



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

JULY
2013

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Rohingya

01 July 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his Burmese counterpart to encourage a safe and voluntary return process for displaced Rohingya Muslims in Burma.

Mr Swire: The Minister of State, Department for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr Duncan), visited Burma between 17 and 20 June 2013, including Rakhine State. In meetings with the Deputy Minister for Border Affairs, Rakhine State's Chief Minister, and with local authorities, he called for a comprehensive and transparent plan for the safe and voluntary return or resettlement of all peoples displaced by the violence in Rakhine.

The British Government continues to make clear to the Burmese Government at all levels the need for accountability, respect for human rights and urgent humanitarian action in Rakhine. Mr Duncan raised these points, and also pressed the Burmese Government to ensure that all people in Rakhine have equal access to health care and education; freedom of movement and livelihood opportunities. We also raise these issues in regular discussions with the UN, as I did with Baroness Amos, UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, on 28 May 2013.

01 July 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the compliance of the reintroduction of the Burmese directive placing a two-child limit on Rohingya couples in the townships of Buthidaung and Maungdaw with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989; and what representations he has made to his Burmese counterparts on this issue.

Mr Swire: We do not support a two-child policy applying to any community in Burma: such a policy contravenes international human rights standards, including UN treaties to which the Burmese Government has signed up. We have welcomed Aung San Suu Kyi's statement that any enforcement of a two-child policy would be discriminatory and not in line with the upholding of human rights in Burma.

During his visit to Burma on 14 June, the Minister of State for Trade and Investment, my noble Friend Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint, raised our concerns with the Government in Naypyidaw. Subsequently, the Minister of State, Department for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr Duncan), raised concerns about the two-child policy during his visit to Rakhine State from 19-20 June and again with Ministers in Naypyidaw, including the Minister for Health. We will continue to raise this matter with the Burmese Government at all appropriate opportunities, along with our other concerns in Rakhine State.

01 July 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his Burmese counterpart to ensure that security forces in Burma provide adequate protection to all ethnic communities including the Rohingya community.

Mr Swire: The Chief of Defence Staff visited Burma from 2-4 June, where he met with Burma's President, the Commander in Chief, lead negotiators in the peace process, and ethnic leaders. He reiterated our

commitment to supporting Burma's democratic transition and the need for military reform, and discussed UK support for the wider peace process, including security sector reform. A focus of our defence engagement in Burma will be on adherence to the core principles of democratic accountability and human rights.

We remain extremely concerned by the violence directed against Muslim communities in parts of Burma. The Minister of State, Department for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr Duncan), visited Burma between 17 and 20 June and urged the Government to ensure that those responsible for acts of violence in Rakhine State are held accountable. Along with the EU, in response to a request from the Government and Aung San Suu Kyi, we are reviewing what steps we might take to assist with police reform in Burma.

15 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the government of Burma about recent reports of Burmese Government security forces raping ethnic Rohingya women.

Mr Swire: We are very concerned by reports of sexual violence in Burma. The British Government regularly lobbies the Burmese Government on the rights of women, particularly on preventing sexual violence against women in conflict areas.

The visit of President Thein Sein to London will be a significant opportunity to continue our dialogue with the Burmese Government: acknowledging positive progress on reform, while raising our concerns on Kachin and Rakhine states and the full range of human rights and ethnic issues, including the release of remaining political prisoners.

15 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether the demands made at the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union on 26 April 2012, urging the Government of Burma to secure the status and welfare of the Rohingya, have been met by the Government of Burma.

Mr Swire: There is a continuing need to address the status and welfare of the Rohingya community in Burma's Rakhine State. At the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 April 2013, EU Foreign Ministers repeated the need for urgent action to deal with humanitarian risks for all displaced people in Rakhine State. At the same time, the EU encouraged the Burmese Government to continue to pursue and implement durable solutions to the underlying causes of the tensions that include addressing the status of the Rohingya.

EU Foreign Ministers also invited the High Representative, Baroness Ashton, to propose a comprehensive framework with priorities for the EU's policy and support to the ongoing reforms for the next three years. We are working closely with EU member states and institutions to ensure it includes action to address the status of the Rohingya community.

11 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what information she has on reports of cholera cases in camps for displaced Rohingya people in Burma.

Mr Duncan: According to the latest report from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in May 2013 there have been no reports of outbreaks of cholera in camps for displaced Rohingya people.

11 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what healthcare facilities are available in each of the Rohingya internally displaced persons camps in Burma.

Mr Duncan: Access to healthcare in Rohingya internally displaced persons camps (IDP) is limited. Restrictions on freedom of movement, which can be particularly difficult for Rohingya, is also a problem; most health centres in Rakhine State tend to be located in areas which are hard to reach for IDPs. Currently there are two non-governmental organisations providing health services in Rakhine state through mobile clinics and disease surveillance, including to Rohingya camps.

09 July 2013 Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information the Government has relating to the involvement of the (a) Arakan Liberation Party and (b)

Rakhine National Development Party in inciting, organising and carrying out attacks against ethnic Rohingya in Burma.

Mr Swire: A number of reports have circulated in the media about who may have been behind the violence targeting Rohingya communities in Burma including, but not limited to, these two groups.

Further independent investigative work to fully establish the facts would be required for an informed assessment if serious crimes have been committed including inciting, organising or carrying out attacks, those who have perpetrated them must be held accountable for their actions. This should be done through a clear and transparent investigative and prosecutorial process that meets international standards, as we have repeatedly made clear to the Burmese Government.

08 July 2013 Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assistance the Government provides to ethnic Rohingya from Burma who have fled to Bangladesh.

Mr Duncan: DFID provides core contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which manages the official camps for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, as well as to other organisations that provide support including the European Commission. This support includes providing shelter, access to water and sanitation, vocational training and food supplies to malnourished refugees. We have raised with the Government of Bangladesh the plight of the Rohingyas and their status.

Humanitarian Aid

01 July 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps her Department is taking to ensure that non-governmental organisations and UN agencies have the capacity to deliver basic health care in Burma, particularly to the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Mr Duncan: DFID's activities for health in Burma are primarily delivered through the multi-donor health fund, the 3MDG Fund. The 3MDG Fund provides funding to a range of partners, including the UN and non-government organisations to provide health care to the poorest and most vulnerable. Priority is given to health care which addresses the major causes of illness and death for the poor of Burma, such as HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and to care which is delivered to communities in remote rural areas. DFID also works in conflict-affected areas such as Kachin, Rakhine and along the Thai-Burma border to help meet the health needs of poor and vulnerable people there.

01 July 2013 Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment she has made of the humanitarian situation in (a) Rakhine State and (b) Kachin State in Burma.

01 July 2013 Chris Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what her most recent assessment is of the humanitarian situation in Burma.

Mr Duncan: I visited Rakhine State on 18 and 19 June to see the humanitarian situation for myself. I met UN agencies, local officials, political and community leaders and made visits to several camps for internally displaced people (IDP) to see DFID's work. The number of displaced persons is estimated at around 140,000 across 89 locations, although this does not take into account some isolated villages. While aid is increasingly getting to where it is needed, it is difficult for humanitarian agencies to gain access to all of the affected areas. Restrictions on movement mean that it is difficult for some communities, particularly Rohingya and Kaman, to get access to areas where they earned a livelihood. On 15 May DFID announced a £4.4 million package of humanitarian support which includes nutrition, drinking water, sanitation, protection and camp coordination.

In Kachin State, consistent humanitarian access remains a concern, especially in non-government controlled areas. There are thought to be around 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), of whom more than half are in hard to reach non-government controlled areas. The UK is the largest bilateral humanitarian donor in Kachin State, where £3.5 million of humanitarian aid is helping to meet the needs of around 27,000 internally displaced people.

16 July 2013 Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assistance her Department provides to displaced people living in model villages in Burma.

Mr Duncan: DFID support is not specifically targeted at so-called 'model villages', which some reporting refers to as camps for the forced relocation of people. DFID's supports to displaced people is targeted at those most in need. DFID provides support to the displaced people in Kachin State, Rakhine State and to those along the Thai-Burma border. In Rakhine State this support reaches both sides of the community.

30 July 2013 Baroness Jolly: To ask Her Majesty's Government which 10 countries are receiving the most Department for International Development nutrition funding; and how much bilateral funding from the United Kingdom goes to each of those countries.

Baroness Northover: DfID uses the Development Assistance Committee. DAC input sector code for basic nutrition to record nutrition specific investments. In DfID's annually published bilateral aid expenditure in its Statistics for International Development (SID) for the period 2011/12, the top ten countries for DfID nutrition basic spend were: India—£26,616,000; Nigeria—£1,913,000, Bangladesh—£1,712,000, Sudan—£988,000; Zambia—£876,000; Tanzania—£820,000; Cambodia—£800,000; Zimbabwe—£745,000; Ghana—£688,000 and Burma £305,000.

These figures do not take into account spending on sectors that also help people maintain a healthy and well-nourished lifestyle (e.g. agriculture, water and sanitation, health, education etc.); donors are working on a method for calculating this and baseline estimates will be published in September. Since April 2012 several new nutrition specific programmes have begun, for example in Yemen, Ethiopia, Kenya and Zambia, so this data will not reflect these more recent investments. The SID 2012/2013 data will be published in the autumn.

Multi-Faith Initiatives

15 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding her Department has allocated in Burma to promote religious tolerance and multi-faith initiatives.

Mr Duncan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), on 5 Jun 2013, Official Report, column 1171W.

Refer answer for this question on 5 June 2013

5 June 2013 Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding the Government has provided to Burma to promote religious tolerance and multi-faith initiatives.

Mr Swire: I have been asked to reply on behalf the Department for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The Government, through the British embassy, is helping fund an inter-faith project delivered by a local non-government organisation. £9,908 has been allocated for this work which aims to raise awareness of inter-faith peace building concepts among young people to encourage reconciliation between communities. The Department for International Development does not have any specific programmes which promote inter-faith and religious tolerance in Burma, but is working with a range of partners, including faith-based organisations, to support peace and reconciliation in Burma.

More generally, the British Government continues to call on the Burmese authorities to sign up to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which includes commitments on protecting religious freedoms. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and I raised this issue with the Burmese Foreign Minister during his visit to the UK in February.

Education

15 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps she is taking to ensure that funding by her Department for education in Burma which is being channelled through monastic schools is not being used to teach or encourage anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice.

Mr Duncan: DFID supports the Myanmar Education Consortium who has the key objective of increasing the number and proportion of children who complete a quality basic education, including within monastic schools.

Our NGO partners have begun discussions with the management team of the Monastic Education Development Group, which is supported by the consortium, to develop processes and materials to integrate peace and conflict resolution into the teach training program, and further, monitor the situation in classrooms and refer concerns should they arise. Monastic schools do not teach religion but follow the prescribed government curriculum.

Child Soldiers

15 July 2013 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are planning to provide technical assistance and training to the Burmese military on specific measures to professionalise and reform its recruitment practices, with a view to preventing child recruitment.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): During his recent visit to Burma from 2-4 June, the Chief of Defence Staff met the Burmese Commander in Chief and other senior military figures in the first high level engagement between the British Government and the Burmese military. Our objective, as the Chief of Defence Staff explained to the Burmese, is to support the reform process by taking actions to facilitate the democratisation of the Burmese military, ensuring it is subservient to the civilian government and institutions. We plan to begin the provision of technical assistance later this year, focusing on this objective.

Our current non resident Defence Attaché, and his resident successor who will follow in November, will explore options for further technical support, including the sharing of expertise on preventing child recruitment.

15 July 2013 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are taking action to encourage the Burmese military to introduce and adopt measures which prevent the recruitment of underage soldiers, following the meeting of Hugo Swire MP, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with the Defence Minister of Burma in December 2012.

Baroness Warsi: During his meeting with the Burmese Defence Minister as part of his visit to Burma in December 2012, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), raised many of our concerns about issues relating to human rights and welcomed the Burmese government's commitment to end the recruitment of child soldiers. However, progress on the release of child soldiers and the prevention of continuing recruitment has been slow. We are currently working on a resolution regarding Burma's progress on its Action Plan with our partners on the UN Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict. We aim to ensure that this text can be used by the international community to facilitate stronger progress than to date by the Burmese military.

15 July 2013 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are taking action to ensure that the United Nations Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict requires the government of Burma to implement effectively the action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children by its armed forces, signed with the United Nations in June 2012, particularly in relation to the provision of access to all military sites and border guard forces in Burma.

Baroness Warsi: We are currently working on a resolution regarding Burma's progress on its Action Plan with our partners on the UN Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict. The eventual resolution will be the result of negotiations between all members of the Security Council, and will require consensus. The British Government will push for a text that highlights the challenges remaining, of which the provision of access to key military sites is one of the most fundamental.

17 July 2013 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the British Ambassador to Burma has raised issues concerning the recruitment of underage soldiers with representatives of the government of Burma and its military; and if so, how many times this issue has been raised, and what has been the response of the government of Burma to those concerns.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): Our Ambassador has not raised the issue of child soldiers specifically with the Burmese government or military; however, he frequently raises the wide range of human rights issues, including that of forced labour, with senior members of the Burmese government. I refer the noble lady to my previous answers of 15 July on Burma, Official report, Columns WA78-79.

Political Prisoners

30 July 2013 Lord Patten: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the latest date by which it is likely that all remaining political prisoners in Burma will have been released.

Baroness Warsi: I refer my noble Friend to the written ministerial statement of 17 July 2013, Official Report, Columns WS109-110, on the Visit of Burma's President U Thein Sein, with particular reference to the President's public commitment to release all political prisoners by the end of 2013. We will continue to monitor the implementation of this commitment closely.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), set out in his press statement of 23 July, we welcome the latest release of political prisoners, but remain concerned by the continued arrests, detentions and sentencing of political activists in Burma.

We continue to call on the Burmese government to ensure that democratic activists are able to voice their opinions freely and without fear of arrest. We welcome reports on 26 July that an activist from the 'Generation Wave' group has been released from custody. We urge both the Burmese government and the parliament to repeal all existing laws which are not in line with democratic standards.

United Nations General Assembly

30 July 2013 Lord Patten: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the last United Nations General Assembly resolution on human rights in Burma; and whether they intend to make any recommendations concerning the contents of the next General Assembly resolution on that subject.

Baroness Warsi: The EU-sponsored resolution on Burma tabled at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in November 2012 recognised the progress made during the country's reform process, whilst noting that concerns remained, particularly on the continued presence of political prisoners in Burma's jails, conflict and human rights violations in Kachin State, and the situation in Rakhine State. The EU-sponsored resolution tabled at the Human Rights Council in March 2013, which the UK had a significant role in shaping, raised concerns about the same issues.

We will discuss plans for Burma with our EU and other UN partners at UNGA 2013 over the coming weeks. As with all UN discussions on Burma, we would work to ensure that the outcome reflects UK policy, welcoming progress made and highlighting those areas where further work is needed.

Human Rights

15 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons human rights lead at the embassy in Burma has been downgraded to the third political officer position.

Mr Swire: The premise of the question is incorrect. Responsibility for human rights within the embassy in Rangoon has not been downgraded. The appointment of a new third secretary to Rangoon is as an additional resource and is part of a wider upgrading of UK diplomatic presence in Burma, which will significantly increase our capacity to work with the Burmese Government on issues of concern.

Land Confiscation

08 July 2013 Alex Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assistance her Department provides to communities impoverished by land confiscation in Burma.

Mr Duncan: DFID is working with civil society organisations to help establish procedures which will grant individuals access to legal aid over land disputes. DFID is also working through the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund with United Nations Habitat to pilot mapping technology, linked to the registration and digitisation of land ownership records, and to help design a land reform agenda. This agenda will include rules on who can use different types of land, for how long and under what conditions, along with clarity on how the rules will be applied and monitored.

Repressive Laws

15 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Burma urging it to repeal all repressive laws in that country.

Mr Swire: The Government supports constitutional reform in Burma and is working with the key Burmese institutions involved in the reform process. During my visit to Burma in December 2012, I raised with Ministers the prospects for Burma's transition towards democracy, and offered support as Burma seeks to reform its laws and processes.

The visit to the UK of President Thein Sein will be a significant opportunity to continue this dialogue with the Burmese Government: acknowledging positive progress on reform, while raising our concerns. Human rights will remain at the heart of our engagement with the Burmese Government, as it continues to implement political and economic reforms. Our support for the Burmese Government's reform agenda also includes an offer to provide technical assistance on drafting new legislation, building on the UK-Burmese parliamentary exchanges that have already taken place.

16 July 2013 Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Burma on repealing all repressive laws in that country.

Mr Swire: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 15 July 2013, Official Report, column 467W, to the hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi).

Draft Legislation

09 July 2013 Alex Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on whether draft laws in Burma which are being drafted with the assistance of the Government are being treated as state secrets by the Government of Burma; and what the reasons are for such a practice.

Mr Swire: While Burmese laws in the initial drafting stages may not be publicly available, we have not received reports that any draft legislation in Burma is being treated as state secrets by the Burmese authorities.

We continue to support the Burmese Government in its reform agenda as the country continues its transition to democracy. This includes an offer to provide technical assistance on drafting new legislation building on the UK-Burmese parliamentary exchanges that have already taken place.

Investment

16 July 2013 Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what guidance his Department gives to companies on investment in Burma on projects which cause displacement; (2) what guidance his Department gives to UK companies on trade or investment with the Yuzana group of companies in Burma.

Michael Fallon: Since the suspension of EU sanctions in April 2012 and subsequent removal, the British Government has committed to promoting responsible trade and investment in support of Burma's democratic reform process.

Where companies have expressed interest in Burma, Ministers have been able to refer them to the UKTI office which opened in Rangoon in July 2012. UKTI can offer practical support and advice to British companies who are interested in the opportunities in Burma. Details, along with a practical Guide for Doing Business in Burma and FCO political and economic updates can be found on the UKTI website.

The British Government urges all UK companies entering Burma to abide by international standards of corporate governance and social and environmental responsibility. In particular, this means adhering to the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises, and the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In recognition of the importance of business activity remaining consistent with human rights, the British Government has committed £600,000 to the Centre for Responsible Investment, which will be equipped to offer advice on responsible investment to any foreign company looking to invest in Burma, including on land issues. We are also providing £150,000 to support the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, a global standard which promotes revenue transparency and accountability in the extractives sector.

Arms Embargo

09 July 2013 Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the use of Swedish-made weapons against ethnic minorities in Kachin State, Burma.

Mr Swire: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 28 January 2013, Official Report, column 552W, to the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth).
Refer answer for this question on 28 January 2013

28 January 2013 Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had discussions with his EU counterparts on the discovery of the use of Swedish-made weapons in Burma.

Mr Swire: In December last year, Sweden's Agency for Non-Proliferation and Export Controls said an investigation had revealed that the Swedish-made weapons found by Kachin forces in early December were part of a larger shipment of arms Sweden sold to the Indian Government. It remains unclear how they ended up being used in Burma. Swedish Trade Minister, Ewa Bjorling, has requested clarification from Indian authorities on the matter.

President Thien Sein Visit

12 July 2013 Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances Ministers of his Department will seek during meetings with President Thein Sein regarding the treatment of the Rohingya Muslim community within Burma.

Mr Hague: This visit will provide an opportunity to continue our dialogue with the Burmese Government: acknowledging positive progress on reform, while raising our concerns on Kachin and Rakhine States and the full range of human rights and ethnic issues including the release of remaining political prisoners. This will include requests for assurances on the treatment and status of the Rohingya.

12 July 2013 Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Ministers of his Department will be present in meetings with President Thein Sein during his upcoming visit to the UK; and what the focus of each of the scheduled meetings is likely to be.

Mr Hague: President Thein Sein will visit the UK as a guest of the British Government on 15 and 16 July. I will meet the President, as will the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), and the Minister of State for Trade and Investment, my noble Friend the right hon. Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint.

This visit will be a significant opportunity to continue our dialogue with the Burmese Government: acknowledging positive progress on reform, while raising our concerns on Kachin and Rakhine States and the full range of human rights and ethnic issues including the release of remaining political prisoners.

We will raise development issues and Burma's economy, including the role that responsible trade and investment can play in lifting the Burmese people out of poverty. We will discuss defence engagement, including the importance of the military's adherence to democratic values and human rights. Human rights will remain at the heart of our engagement with the Burmese Government, as it continues to implement political and economic reforms.

12 July 2013 Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Prime Minister

(1) what the Government's aim is for the upcoming visit of President Thein Sein to the UK; and what the scope of any discussions that will be held between representatives of the Burmese and British governments during that visit will be;

(2) what specific assurances he will be seeking from President Thein Sein regarding the treatment of the Rohingya Muslim community within Burma during his upcoming visit to the UK.

12 July 2013 Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Prime Minister

(1) if he will discuss with President Thein Sein during his visit to the UK the number of remaining political prisoners in Burma and a timetable for their release;

(2) if he will discuss with President Thein Sein during his visit to the UK efforts to end the conflicts in Kachin and Rakhine states and the need for full, independent and transparent investigations into the violence;

(3) if he will discuss with President Thein Sein the (a) treatment of the Rohingya, (b) need for unimpeded humanitarian access for all internally displaced persons, (c) reports of a two child policy imposed on the Rohingya community and (d) reviewing of the 1982 Citizenship Law; and if he will raise the Human Rights Watch report entitled, All You Can Do is Pray, with the President;

(4) if he will discuss the (a) role and accountability of the security forces in Burma, (b) level of sexual violence and (c) possibility of extending the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative to Burma with President Thein Sein during his visit to the UK;

(5) if he will discuss with President Thein Sein during his forthcoming visit to the UK (a) the opening of an office for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burma, (b) signing the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and (c) signing the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The Prime Minister: President Thein Sein will visit the UK as a guest of the Government on 15 and 16 July. I will meet him in Downing street.

This visit will be an opportunity to discuss progress on political and economic reform, including the need for responsible trade and investment. It will also be an opportunity to raise our concerns about Kachin and Rakhine states, as well as human rights and the release of remaining political prisoners.

15 July 2013 Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what improvements in human rights he will be prioritising when President Thein Sein of Burma visits the UK.

Mr Swire: Human rights concerns remain at the forefront of our engagement with the Burmese Government, as it continues to implement political and economic reforms.

This visit will be a significant opportunity to continue our dialogue with the Burmese Government: acknowledging positive progress on reform, while raising our concerns on Kachin and Rakhine states and the full range of human rights and ethnic issues including the release of remaining political prisoners.

11 July 2013 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the cost to the public purse of the visit of Burma's President Thein Sein and his delegation to the UK will be.

Mr Swire: The cost of the Guest of Government visit for President Thein Sein to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be an estimated £30,250. The Home Office will bear policing costs.

Military Relationship & Military Equipment

30 July 2013 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Wallace of Saltaire on 18 July (HL Deb, cols 876–7), whether the United Kingdom's new military relationship with Burma will include the sale or transfer of arms or military equipment; whether the United

Kingdom has approved any arms export licences to Burma and, if so, on what grounds; and what steps they are taking to ensure that the European Union arms embargo on Burma remains in place and continues to be strictly enforced.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): The sale or transfer of arms and military equipment play no part in our relationship with the Burmese military. The EU arms embargo on Burma remains in place, following the lifting of the majority of sanctions in April 2013.

All export licences for Burma are fully assessed against the Consolidated Criteria and compliant with the sanctions in place at the time. A UK licence would only be issued for the export of military equipment to Burma where the proposed export meets one or more of the narrow exemptions to the arms embargo as set out in EU legislation, such as equipment for use in demining operations, or non-lethal equipment solely for humanitarian or protective use. In the last five years only one such licence has been granted, for the export of bomb suits for use by a humanitarian organisation engaged in demining activities.

EU arms embargoes are implemented by Member States in their domestic law. Whether there are sanctions for a Member State in breach of the embargo—and, if so, what those sanctions entail—will depend on the terms of that Member State's implementation in its domestic law.

The UK is developing a defence relationship with Burma, including appointing a Defence Attaché at the request of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The focus of our defence engagement will be on developing democratic accountability in modern armed forces, with full respect for international law and human rights. During President Thein Sein's visit to London from 15-16 July, the Secretary of State for Defence, the right Hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), offered a training course incorporating these core principles, to be delivered in Burma early next year.

30 July 2013 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what applications have been received for licences for export of small arms ammunition to Burma; and from whom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Viscount Younger of Leckie): In the last 5 years there has been one licence application for export of small arms ammunition to Burma. The application was for .22 calibre sporting cartridges and was submitted in May 2011. The application was refused because the export of small arms ammunition would have been a breach of the EU arms embargo. Export licence applications are submitted in confidence and contain commercially sensitive information.

ANSWERS TO SPOKEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Human Rights

17 July 2013 Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State tell the House what assurances the Burmese President has given the UK about respect for human rights in Burma, and, specifically, the treatment of Rohingya community, during his recent visit to Britain?

Justine Greening: I had a chance to meet the Burmese President earlier this week, when I did raise those issues, particularly the importance of access for humanitarian support. I hope I managed to get his assurances that the Burmese Government will work with us as we try to improve the lot of those people and will play a leadership role in reducing ethnic tensions.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

House of Lords: Peers' Entrance Oral Question

Human rights concerns raised with the President of Burma 18 July 2013

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead : To ask Her Majesty's Government which areas of concern relating

to human rights were raised with President Thein Sein of Burma by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on 15 July.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, the full range of human rights issues were raised. Ministers called for the release of all political prisoners and for an end to ethnic conflict. They invited Burma's support for the preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative. On Rakhine State, Ministers welcomed the abolition of the Nasaka security force, raised concerns about the two-child policy and pressed for citizenship for the Rohingya minority. On anti-Muslim violence, they stressed the need for accountability, welcoming recent arrests.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: Does the Minister agree that history shows that the only language that the Burmese generals understand and respond to is firm, sustained pressure? What steps did the Prime Minister take to set out explicit benchmarks by which progress in Burma will be measured, a specific timeline by which we expect to see progress, and the possible consequences if there is no such progress? The Burmese President is very good at offering the right words and promises when required, but less good at fulfilling them.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I would agree that history shows that one of the most difficult periods in a country's history is when it is attempting to move away from a highly authoritarian regime. The question whether it can move from that without a bloody conflict is, of course, always one of the difficult ones. We have taken the choice to encourage the moves currently under way in Burma; things are improving a good deal there but, of course, they have a long way to go. The opposition, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, have very much encouraged the move that the British have taken.

Lord Alton of Liverpool: My Lords, is it not crucial that we take our lead from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as the noble Lord has just said? I met her just before Easter, when she said that we must engage in dialogue—but also that we must be realistic. During the discussions with Thein Sein, were limits placed on the new military relationship that has been announced by the Prime Minister? In particular, have we raised the Burmese army's use of child soldiers, forced labour, sexual violence and land mines? Can he confirm that it is not our intention to sell arms to Burma?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I can confirm that the first thing that Aung San Suu Kyi asked the British Government to do was to appoint a defence attaché to Burma some months ago. We are now offering military training to a number of Burmese officers in this country to help them through the transition.

Requests have also been made to assist in retraining the Burmese police. These are all things that we think will help through a transition—not, of course, towards full democracy and a perfect resolution of all these problems, but we see the situation as improving. We are doing our best not only to help it to improve but to monitor how far it goes.

Lord Avebury: When the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, raised the Human Rights Watch report on ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Arakan state, she was told that it clearly needed to be supported by further evidence. What has happened to the independent investigative commission announced by the Burmese Government as long ago as last September? Is it going to be established in the near future? To ensure its credibility, will my noble friend suggest to the Burmese that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, be asked to nominate the members of that commission?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I will have to write to the noble Lord with a specific answer to his question, but I can confirm that Alan Duncan, from the Department for International Development, was in Rakhine state in June, that my noble friend Lady Warsi was looking at the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar shortly before that, and that British officials are very regularly in and out of Rakhine state.

Baroness Nye: Is the Minister aware that the Burmese Government refuse to allow the UN access to military sites so that it can identify and discharge children present in the Burmese army border forces, border guard forces and other armed groups? Following on from the question asked by the noble Lord, Lord Alton, in the issues that the noble Lord said were raised, there was no mention of any representations by the Prime Minister to the Burmese President during his visit about ending the recruitment and use of

children, some as young as 11, as soldiers in Burma. Can he give an assurance that the issue was not overlooked during the visit?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, noble Lords will have seen the Written Statement issued yesterday on the visit. It does not specifically mention the issue of child soldiers, but it touches on a very large number of human rights issues. I will check and get back to the noble Baroness on the specific issue of child soldiers. We are monitoring the situation; we recognise, for example, that the Kachin ceasefire has been agreed but not yet fully implemented. The President promised, when he was here, that all remaining political prisoners will be released by the end of this year, and we will of course be watching to make sure that that promise is carried out.

Lord Howell of Guildford: There is a sort of race here. The Chinese are pouring in vast sums of money and investment into Burma, which is potentially a very rich country indeed. While we must obviously maximise our pressure, counselling and support for overcoming human rights abuses, as the noble Lord, Lord Alton, has specified, the right approach must be to embrace as fully as we can that country in its efforts to modernise and move away from military rule, and we should consider supporting it and working with it, perhaps in the context of a future membership of the Commonwealth.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord on managing to get the Commonwealth into this discussion. Burma is currently the poorest country in south-east Asia. If it is to pass through this transition successfully, it also needs economic assistance. My noble friend Lord Green has also been in Burma. We are engaged in the question of how far British companies, as well as British technical advice, can assist in the transformation of the Burmese economy.

Lord Dubs: My Lords, the Minister used the word “monitoring”. Do we not need some very rigorous benchmarks in discussion with the Burmese Government to ensure that progress is being made on the whole range of issues mentioned in questions today?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I think that I would prefer to stick to “monitoring”. We always have to remember the very complex colonial history. We therefore have to be very careful not to be too authoritative ourselves in dealing with the legacy of authoritarianism. We are however actively working to hold the Government to the promises which they are making, and we are working with all forces in Burmese society.

Baroness Berridge: My Lords—
Lord Steel of Aikwood: My Lords—

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, I know that my noble friend Lord Alton is a courteous man, and will know that my noble friend Lady Berridge has been trying to get in, and indeed has started her question on four occasions. I am sure that the House might give my noble friend Lady Berridge a chance.

Baroness Berridge: My Lords, the overwhelming improvements are of course welcome, but there is growing concern that Burmese citizens are suffering discrimination on the basis of their religion. Therefore there is a danger that the millions of pounds of UK aid that are now going to Burma will not be distributed equally to all Burmese citizens. What discussions did the Prime Minister have with the President regarding freedom of religion and belief, particularly in regard to the rising intolerance towards Muslims and other non-Buddhists?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: We welcome the recent arrest for the first time of a number of Buddhists who have taken part in anti-Muslim demonstrations. We have sadly discovered that even Buddhism is a religion that is not entirely under all circumstances used as a religion of peace. This is part of the discussion which is well under way.

Burma mentioned in Summer Adjournment Debates 18 July 2013

Fiona Bruce: As individuals, we can support effective advocacy organisations such as Christian Solidarity Worldwide; I invite hon. Members to read Ben Rogers’s excellent article, which is on the Conservative Home website today. We can highlight the plight of foreign nationals such as Kenneth Bae, who is in jail

in North Korea, and support the planned new grass-roots group, North Korea Campaign UK, which is to be modelled on the successful Burma Campaign UK, a country from whose recent experiences we should draw cautious optimism. Hon. Members should look out for this campaign's launch in the media, which will take place on 27 July to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the Korean war armistice. It is often called the forgotten war, and I pay tribute to the 1,000 men who lost their lives in it; that is more British forces than died in the Falklands, Iraq, and Afghanistan combined.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130718/debtext/130718-0003.htm#13071867000005>

Discussion on Burma in Overseas Aid: Post-2015 Development Agenda Debate, House of Lords

25 July 2013

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington: My Lords, I returned this morning from Myanmar which—although it was a fascinating week—is still in a very fragile state. It is one of the states that has failed to achieve any of the MDGs. It is still a very poor country where one in four people lives below \$1.25 a day, and it has terrible capacity issues. Given the feeling of hope in that country now, what does DfID plan to do to support the Burmese people in the run-up to the 2015 elections?

Baroness Northover: DfID is a strong supporter of Myanmar and we recognise that it is a very fragile state. I think that my noble friend went with an all-party group, and we are delighted that such a group has been able to visit. We recently announced £10 million in funding to help with the 2014 Myanmar population and housing census which will help to underpin the information required for the elections. We will continue to help the Government and other organisations in other ways as well.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldhansrd/text/130725-0001.htm#13072523000360>

Written Ministerial Statement: Foreign & Commonwealth Office

President U Thein Sein of Burma (Visit)

17 July 2013

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): From 14 to 16 July Burma's President Thein Sein visited the United Kingdom for discussions with the Prime Minister, the Defence Secretary, the Secretary of State for International Development, Lord Green and I.

This was the first official visit of a Burmese president to the UK. It was an opportunity to discuss with President Thein Sein the significant political reforms his Government have achieved over the last two years, including releases of political prisoners, ceasefire agreements with 10 out of 11 ethnic armed groups, and steps to increase freedom of expression. It was also an opportunity to urge further progress in areas where additional reforms are needed.

The Prime Minister and I also raised our concerns about a wide range of human rights and ethnic issues, including the continuing plight of the Rohingya community in Rakhine state. I welcomed the president's announcement of the abolition of the Nasaka security forces in Rakhine state. The president committed himself during his visit to releasing all political prisoners by the end of 2013, and said that he hoped over the coming weeks to achieve a nationwide ceasefire with the ethnic armed groups. The president also welcomed our initiative on preventing sexual violence in conflict. He acknowledged the need to reform the constitution ahead of the 2015 elections.

The Secretary of State for International Development emphasised the need for the president's leadership on ethnic reconciliation, peace-building and inclusive growth, and confirmed our continued commitment to supporting Burma, notably helping foster private investment, jobs and better livelihoods, advance health care and schooling, bolster peace-building, and provide humanitarian aid to people hurt by conflict and ethnic violence. She also announced £10 million for the 2014 census, £5.65 million to support Burma's economic development and £13.5 million for a humanitarian programme in Kachin delivering food, shelter, water and adequate sanitation.

We emphasised the importance of reforming the Burmese military and of pursuing a sustainable ethnic peace process. The focus of our future defence engagement in Burma will be on adherence to the core principles of democratic accountability and human rights. The Defence Secretary offered to support the participation of around 30 Burmese officers in the British military's flagship "Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context" course in January 2014. We sought assurances from the president that any links to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), contrary to UN Security Council Resolutions, have ended.

The president met a range of British businesses at events hosted by the UK ASEAN Business Council, and discussed the importance of transparency, building a stable regulatory framework and harnessing private investment for the good of the people. We will offer our support to develop Burma's financial services sector; Lord Green launched the financial services taskforce, which will support the development of financial services in Burma to help facilitate economic growth.

The British Government will continue to work with the Burmese Government and build constructive ties to secure long-term democratic development and reform, while making it clear, both directly and through the UN, our human rights concerns, especially in the areas affected by ethnic conflict.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130717/wmstext/130717m0001.htm#13071774000001>

Press Release: Prime Ministers Office, 10 Downing Street

PM meets President U Thein Sein 15 July 2013

Free elections in 2015 were discussed by Prime Minister David Cameron and President U Thein Sein of Burma at Downing Street today.

Following the meeting, a Number 10 spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister hosted President U Thein Sein at Downing Street earlier today where he welcomed progress made on political transition in Burma and the President briefed him on the latest developments.

The PM welcomed the prospect of free and fair elections in 2015 and emphasised the importance of completing necessary changes to the constitution, including to allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to stand in future elections. He emphasised the need to resolve the situation in Rakhine State and protect the rights of the Rohingya Muslims. He also stressed the need to overturn the two child policy on the Rohingya Muslim community that has been introduced at local government level.

Both leaders discussed the tremendous opportunities for developing the relationship between Britain and Burma. In particular, through growing defence cooperation, educational partnerships for English language training and a bigger role for British companies providing sustainable and ethical investment. The PM emphasised his strong commitment to using British development assistance to support Burma's economic and political transition.

End

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meets-president-thein-sein>

Press release: Foreign Commonwealth Office 15 July 2013

President Thein Sein makes historic visit to the UK

UK encourages progress on reform and announces new support for Burma's transition.

Foreign Secretary William Hague with President U Thein Sein of Burma in London.

The Prime Minister today welcomed His Excellency President U Thein Sein to the UK. The visit comes 66 years after General Aung San, the founder of independent Burma and Aung San Suu Kyi's father, visited

London in 1947 to sign an agreement guaranteeing Burma's independence. The President also met the Foreign, Defence, and International Development Secretaries during the first day of his two-day visit.

The Foreign Secretary William Hague said:

I congratulated the President on the reforms we have seen in Burma, which his government has initiated with the support of Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders, and the President acknowledged the need to reform the constitution ahead of the 2015 elections. I urged him to continue to maintain this progress and offered UK assistance to this end. We discussed humanitarian and human rights issues, including political prisoners, ethnic violence and the plight of the Rohingya people, and I welcomed the President's announcement of the abolition of the Nasaka security forces in Rakhine State. The President also welcomed my personal initiative on preventing sexual violence in conflict.

Announcing nearly £30 million in development assistance, Development Secretary Justine Greening said: The UK remains committed to Burma's development and is helping to provide essential healthcare services, education and humanitarian aid to those affected by conflict. We are also supporting the country's economic development so the Burmese people can benefit from the country's increasing prosperity and ultimately end aid dependency through growth and jobs.

As we continue to support Burma's ongoing reforms the UK Government will provide £13.5 million for a humanitarian programme in conflict-ravaged Kachin, delivering food, shelter, water and adequate sanitation and £10 million to support the first census in Burma since 1983 which is essential to make sure support is getting to those who need it most. We will also provide £5.65 million to boost Burma's economic development, so the country can better support itself and reduce its reliance on aid.

Following his meeting with President Thein Sein, Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said: Reforming the Burmese military and pursuing a sustainable peace process will be key to Burma's stability and prosperity. The focus of our defence engagement will be on developing democratic accountability in a modern armed forces, and we have offered training for the Burmese military to this end.

During the meetings between the President and Ministers a number of agreements were made:

1. This was the first official visit of a Burmese President to the UK. He was joined by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wunna Maung Lwin; Minister for the President's Office, U Soe Thane; Minister for Finance and Revenue U Win Shein; Minister for Border Affairs and overall responsibility for Rakhine State, Lt General Thet Naing Win; and Minister for Communication, U Myat Hein.
2. The UK wants to ensure that Burma's economic growth is transparent and equitable. Through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Prosperity Fund the UK will provide £450,000 for various projects to promote transparent and equitable economic reform in Burma. These projects will tackle corruption and money laundering; formulate policies on public-private-partnerships; strengthen the accountancy profession; better enable the Myanmar Investment Commission to undertake responsible investment assessments; and help to create a broad-based consultation process for investments.
3. The Department for International Development has committed a further £29.15 million in UK Aid to Burma in the form of:
 - £10m for the 2014 Census
 - £13.5m for victims of conflict and humanitarian programme in Kachin
 - £0.75m to support Burma's implementation of the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI)
 - £4.9m for the Burma Business Innovation Facility

End

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/president-thein-sein-makes-historic-visit-to-the-uk>

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

ANTI-MUSLIM VIOLENCE IN BURMA

Date tabled: 11.07.2013

That this House expresses deep concern at the growing anti-Muslim violence in Burma; is concerned that the government of Burma has still not taken action against those inciting and organising violence; is further concerned by growing Buddhist nationalism in the country and that other religious minorities could also

be targeted; is further concerned that, despite Muslims being the majority of the victims of violence, they also make up the vast majority of those being charged with violent offences; calls on the Government to significantly increase support for programmes promoting religious tolerance in Burma; and further calls on the Government to mobilise and co-ordinate an international task force to help address religious violence in Burma.

Total Signatures: 30

ROHINGYA MUSLIM PERSECUTION IN MYANMAR

Date tabled: 20.05.2013

That this House notes that the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar is not only continuing but sectarian violence is getting worse; further notes that a boat carrying well over 100 Rohingya Muslims fleeing a cyclone capsized on 14 May with many drowned; further notes that the Myanmar President Thein Sein has been invited to Washington to meet President Obama as part of the normalisation of relations with western countries; deplores the continued persecution of the Rohingya Muslims; and calls on the Government to take all necessary measures to get the Myanmar government to act to protect the Rohingya Muslims from sectarian persecution and violence.

Total Signatures: 14

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**for Human Rights, Democracy
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