma. In many areas in Burma the security of the people still cannot be guaranteed, there is a heavy Burmese army presence as well as land mines, and many refugees have lost their land due to land confiscations and have nowhere to return to.

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