



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

JAN
2010

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH

United Nations

5 Jan 2010 Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions his Department has had with UN counterparts on securing a replacement for Mr. Ibrahim Gambari as the UN Special Envoy to Burma; and if he will make a statement. [307999]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The replacement of Ibrahim Gambari as UN envoy to Burma is a matter for the UN Secretary General. However, Burma remains high on the Government's agenda and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister regularly speaks with the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki - moon, about the issue. We have underlined our ongoing support for his personal engagement and the role of his good offices mission. We are aware that Mr. Gambari will become head of the UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur and we look forward to working closely with whoever is chosen to replace him in this important role.

ANSWERS TO ORAL PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Election

19 Jan 2010 Mr. John Randall (Uxbridge) (Con): What steps he plans to take to seek to ensure that the 2010 election in Burma is fair. [311318]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We have maintained international pressure on the Burmese regime. We have lobbied China, India and Association of South East Nations members to recognise that only free and fair elections will lead to a stable and secure Burma. We support the UN Secretary-General's continued engagement. Tough EU sanctions will remain in place in the absence of any progress.

19 Jan Mr. Randall: Can the Minister give us an idea of whether any independent election monitoring teams will be allowed in to observe the elections?

Mr. Ivan Lewis: I am afraid to say that we have no expectation that international observers will be allowed to observe the election. It must be clear that without the release of political prisoners and a commitment to an inclusive process in respect of opposition and ethnic groups, the forthcoming elections in Burma will not be recognised by the international community-indeed, they will be entirely illegitimate.

19 Jan Mr. Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that not only do we expect openness, transparency and people to be able to watch the election, but more importantly, we expect the democratic result to be accepted and the military junta not to interfere in the end result?

Mr. Ivan Lewis: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. There is only one difficulty: the constitution that underpins the election is deeply flawed. It is designed to perpetuate military rule in Burma. It is therefore important that there is no interference in the elections. As long as the elections are contested on the current constitution, whatever the outcome they cannot be recognised by the international community.

19 Jan 2010 Mr. Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Do we not have to be realistic and realise that the elections will inevitably not be fair and democratic, but that they nevertheless present a real challenge for democracy campaigners within Burma? Will the Minister take his lead from the democracy movement, in particular the NLD, in determining the approach that is to be taken by this country in relation to the conduct and the outcome of the elections?

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Of course, the hon. Gentleman is right. It is not for us to determine the decision by the opposition parties whether to participate in the forthcoming elections. It is equally important that the entire international community gives a united response to any election outcome. If there were any suggestion that some members of the international community attempted in any way to legitimise that outcome, that would be very dangerous in terms of strengthening the regime. What we seek to achieve is maximum unity of response on the basis that the election will be fought on a flawed constitution.

Early Day Motion

EDM 238 REPORTS OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY IN BURMA

25.11.2009

Carmichael, Alistair

Signed by 163 MPs

That this House expresses severe concern at the escalating systematic human rights abuses being perpetrated against the people of Burma by the Junta military dictatorship; notes that there is well documented evidence over many years of widespread torture, forced displacement, sexual violence, extra-judicial killings and forced labour with civilians being deliberately targeted; further notes that these actions constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes; and calls on the Government to urge the United Nations to establish a Commission of Inquiry into these crimes in addition to supporting the International Labour Organisation's calls to refer the use of forced labour to the International Court of Justice.

EDM 391 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

08.12.2009

Evans, Nigel

Signed by 91 MPs

That this House welcomes International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2009; condemns those countries where human rights abuses occur on a daily and systematic basis; notes that on Monday Iranian authorities ordered foreign news outlets not to cover the protests that came on National Student Day, which were reportedly dispersed with the use of tear gas and militia brutality; further notes that in Burma, the case of Aung San Suu Kyi highlights the cruel suppression of democracy and perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the military junta; and calls on international agencies, including the UN and EU, and each sovereign state, to refocus their attention on human rights violations wherever they occur throughout the world.

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