



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

JULY
2010

HOUSE OF COMMONS

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH

Election

1 July 2010 Gordon Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Burma on the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and the forthcoming elections in that country.

Jeremy Browne: I raised Burma with ASEAN Ministers at the EU-ASEAN Ministerial on 26 May at which the Burmese Foreign Minister was present. I made clear that without the release and participation of all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's elections will not be free and fair. Our ambassador in Rangoon also raises issues of concern directly with the Burmese regime including calls for the release of all political prisoners.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and other members of the G8 discussed Burma at the summit in Canada and issued a statement urging the Burmese regime to allow for free and fair elections, to release without delay all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and to engage the democratic opposition and representatives of ethnic groups in a substantive dialogue on the way forward to national reconciliation. We will continue to raise our concern at the highest possible level with Burma's neighbours, in the EU, the UN and directly with the regime.

Export Controls

1 Jul 2010 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the purchase by the Burmese government of dual use goods which could be used in the development of nuclear weapons; and whether he has taken steps to ensure that no such dual use goods can be exported to Burma from the (a) UK and (b) EU.

Jeremy Browne : We are concerned by reports suggesting that Burma may be developing a covert nuclear programme in collaboration with North Korea.

We continue to urge Burma to act strictly in accordance with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to abide by the terms and conditions of its International Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Agreement, and declare all nuclear material in its possession. Should there be authoritative evidence that Burma is in breach of its international obligations, the UK would raise the matter with other EU member states.

Our ambassador to Rangoon has recently lobbied the Burmese regime on their obligations under UN sanctions and raised proliferation issues with senior members of the military. We will continue to raise our concerns at the highest possible level.

Bilaterally the UK actively discourages trade and investment with Burma which could benefit members of, or those persons associated with, the Burmese military regime. The EU has had restrictive measures

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in place against Burma since 1996. The EU Council Decision (formerly an EU Common Position) was renewed for a further year in April. EU sanctions against Burma are calibrated to address the deteriorating political situation and abuses of civil and human rights by the military regime. There are at the present time no specific EU measures in place which restrict the export of machinery to Burma with a potential dual use of this nature.

1 July 2010 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his German counterpart on the alleged breach by Germany of the EU Common Position on Burma through the export to that country of industrial equipment with a potential dual use in a nuclear weapons programme.

Henry Bellingham : The EU has had restrictive measures in place against Burma since 1996. EU restrictive measures against Burma are calibrated to address the deteriorating political situation and abuses of civil and human rights by the military regime. The EU Council Decision (formerly an EU Common Position) was renewed for a further year in April. There are no specific EU measures in place which restrict the export of machinery to Burma, with a potential dual use of this nature. Bilaterally the UK actively discourages trade and investment with Burma, which could benefit members of, or those persons associated with, the Burmese military regime.

We continue to urge Burma to act strictly in accordance with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to abide by the terms and conditions of its International Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Agreement, and declare all nuclear material in its possession. In light of the activities suggesting Burma is acting in contravention of its international obligations, the UK is seeking to raise the matter with other EU member states.

Our ambassador to Rangoon has recently lobbied the Burmese regime on their obligations under UN sanctions and raised proliferation concerns with senior members of the military regime and we will continue to raise our concerns at the highest possible level.

1 Jul 2010 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of assistance given by North Korea to Burma in the acquisition of nuclear weapons technology.

Jeremy Browne : We are concerned by the allegations that Burma may be developing a covert nuclear programme in collaboration with North Korea. We take such issues very seriously. We continue to urge Burma to act strictly in accordance with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to abide by the terms and conditions of its International Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Agreement and declare all nuclear material in its possession.

We continue to urge all countries, including Burma, to respect their obligations under UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874 which clearly prohibit the export from North Korea of all items, materials, equipment, goods and technology which could contribute to North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. Our ambassador to Rangoon has recently lobbied the Burmese regime on their obligations under UN sanctions and raised proliferation concerns with senior members of the military regime. Burma cannot afford to risk the grave consequences of breaching the measures that have been adopted to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Burma

19 Jul 2010 Andrew Rosindell : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his overseas counterparts on the state of democracy in Burma.

Jeremy Browne : I raised Burma with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministers at the EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting on 26 May 2010, at which the Burmese Foreign Minister was present. I made clear that there was no prospect of planned elections being free and fair while Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 2100 other political prisoners remained in detention, and many opposition and ethnic groups were excluded from meaningful participation in the process. Burma was on the agenda of the G8 Summit attended by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 27 June 2010, and the Summit Communiqué

underlined G8 leaders' concern at the lack of progress towards democracy in Burma. The Government will continue to raise Burma with international partners, and the issue will be high on the agenda during my forthcoming visit to south East Asia.

International Development

Overseas Aid

5 Jul 2010 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if his Department will take steps to establish a complementary mechanism to the Three Diseases Fund to ensure aid reaches border areas in Burma, which cannot be reached by that fund.

Andrew Mitchell : In addition to supporting the nationwide Three Diseases Fund in Burma, the Department for International Development (DFID) has expanded its aid for the health sector in border areas. We now provide TB treatment for Burmese people along the Thai border through the Shoklo Malaria Research Unit. We support the Shan Women's Action Network who provide basic health services to displaced people, and provide medical supplies through the Mae Tao Clinic. We are also expanding our cross-border health support from China. At least 345,000 people in remote border areas have benefited from this programme since 2006. I am currently considering a new proposal for health support for displaced people in conflict-affected parts of Eastern Burma.

5 Jul 2010 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in coordinating in-country and cross-border aid to Burmese internally displaced people; and how much funding the Government have provided for this work in each of the last three years.

Andrew Mitchell : The Department for International Development (DFID) welcomes the United Nations' (UN) efforts in Burma to improve the coordination of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people. We have seen an improvement in information sharing between organisations on their aid activities but recognise that this process will take time because of the risks involved in working in this part of Burma. DFID does not currently fund the UN's coordination work to internally displaced people. However, we provided £33,500 in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to the UN Resident Coordinator's office to help facilitate discussions between organisations providing humanitarian aid.

We are currently reviewing all our aid, including aid channelled through multilateral agencies, to ensure it is as effective as possible and brings real benefit to the world's poor.

HOUSE OF LORDS

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Burma

5 Jul 2010 Lord Alton of Liverpool : To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Burma about the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Lord Howell of Guildford : My honourable friend Jeremy Browne, the Minister for South East Asia, raised Burma with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministers at the EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting on 26 May, at which the Burmese Foreign Minister was present. He made clear that without the release and participation of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's elections will not be free and fair. The subsequent summit statement reflected the EU's concern. To mark Aung San Suu Kyi's 65th birthday, my right honourable friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and my honourable friend the Minister for South East Asia called on the military regime to end her detention.

Our ambassador in Rangoon repeatedly raises the need for the release of prisoners of conscience, including Aung San Suu Kyi, with Ministers in the Burmese military Government. We will continue to raise the plight of Burma's political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, through the EU, with Burma's neighbours, and we will highlight the issue in the UN Security Council and with the UN's human rights

bodies. We endorse the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's recent observation that the ongoing detention of Aung San Suu Kyi is illegal and in violation of international human rights law.

22 Jul 2010 Baroness Cox : To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the report Crimes against humanity in Western Burma: the situation of the Rohingyas by the Irish Centre for Human Rights, about Rohingyas in northern Arakan.

Lord Howell of Guildford : The report from the Irish Centre for Human Rights adds to our already deep concern about the situation faced by the Rohingya people in Northern Rakhine State. Our embassy in Burma monitors the situation as closely as possible, in consultation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, International Labour Organisation, and UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights. The Rohingyas are denied Burmese citizenship, and we continue to receive credible reports of severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, forced labour and other human rights abuses. We deplore the institutionalised persecution of the Rohingya highlighted by the report.

22 Jul 2010 Baroness Cox : To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Governments of Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on the situation of the Rohingya people in Burma.

Lord Howell of Guildford : The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Office Minister of State responsible for South East Asia have expressed the Government's concern over the human rights situation in Burma. My honourable friend the Minister of State responsible for South East Asia discussed the situation faced by ethnic groups in Burma with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers, including the Foreign Ministers of Thailand and Malaysia, at an EU/ASEAN meeting on 27 May 2010 in Madrid, and Burma is on the agenda for his forthcoming visit to South East Asia. My right honourable friend the Minister of State at the Department for International Development, Alan Duncan, discussed the Rohingya with Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni on 14 July 2010 and senior FCO officials raised wider Burma human rights concerns with the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2010. We will continue to seek opportunities to raise the plight of Burma's ethnic groups, including the Rohingya, with neighbouring countries and other international partners likely to have influence on the military Government.

22 Jul 2010 Baroness Cox : To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will invoke the Responsibility to Protect mechanism to address human rights and humanitarian concerns in the ethnic areas of Burma.

Lord Howell of Guildford : The coalition Government's policy towards Burma is consistent with the concept of Responsibility to Protect, which, while not creating any new rights or obligations under international law, underlines that all Governments have a responsibility to protect their citizens from crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing. If they are unable or unwilling to do so, the international community should assist, using humanitarian, diplomatic and all other peaceful means at its disposal. As a last resort, the concept envisages the consideration of more coercive international intervention through the Security Council in accordance with the UN Charter.

We are deeply concerned at the widespread abuse of human rights in Burma, and particularly at the suffering of Burma's ethnic groups. We are committed to raising our concerns with Burma's neighbours and other international partners, in all relevant international fora, including the UN Security Council, and directly with the military Government in Burma. With such action we aim to highlight the situation in the country, rally international pressure on the regime, and thereby curtail further human rights abuses. The Government are also committed to helping Burma's long-suffering people through a significant programme of humanitarian aid that makes the UK amongst the largest bilateral donors.

22 Jul 2010 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead : To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any British companies are investing in Burma; and, if so, which companies.

Lord Howell of Guildford : The Burmese Government do not share with the UK the specific information they hold on foreign investment, but our assessment is that there is negligible investment by British companies in Burma. Statistics from 2007 and 2008-the latest available-from the Office for National Statistics show no new foreign investment from the UK into Burma.

22 Jul 2010 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead : To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the European Commission to ensure officials adhere to agreed European Union policy on Burma.

Lord Howell of Guildford : The EU Council Decision on Burma (formerly EU Common Position) was renewed for a further 12 months at the end of April 2010 with unanimous support. The European Commission is also party to the Council Decision and adheres to EU policy on Burma. EU activity on Burma is further co-ordinated through regular discussion in Asia-Oceania Working Group meetings in Brussels, which involves all member states, and the European Commission.

26 Jul 2010 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead : To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the Government of Germany about the export of industrial equipment to Burma, which could be used for the development of a nuclear weapons programme.

Lord Howell of Guildford : We have not had any discussions with the German Government about the export of industrial equipment to Burma which could be used for the development of a nuclear weapons programme. We continue to urge Burma to act strictly in accordance with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to abide by the terms and conditions of its International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement, and declare all nuclear material in its possession. Our ambassador to Rangoon has recently lobbied the Burmese regime on their obligations under UN sanctions and raised proliferation concerns with senior members of the military regime and we will continue to raise our concerns at the highest possible level.

Early Day Motion

Early Day Motion 112: Human Rights in Burma

John Pugh

30.05.2010

Signed by 136 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.

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