



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

A summary of Burma-related issues in the British Parliament

JULY
2015

Answers to Written Parliamentary Questions

Elections

28 July 2015 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that Rohingya Muslims are able to vote in the forthcoming election in Burma.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We continue to make clear to the Burmese authorities our concerns about the status and vulnerability of former white card holders, and the risk of the Rohingya being disenfranchised from the elections. We have stressed the need for a clear process to replace these documents, as well as a transparent, inclusive and consistent process in establishing the status of inhabitants of Rakhine State. Regardless of citizenship status, the human rights of all individuals in Rakhine must be fully respected. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), has made these very points to senior members of the Burmese government over the last few days during his visit there.

Rohingya

7 July 2015 Paul Scully: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the Government has requested the UN Security-General to lead personally negotiations on securing unrestricted humanitarian access in Rakhine State, Burma.

Mr Hugo Swire: The United Kingdom continues to encourage a wider UN leadership role to help bring peace and reconciliation to all communities in Rakhine State. We welcome the firm personal stand the UN Secretary General has already taken on the Rohingya. During his visit to Burma in November 2014, he publicly expressed his concern about the discrimination and violence they face, and called for the human rights and dignity of all the people in Rakhine to be respected. During the recent crisis in the Andaman Sea, he called President Thein Sein on 20 May to make clear his concerns. The UN Secretary General also presided over a meeting of the International Partnership Group on Burma on 24 April.

More widely, the UK is actively keeping Rakhine and the situation of the Rohingya high on the international agenda and within the UN system. With UK support, the situation in Rakhine was discussed at a UN Security Council briefing on 28 May, and the UK was instrumental in securing strong UN Resolutions on Burma at the UN General Assembly in November and the Human Rights Council in March. The latter resolution extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights. In Burma, Professor Yanghee Lee, who has highlighted the plight of the Rohingya in her reports. The Government invited Professor Lee to the UK in March, where she discussed the situation in Rakhine with the Minister of State, my noble Friend the right hon. Baroness Anelay of St Johns.

We will continue to engage closely with the UN system to maintain a focus on this important issue.

20 July 2015 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has held with the UN Secretary General on his role in negotiating humanitarian access in Rakhine state, Burma.

Mr Desmond Swayne: The Secretary of State for International Development has not held discussions

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with the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on his role in negotiating humanitarian access in Rakhine State, Burma. We welcome the firm personal stand the UN Secretary General has already taken on the Rohingya and continue to encourage a wider UN leadership role to help bring peace and reconciliation to all communities in Rakhine State.

20 July 2015 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what her Department's policy is on using the word Rohingya when discussing the Rohingya with the government of Burma.

Mr Desmond Swayne: While the Department for International Development has no formal policy on this point, we believe in the right of minorities to choose the name by which they are identified. I and other UK Ministers are on record using the word Rohingya, and we continue to use the word in communications with the government of Burma.

21 July 2015 Liam Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the government of Burma provides education for Rohingya children.

Mr Hugo Swire: The United Kingdom continues to press the government of Burma to take steps to ensure that all communities in Rakhine, including the Rohingya, are able to access basic services like education and healthcare.

In 2014, British funding to Rakhine provided education services to over 4,000 primary school-age children in camps for displaced people through temporary learning spaces, recruited and trained volunteer teachers in Sittwe and Pauktaw townships and renovated three schools in surrounding communities.

8 July 2015 Harry Harpham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions has he had with the Burmese government on (a) the Rohingya community in Rakhine state and (b) democracy and human rights in that country.

Mr Hugo Swire: We have consistently raised our concern at the situation of the Rohingya community in all recent Ministerial contacts with the Burmese government. Most recently, I called the Burmese Ambassador in to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 18 May to express our concern at the migrant crisis in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea, and press Burma to take urgent steps to deal with the humanitarian implications of the crisis, as well as the underlying causes in Rakhine. It is vital that Burma addresses the longer-term issues which lie at the root of the problem - namely the desperate conditions in which Rohingya communities are living in Rakhine State.

We recognise the significant steps towards democratic reform that the government of Burma has taken over the past two years. At the same time, we are clear that much more needs to be done, and that progress in some areas of human rights has declined. The November parliamentary elections will be a critically important test of the government's commitment to see the reforms through to their conclusion. It is vital for Burma's future development that these are inclusive and credible. The Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) made this point to President Thein Sein at the Group of Twenty (G20) summit in Brisbane in November.

13 July 2015 Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what meetings he has held with the ethnic Rohingya community in the UK regarding the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Mr Hugo Swire: I have not met the Burmese Rohingya community in the UK since the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea humanitarian crisis emerged in May. However, our officials met a senior Burmese Muslim representative in London in June to discuss the crisis, and I called in the Burmese Ambassador to raise my concerns. Previously I have met many Burmese groups, including community and religious leaders from within the Rohingya community, both in the UK and during my visits to Burma.

22 July 2015 Liam Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the government of Burma provides citizenship for the Rohingya.

Mr Hugo Swire: The situation of the Rohingya in Burma's Rakhine State remains of grave concern. It is

clear that desperate living conditions are driving many people to make the dangerous journey to other countries in the region, fuelling the humanitarian crisis we have seen this year in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. We continue to urge the Burmese authorities to tackle this situation by working towards a long-term solution that brings peace and reconciliation and ensures the civil and human rights of all communities within Rakhine State, including full citizenship for the Rohingya. We are playing our part to resolve the situation in Rakhine. Since 2012, the UK has been one of the largest bilateral humanitarian donors there, investing over £18m in humanitarian support, including an additional £6.2m this year.

While we have not this year seen intercommunal violence, as witnessed in 2012, the situation remains fragile. Our approach is to seek an end to all violations by encouraging a resolution of the underlying problems and de-escalating tensions. We have made clear to the government of Burma that allegations of human rights abuses must be dealt with through an independent and transparent investigative and prosecutorial process that meets international standards. The UK was instrumental in securing the strong UN Resolution on Burma at the Human Rights Council in March, which extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma, Professor Yanghee Lee. We very much support Professor Lee's investigations into the human rights situation in Burma, including in Rakhine, and the reports she has issued on these.

22 July 2015 Liam Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the government of Burma acts against those perpetrating violence against the Rohingya.

Mr Hugo Swire: The situation of the Rohingya in Burma's Rakhine State remains of grave concern. It is clear that desperate living conditions are driving many people to make the dangerous journey to other countries in the region, fuelling the humanitarian crisis we have seen this year in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. We continue to urge the Burmese authorities to tackle this situation by working towards a long-term solution that brings peace and reconciliation and ensures the civil and human rights of all communities within Rakhine State, including full citizenship for the Rohingya. We are playing our part to resolve the situation in Rakhine. Since 2012, the UK has been one of the largest bilateral humanitarian donors there, investing over £18m in humanitarian support, including an additional £6.2m this year.

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22 July 2015 Liam Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the government of Burma admit UN investigators and allow them to freely investigate alleged atrocities perpetrated against the Rohingya.

Mr Hugo Swire: The situation of the Rohingya in Burma's Rakhine State remains of grave concern. It is clear that desperate living conditions are driving many people to make the dangerous journey to other countries in the region, fuelling the humanitarian crisis we have seen this year in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. We continue to urge the Burmese authorities to tackle this situation by working towards a long-term solution that brings peace and reconciliation and ensures the civil and human rights of all communities within Rakhine State, including full citizenship for the Rohingya. We are playing our part to resolve the situation in Rakhine. Since 2012, the UK has been one of the largest bilateral humanitarian donors there, investing over £18m in humanitarian support, including an additional £6.2m this year.

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22 July 2015 Liam Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of how many Rohingya have died in violence this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Hugo Swire: The situation of the Rohingya in Burma's Rakhine State remains of grave concern. It is clear that desperate living conditions are driving many people to make the dangerous journey to other countries in the region, fuelling the humanitarian crisis we have seen this year in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. We continue to urge the Burmese authorities to tackle this situation by working towards a long-term solution that brings peace and reconciliation and ensures the civil and human rights of all communities within Rakhine State, including full citizenship for the Rohingya. We are playing our part to resolve the situation in Rakhine. Since 2012, the UK has been one of the largest bilateral humanitarian donors there, investing over £18m in humanitarian support, including an additional £6.2m this year.

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22 July 2015 Liam Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to broker a regional solution which would provide a safe haven for the Rohingya.

Mr Hugo Swire: The situation of the Rohingya in Burma's Rakhine State remains of grave concern. It is clear that desperate living conditions are driving many people to make the dangerous journey to other countries in the region, fuelling the humanitarian crisis we have seen this year in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. We continue to urge the Burmese authorities to tackle this situation by working towards a long-term solution that brings peace and reconciliation and ensures the civil and human rights of all communities within Rakhine State, including full citizenship for the Rohingya. We are playing our part to resolve the situation in Rakhine. Since 2012, the UK has been one of the largest bilateral humanitarian donors there, investing over £18m in humanitarian support, including an additional £6.2m this year.

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15 July 2015 Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Malaysia and Thailand on ensuring that people are not trafficked from those countries.

Mr Hugo Swire: The United Kingdom takes all human rights issues seriously and looks to tackle slave labour and human trafficking in coordination with our international partners.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond) met Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah in June. He welcomed Malaysia's regional leadership on the recent migration crisis and encouraged a continued regional approach. Our officials have lobbied ASEAN member states, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, to do the same. We have cooperated with Malaysia on human trafficking, including at a workshop in January and an earlier visit by Malaysian officials to the UK Human Trafficking Centre. In June, senior officials met the head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Kuala Lumpur.

Since the Thai coup of May 2014, high-level political bilateral exchanges with the Thai military government have been postponed or cancelled. However, as part of our inaugural strategic dialogue with Thailand in 2013, which I co-chaired, the UK and Thailand committed to work together to combat transnational crimes, including human trafficking. We continue to look for opportunities to raise this issue where and when we can, including in future negotiations over an EU-Thailand Free Trade Agreement, where issues of regulation and labour standards will feature prominently.

We continue to work with the Thai authorities on the disruption of human trafficking and irregular migration and have issued statements in support of activists working on the issue of migrants' human rights. We also work with UK industry to support ethical supply chains and promote greater awareness within the UK of where products and services have been sourced.

Aid

8 July 2015 Paul Scully: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how much funding her Department has allocated to inter-faith projects in Burma in 2015-16.

Mr Desmond Swayne: We are working with a range of partners to support peace and reconciliation in Burma. DFID is providing £600,000 through the Peace Support fund for four projects that directly aim to improve inter-communal relations and combat hatred at a community level through dialogue and understanding.

20 July 2015 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what funding her Department is providing for internally displaced people in Shan and Kachin states, Burma.

Mr Desmond Swayne: Between 2012 and 2015 DFID has allocated over £17 million for humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons (IDP) in Kachin and Northern Shan States, including in non-government controlled areas.

8 July 2015 Paul Scully: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of whether the funding needs of internally displaced people in non-government controlled Kachin state, Burma, are being fully met; how much funding is being provided to meet those needs by the Government; and what information she holds on how much funding is being provided to meet those needs by the Burmese government.

Mr Desmond Swayne: The UK is one of the largest humanitarian donors in Kachin State. Between 2012 and 2015 DFID has allocated over £17 million for humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons (IDP) in Kachin and Northern Shan States, including in non-government controlled areas. We do not have figures for how much funding for the needs of internally displaced people in Kachin state is being provided by the Burmese government. The UN appeal for humanitarian assistance across Burma is currently only 27% funded. We regularly monitor the situation in the camps, including a visit by a DFID team in June 2015 to non-government controlled areas.

15 July 2015 Baroness Goudie: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the UN and international aid agencies face any restrictions by the government of Burma in delivering aid to internally displaced people in areas of Burma not under government control.

Baroness Verma: UN and international agencies have reported restrictions on delivering aid to internally displaced people in areas of Burma not under government control in Kachin State. Aid is reaching those in need and the UK is one of the largest donors having allocated over £17 million for humanitarian assistance

for internally displaced persons (IDP) in Kachin and Northern Shan States, including in non-government controlled areas since 2012. The UK regularly presses the government on the need to ensure aid reaches those in need. On 8-11 June a DFID team visited Kachin, including non-government controlled areas and raised humanitarian access with the Chief Minister for Kachin.

15 July 2015 Imran Hussain: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what conditions are attached to the financial aid her Department provides to Myanmar.

Mr Desmond Swayne: DFID is providing no financial assistance directly to the government of Burma. Our policy is that none of our bilateral aid is provided directly through central government systems, only through United Nations organisations, trusted international and local NGOs and, where circumstances allow, to authorities at the township level.

Anti-Muslim activities

7 July 2015 The Lord Bishop of Coventry: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Myanmar concerning the Population Control Health Care Law and how it can be implemented in a non-discriminatory way.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We have made representations on all four of the so-called 'protection of race and religion bills', including the population law. We remain concerned that 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 the proposed legislation to members of the Burmese government and parliamentarians. The then Minister of State for the Home Department, the right hon. 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 local 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. The population bill was also raised in the EU/Burma Human Rights Dialogue on 18 June.

24 July 2015 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government what analysis they have made of the assessment by the Burmese Muslim Association that the government of Burma is encouraging anti-Muslim activities in that country.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We remain extremely concerned by instances of religious intolerance in Burma, particularly as the November parliamentary elections approach. Specific concerns include the restriction on the Rohingya community, the rise of Buddhist nationalism, hate speech and anti-Muslim violence, and the introduction of potentially discriminatory faith-based legislation. We have raised our concerns in detail both bilaterally and in company with our partners in the EU and will continue to raise this issue in our dealings with the Burmese authorities, both in public and in private. We also 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.

Political Prisoners

13 July 2015 Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to secure the release of all political prisoners in Burma.

Mr Hugo Swire: We welcome the release of thousands of political prisoners under the current Burmese government. However, we remain concerned by the continued arrests, detentions and sentencing of political activists, with an estimated minimum of 150 remaining behind bars at the end of May 2015, and a further 450 awaiting trial following arrests throughout 2014 and early 2015.

Officials from our Embassy in Rangoon meet regularly with civil society on this issue, and we continue to raise our concerns with the government of Burma at the highest levels. Most recently, the then Minister of State at the Home Office, Lynne Featherstone, raised this issue directly with Minister for the President's Office, U Soe Thein, during her visit to Burma in January. We continue to lobby on individual cases. We also raise our concerns publicly in our Annual Report on Human Rights and in multilateral fora such as the

UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, where the UK co-sponsored a Resolution in March that called for the unconditional release of all political prisoners.

13 July 2015 Baroness Goudie: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the British Ambassador to Burma has met relatives and representatives of political prisoners during 2015.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We welcome the release of thousands of political prisoners under the current Burmese government. However, we remain concerned by the continued arrests, detentions and sentencing of political activists, with an estimated minimum of 163 remaining behind bars at the end of May 2015, and a further 442 awaiting trial following arrests throughout 2014 and early 2015.

Our Ambassador and other officials from our Embassy in Rangoon are in regular contact with civil society groups representing political prisoners in Burma. They also talk to former political prisoners, including a meeting last week between the Ambassador and a former prisoner, and we continue to raise our concerns with the Government of Burma at the highest levels. At Ministerial level, the then Minister of State at the Home Office, the right hon. Lynne Featherstone, raised the issue of political prisoners directly with Minister for the President's Office, U Soe Thane, during her visit to Burma in January.

Kachin

13 July 2015 Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports the Government has received on human rights violations by the Burmese Army in Kachin state, Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Hugo Swire: We receive regular media reports of continued heavy fighting in Kachin State. This includes reports of an escalation of violence in June, involving clashes in the vicinity of Hpakant. It is difficult to independently verify these reports owing to a lack of access to conflict affected areas, but a DFID team visited from 8-11 June to assess the effect of conflict on the civilian population, including on the over 100,000 displaced people currently living in camps.

We remain very concerned that the continued conflict sustains an environment where human rights violations, including the sexual abuse of women caught up in the conflict, can and do occur, as was starkly demonstrated by the terrible case of the two teachers raped and killed in January this year in neighbouring Shan State. We have made clear to the government of Burma that any allegations of human rights abuses must be dealt with through a clear, independent and transparent investigative and prosecutorial process that meets international standards.

20 July 2015 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what funding her Department is providing for internally displaced people in Shan and Kachin states, Burma.

Mr Desmond Swayne: Between 2012 and 2015 DFID has allocated over £17 million for humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons (IDP) in Kachin and Northern Shan States, including in non-government controlled areas.

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Sanctions

13 July 2015 Baroness Goudie: To ask Her Majesty's Government what sanctions are in place against Burma.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The EU currently has sanctions in place on Burma. These measures include an arms embargo prohibiting the sale, supply, transfer or export of equipment which might be used for internal repression, whether or not originating in the Union, to any natural or legal person, entity or body in, or for use in Burma. The embargo also prohibits the provision of financing and technical assistance related to military activities, arms and related material, and equipment which might be used for internal repression. The EU recently renewed these measures until 30 April 2016. Countries outside the EU may have their own sanctions measures in place on Burma.

War Crimes

13 July 2015 Baroness Goudie: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has raised with the President of Burma concerns regarding evidence of war crimes committed by the Burmese Home Affairs Minister.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), has not raised this particular issue with the President of Burma. While Burma has undergone a remarkable period of reform since the current government took power in 2011, we remain extremely concerned by allegations of historic human rights violations by the Burmese military. The UK is a strong supporter of the principle that there should be no impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes. Any judgement on whether specific international crimes have occurred is a matter for international judicial decision rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. There are a number of different models for moving on from conflict and ending impunity, and it is for the people of Burma, through their political representatives, to decide on the best model for their country.

British Companies in Burma

24 July 2015 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government what funding is provided each year for the British Chamber of Commerce in Burma.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Last year (2014/15) the British Chamber of Commerce in Burma received £70,400 of funding from UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and this year (2015/16) it will receive £102,400. It will deliver 130 company interventions in 2015/16. This funding is part of UKTI's Overseas Business Network Initiative, a change programme increasing the role of the private sector, including Chambers of Commerce and Business Groups, in providing support for UK exporters.

24 July 2015 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any United Kingdom Government officials or Ministers have met any representatives of Bell Pottinger regarding Burma.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Our Ambassador to Burma and the Director of UK Trade and Investment in Rangoon have met representatives from Bell Pottinger in the last year, in order to provide political and economic overviews of the country.

British training of the Burmese Army

21 July 2015 Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Burmese counterpart on that country's increased spending on its military.

Mr Hugo Swire: While I have not discussed the rise in spending on Burmese military with my counterpart specifically, the level of spending on the military in Burma is of concern. The main focus of our engagement with the Burmese military is on their adherence to the core principles of democratic accountability, international law and human rights, and I have raised these issues on numerous occasions, including with the Commander-in-Chief directly in January 2014.

2 July 2015 Stephen Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in which countries the armed forces are providing training to (a) security forces and (b) armed forces.

Penny Mordaunt: The Ministry of Defence has permanent training teams based overseas in Czech Republic, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Africa. 57 military personnel are currently serving in these teams.

The teams deliver advice, capacity-building and training directly to the armed and security forces of the countries in which they are based, and of others on a regional basis.

470 personnel are in Afghanistan as part of the Resolute Support Mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces. Over 100 personnel are currently deployed on other enduring overseas tasks, including the EU Training Mission in Mali, the international efforts in Somalia and Iraq, and security sector assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

In addition there are some 200 personnel in Loan Service teams in seven countries: Brunei, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. These Loan Service personnel are embedded in a wide variety of training, educational and staff posts in the host nations' armed forces. Data is not held centrally on which posts are filled by reservists. Exchange posts with NATO allies and others have been excluded.

A substantial amount of training is also provided by short-term training teams (STTTs) sent from the UK. An STTT may comprise a single instructor for a few days or up to 40 or 50 personnel for several weeks. STTTs are often called forward by the permanent overseas teams but are also arranged by defence attaches as part of our bilateral defence relationships. In 2014 over 1,000 military personnel deployed in such teams. Royal Navy vessels also undertake training tasks in the course of their deployments.

Countries or territories in which UK Armed Forces have provided training to either security or armed forces personnel since January 2014 are:

Algeria, Afghanistan, Armenia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Brunei, Burma, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Cook Island (New Zealand), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Gibraltar, Hungary, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Macedonia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Nieu (island near New Zealand), Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

2 July 2015 Stephen Doughty: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) members and (b) reserve members of the armed forces are providing training to the (i) armed forces and (ii) security forces of other countries; and in which countries that training is being provided.

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A substantial amount of training is also provided by short-term training teams (STTTs) sent from the UK. An STTT may comprise a single instructor for a few days or up to 40 or 50 personnel for several weeks. STTTs are often called forward by the permanent overseas teams but are also arranged by defence attaches as part of our bilateral defence relationships. In 2014 over 1,000 military personnel deployed in such teams. Royal Navy vessels also undertake training tasks in the course of their deployments.

Countries or territories in which UK Armed Forces have provided training to either security or armed forces personnel since January 2014 are:

Algeria, Afghanistan, Armenia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Brunei, Burma, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Cook Island (New Zealand), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Gibraltar, Hungary, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Macedonia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Nieu (island near New Zealand), Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Ethnic allies excluded from VJ day celebrations

1 July 2015 Lord West of Spithead: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any representatives of the Burmese hill tribes will attend commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the Victory over Japan Day.

Earl Howe: The Ministry of Defence, in collaboration with The Royal British Legion, will lead national commemorations in central London on Saturday 15 August 2015 to mark the 70th Anniversary of Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day 70).

The event will begin with a special commemoration on Horse Guards Parade, attended by senior political and military representatives, veterans and their families, which will include at its heart a traditional Drumhead Service. Current members of the Armed Forces will then lead veterans and their families in a parade down Whitehall, past the Cenotaph and the statue of Field Marshal Lord Slim, who famously led the 14th Army.

Further details of the VJ Day 70 programme will be announced in due course.

Invitations to participate in VJ Day 70 have been issued to representatives from all declared allies of the UK, Commonwealth countries, overseas territories and Crown Dependencies. In this way, the contribution and sacrifices made during the Far East campaign by communities such as the Burmese hill tribes will be recognised on this milestone anniversary.

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

6 July 2015 Baroness Helic: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to report on progress in implementing the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and if so, when such a report will be published.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The third UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, covering the period 2014-17, was published in June 2014. In December 2014 we presented an Implementation Plan to Parliament, which set out our goals for action on this important issue in our priority countries: Afghanistan, Burma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Somalia and Syria. The National Action Plan, jointly owned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence, demonstrates our intention to put women and girls at the centre of all our efforts to prevent and resolve conflict; to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls; and to promote peace and stability internationally. We will report to Parliament on progress in implementing the National Action Plan in the autumn.

Answers to Oral Parliamentary Questions

Rohingya

14 July 2015 Mr Jim Cunningham: What recent discussions he has had with the Burmese Government on (a) the Rohingya community in Rakhine state and (b) democracy and human rights in that country.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire): Human rights and democratic reform are central concerns for us. In this critical election year for Burma, we regularly raise these issues with the Government of Burma. I strongly reiterated our concerns on the Rohingya to the Burmese ambassador on 18 May, which our ambassador in Rangoon repeated to Ministers locally.

Mr Cunningham: Does the Minister agree that reserved parliamentary seats for the military are not compatible with a modern democracy? It is now clear that the military in Burma retains too much power and influence and that it is time for the international community to reassess Burma's commitment to democracy and human rights.

Mr Swire: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. We have registered our unhappiness with this clause remaining, as indeed we have for the clauses remaining that effectively rule out Aung San Suu Kyi from running as a presidential candidate. Having said that, we have made the point again and again to President Thein Sein—most recently by the Prime Minister—that we expect the elections on 8 November to be inclusive and credible.

Valerie Vaz: Will the Minister raise with the United Nations the possibility of Ban Ki-Moon leading a delegation to Rakhine state to ensure humanitarian access?

Mr Swire: We have encouraged the Secretary-General to play a leadership role. With UK support, the situation in Rakhine state was discussed at a UN Security Council briefing on 28 May. We will keep up the pressure on that. It is also worth saying that we support the continuing work of the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Professor Yanghee Lee.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: The Minister will be aware of the widespread concerns surrounding the recent arrest of five students protesting outside the Parliament in Burma. Will he do what the Burma campaign recently asked him to do in relation to other human rights concerns and summon the Burmese ambassador to express the widest possible concerns about these growing human rights abuses?

Mr Swire: We welcome, since 2011, the release of 2,000 political prisoners, increasing press freedoms and the discharging of 500 child soldiers. We have, however, seen some re-arrests and we have not been slow to raise these issues. We are working extraordinarily closely with the Department for International Development to try to ensure that on 8 November Burma can face a democratic election where the people can decide who they wish to govern them. From that will flow greater freedoms and respect for human rights.

Kerry McCarthy: Given the continued plight of the Rohingya and the role of the military, not just in Parliament but in its continued use of sexual violence with impunity and the lack of progress on key areas of constitutional reform, it is clear we are not seeing the progress we need in Burma. Does the Minister think that the UK or the EU retain any influence now that sanctions have been lifted?

Mr Swire: Yes, I do. Incidentally, I draw the House's attention to the hon. Lady's recent article on Burma in the Huffington Post, where she appears to suggest that the Prime Minister took business leaders to Burma before the EU lifted trade sanctions in 2013, implicitly suggesting that somehow the Prime Minister was promoting trade when EU sanctions were in place. I refer her back to a 2012 article in The Guardian, which she would do well to read. She may wish to correct what is effectively rather a misleading comment in her article.

Kerry McCarthy: I know that the Prime Minister and the Minister are keen to strengthen our bilateral relationship with Burma, but does he agree there will be serious consequences for that relationship if Burma fails to deliver free, fair and credible elections in November in which the Rohingya can participate and Aung San Suu Kyi can play a full role?

Mr Swire: Of course, we work closely with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on all these matters. To repeat, the Prime Minister, with President Thein Sein, said at the G20 that elections should be inclusive and credible, which is what we are working towards on 8 November.

Burma mentioned in House of Lords Debate on Refugees and Migrants from Asia and Africa

9 July 2015 Lord Alton of Liverpool: (...) In Asia, there are 9 million refugees and 15 million internally displaced people. Afghanistan generates the second largest number of refugees worldwide, while Burma is awash with refugees, including thousands of Rohingyas, cast adrift in rickety boats in the Andaman Sea. These new boat people bring to mind the Vietnamese boat people, whose camps I visited as a young MP. I also served as president of Karenaid. Last week the noble Earl confirmed that there are 110,094 Karen refugees in camps, which I visited on the Burmese border. Some have been there for decades. Will the noble Earl say whether we are talking to ASEAN about developing a strategy for that region's refugees and what practical help we are giving to search, rescue and resettlement? (...)

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: (...) Among those compelled to take such risks are the impoverished and persecuted Rohingya, in Rakhine State in Burma, as the noble Lord, Lord Alton, said. They are oppressed by draconian travel restrictions and the denial of education, land rights and healthcare and are widely described as the most persecuted people on earth. More than 140,000 Rohingya have been confined to squalid camps. They are the world's largest group of stateless people and are effectively banned from citizenship because the Burmese Government have scrapped the Rohingya white identity cards, and the voting rights that go with them, in Rakhine State, where they live in a state of virtual apartheid and dire poverty. Will the UK support the view that the UN Secretary-General should now take the lead in negotiating humanitarian access to Rakhine State? (...)

Baroness Cox: My Lords, I also congratulate my noble friend on initiating this timely debate and on his characteristically comprehensive and compelling opening speech. It is with a heavy heart that I report the findings from my recent visits to Burma and Sudan, where I met many hundreds of refugees and forcibly displaced people. I focus on these areas as they are largely inaccessible to international aid organisations and are off the radar screen of the international media.
(...)

In Burma, I was pleased to report positive developments following a visit to Chin state in February, but a subsequent visit has sadly revealed that military offensives by the Burmese army continue to cause mass displacement and great suffering in Shan and Kachin states, despite ceasefire agreements and peace negotiations. More than half a million people have fled to neighbouring countries, and more than 600,000 have been internally displaced. Furthermore, the Government are encouraging unscrupulous mega-developments, including dam-building and mining, creating displacement of local populations without adequate consultation and sometimes with no compensation, causing further large-scale displacement. For example, according to International Rivers, in one project alone, 60,000 people have been forcibly relocated by the Ta Sang-Mongtong dam on the Salween river.

Conditions in the camps for displaced people are dire and worsening. Flooding has recently caused food shortages and the destruction of shelters in the camps for the Rohingya, many of whom, as we know, have risked and lost their lives as they flee from violent attacks on their communities and unbearable conditions

in the camps, as highlighted by the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock. On the Thai-Burma border, in camps for the Shan and Kachin IDPs, problems abound with health risks such as the rise of dengue fever and severe food shortages. For example, the daily allowance for IDPs in Kachin state has been cut to the equivalent of less than 20 US cents a day. It is not possible to live on that, and the Kachin Peace Network claims that only 17% of the basic needs of IDPs are currently being met. We have visited these camps and seen the conditions.

In this context, the decision of the UK Government and DfID to refrain from providing any cross-border aid to civilians trapped behind closed borders in Sudan and to reduce cross-border aid to community-based organisations working across the border in Burma, other than the Thai-Burma Border Consortium, is immensely disturbing. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that more than 50% of IDPs in Burma are in non-government controlled areas and are therefore not receiving any aid from the Burmese Government, aid channels or international NGOs. It has always been the policy of my own small NGO, the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust—HART—to work with local, community-based organisations which can reach people who are trapped in these situations and which do not withdraw in times of danger and insecurity. We visit them regularly and have seen again and again how these organisations are highly effective at delivering aid to their people in greatest need. We receive comprehensive reports and are continually impressed by their accountability. These CBOs provide food, medical and educational supplies, and they are trusted by the local people. I hope, therefore, that Her Majesty's Government and DfID will reconsider their position on working with such community-based organisations.

In conclusion, perhaps I may highlight three priorities that are essentially similar for both countries and ask the Minister how Her Majesty's Government are responding or will respond to these challenges. The first is the urgent need to end the impunity with which the army and the Government in both Burma and Sudan continue to perpetrate military offensives and human rights abuses against their own civilians: in Sudan in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan; and in Burma against the Rohingya, Shan and Kachin peoples.

The second priority is the need for the international community to promote political solutions which will bring genuine peace and justice for all civilians. While Her Majesty's Government are supporting the political process with regard to forthcoming elections in Burma, many ethnic national peoples fear that this will not bring justice for them. In Sudan, too, it is immensely hard for the people suffering there to see any effects of Her Majesty's Government's interventions to bring the Sudanese Government to account for their continuing genocidal policies in Darfur and the Two Areas.

The third priority is the need for immediate, urgent short-term interventions to relieve the suffering of these displaced civilians, especially those trapped in areas where their Governments do not allow access to humanitarian aid. I sincerely hope that the Minister will be able to offer reassurance as to how the United Kingdom will contribute to the international community's duty to protect these civilians, and provide life-saving humanitarian aid to the refugees and displaced people currently dying at the hands of their own Governments in Sudan and Burma. (...)

Lord Luce: (...) We only have to look, as we have seen in the debate so far, to Syria and Iraq, the Horn of Africa, Sudan and South Sudan, Afghanistan, Burma and, as has been mentioned by so many, Libya. I remember, as a former governor of Gibraltar, witnessing the number of Africans who swam across the Straits of Gibraltar from north Africa to Spain and, when some of them drowned, imagining whether I myself would have taken that kind of risk had I lived in the conditions that they lived in. (...)

Lord Collins of Highbury: (...) The world's focus must be on finding political solutions to the cycles of violence that drive civilians from their homes, and on breaking the culture of impunity that has come to characterise brutal conflicts such as those in Syria and South Sudan. Each new tragic incident—the seizure of Yarmouk, the shipwreck off Lampedusa and the desperate plight of the Rohingya—is more horrific than the last, and must spur political action. (...)

No country or region is immune, from Libya and the shores of the Mediterranean, through to the Gulf of Aden, and across the sea, where the Rohingya and Bengali families were stranded on boats for months with scarce food and water. (...)

The Earl of Courtown (Con): (...) As the noble Lord, Lord Alton, and the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, said, on the other side of the world, Rohingya refugees have fled their homes in north-west Burma. The United Kingdom is one of the largest donors in Burma, providing £18 million in humanitarian assistance since 2012 to Rakhine State, from where many of the Burmese Rohingya found on boats in the Andaman Sea originate. (...)

(...) The noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, and the noble Lords, Lord Alton and Lord Collins, went further on the problems facing the Rohingya people. The United Kingdom has taken action at ministerial level by raising the issue with the Burmese ambassador in London. We are issuing a joint demarche, with the US and the EU, to Ministers in Burma, and we are lobbying ASEAN member states Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia not to turn away boats in distress. On 29 May, we participated in the Thai international co-ordination meeting as an observer. We call on all parties in Burma to address the dire situation of the Rohingya community in Rakhine state. We want to see improved humanitarian access, greater security and accountability, and a sustainable solution on citizenship. (...)

For full debate, see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/text/150709-0002.htm#15070961000823>

Burma mentioned in House of Lords debate on Freedom of Religion and belief

16 July 2015 Lord Alton of Liverpool: (...) Although Christians are persecuted in every country where there are violations of Article 18—from Syria and Iraq, to Sudan, Pakistan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Egypt, Iran, North Korea and many other countries—Muslims, and others, suffer too, especially in the religious wars raging between Sunnis and Shias, so reminiscent of 17th-century Europe. But it does not end there. In a village in Burma, I saw first-hand a mosque that had been set on fire the night before. Muslim villagers had been driven from a village where for generations they had lived alongside their Buddhist neighbours. Now Burma proposes to restrict interfaith marriage and religious conversions. It is, however, a region in which Christian Solidarity Worldwide and the Foreign and Commonwealth are doing some excellent work with lawyers and other civil society actors, promoting Article 18. (...)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/text/150716-0002.htm#15071639000955>

Baroness Berridge: (...) I join the most reverend Primate in celebrating Magna Carta, which opens with, “the English Church shall be free”, meaning from state intervention, which at that time of course meant the king. Freedom of religion or belief, as set out in Article 18, is another deeply constitutional statement. As the UN special rapporteur illustrated in his comment to me, “There is lots of religion in Vietnam but not a lot of it is free”. The declaration is founded on individuals enjoying human rights when the state knows how to behave, knows its own limits and understands its role as protector of its citizens’ human rights from violation by third parties. In old communist states such as Vietnam, religion is controlled by the state, but another common backdrop to many Article 18 violations is an inappropriate connection between a religious institution or a faith or a stream of one faith, and the state. Often, that institution or faith has such preference that pluralism is suffocated, and, in the extreme, a religion becomes identified with nationality.

Is Myanmar’s identity becoming synonymous with being Buddhist? The Rohingya Muslims are denied citizenship and an outcry by Buddhist extremists led the Government to capitulate and confiscate their only identity document.

I am intrigued that Her Majesty’s Government can exhibit the FCO priority of freedom of religion and belief in our newly opened visa office in Rangoon. I expect my noble friend will have to write to me on this, but how is the United Kingdom able to offer UK visas, regardless of religion, when Rohingya Muslims have no documentation? Is it only wealthy Buddhist tourists or business men—not Muslims or Christians—who can come to the UK? The Rohingans were disenfranchised in this year’s election. (...)

The trajectory on this issue has spiralled. However, I highlight Vietnam, Myanmar and CAR because they are in, I believe, the doable category. (...)

Baroness O’Loan: (...) Reference has already been made to the thousands of Rohingya Muslims who are making treacherous and often fatal journeys across the Andaman Sea, trying to escape escalating

persecution at the hands of Burma's authorities. Hate speech and xenophobic attacks are allowed to continue unchallenged. The Rohingya have been denied citizenship, cajoled into camps and prevented from accessing humanitarian assistance. The Burmese Government have also passed a package of laws targeting religious minorities which may prevent people converting, marrying or even starting a family. These laws have been condemned by Burma's first Catholic cardinal, Charles Bo. In a response to me in this Chamber recently, the Minister agreed with that condemnation. Will she update us on the UK's response to the Burmese package of laws? I would also be grateful for an outline of any recent discussions with other states about the rescue and accommodation of Rohingya refugees. (...)

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns): (...) We are just as active on bilateral channels. Every Minister at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office acts as an ambassador for this fundamental right. Each one of us, as a Minister, raises and promotes these issues in the countries or organisations for which we have responsibility. My noble friend Lady Berridge and others referred to Burma. We have raised our concern about the situation of the Rohingya community in all our recent ministerial contacts with the Burmese Government. Most recently, my honourable friend Mr Swire called the Burmese ambassador to the FCO on 18 May to express our concern about the Rohingya situation and the related migrant crisis in the Bay of Bengal. We urged Burma to act swiftly to deal with the humanitarian implications, but also to address the underlying causes. (...)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/text/150716-0002.htm>

Burma Mentioned in House of Lords debate on Responsibility to protect

16 July 2015 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: (...) The potential for genocidal killing exists today in Burundi. Gross abuses of international humanitarian law are being perpetrated against the Muslim inhabitants of Burma. More than 200,000 Syrians have died in a civil war while the UN Security Council has been paralysed by Russian and Chinese vetoes and by the timidity of western Governments. The so-called Islamic State is waging a war that respects none of the international conventions that we had hoped would be universally observed, and which in fact rides roughshod over the Geneva Conventions on the rules of war and over the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (...)

For full debate, see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/text/150716-0001.htm#15071639000951>

Burma mentioned in Westminster Hall Debate on Srebrenica Genocide (20th Anniversary)

7 July 2015 Yasmin Qureshi: (...) I want to touch on genocide or killing that is still happening; Syria has been mentioned. Conflicts are sometimes confusing, and the situation in Burma is also relevant. May I have another minute, Mr Chope?

(...) I want to mention Burma, where ethnic cleansing is happening and many are being killed. I am sorry that the international community has not been doing much about it. Perhaps we need to move on that. (...)

For full debate, see:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150707/halltext/150707h0002.htm#150707h0002.htm_spnew10

Burma mentioned in House of Lords debate on Human Rights and civil liberties

2 July 2015 Lord Cashman: (...) The noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, mentioned the international aspects. I am deeply worried that what we do in these Houses will give succour to those who thought that they could use teargas and shoot rubber bullets at the gay parade in Istanbul last week, or members of the junta in Burma who feel it is absolutely right openly to condemn people merely because of their sexual orientation. (...)

For full debate, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/text/150702-0001.htm#15070243000898>

Burma mentioned in Westminster Hall debate on Sustainable Development Goals (Education)

2 July 2015 Desmond Swayne: (...) We have been supplying early years education for 150,000 children in Burma, and through the organisation BRAC in Bangladesh we have supplied 2.7 million children with pre-primary education, but we also have to address the needs of tertiary education. (...)

For full debate, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150702/halltext/150702h0001.htm#15070234000001>

Burma mentioned in Written Statements on Foreign Affairs Council and General Affairs Council

1 July 2015 The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington): (...) Ministers agreed without discussion a number of measures:

The Council launched the EU naval operation to disrupt human smuggling in the Mediterranean;
The Council adopted the EU priorities at the United Nations and the 17th UN General Assembly—September 2015 to September 2016;
The Council adopted conclusions on EU-ASEAN relations;
The Council adopted conclusions on the forthcoming elections in Burma;
(...)

For full statement, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150701/wmstext/150701m0001.htm#15070129000011>

Burma mentioned in Written Statements on Foreign Affairs Council and General Affairs Council

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The Council adopted the EU priorities at the United Nations and the 17th UN General Assembly—September 2015 to September 2016;
The Council adopted conclusions on EU-ASEAN relations;
The Council adopted conclusions on the forthcoming elections in Burma; (...)

For full statement, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150701/wmstext/150701m0001.htm#15070129000004>

Early Day Motions

ACCESS FOR HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES TO RAKHINE STATE IN BURMA (Early Day Motion 58)

Date tabled: 01.06.2015

Signatures: 54

That this House expresses its concern at the number of Rohingya Muslims from Burma and Bangladesh who have fled their countries since the start of the year, risking their lives in order to reach Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand; calls on the Government to make clear to the Burmese government the need to address the reasons that people feel forced to do so; and further calls on the Government to ask the UN Secretary-General to take a personal lead in negotiating with the Burmese government to allow access for humanitarian agencies to Rakhine State.

TREATMENT OF THE ROHINGYA IN BURMA (Early Day Motion 121)

Date tabled: 15.06.2015

Signatures: 41

That this House notes that the continuing persecution of the Rohingya people in Burma has caused and continues to create a humanitarian disaster in the area; further notes that the Muslim Rohingya minority

have been described as the most persecuted people in the world; further notes that they are subject to violence, murder, displacement and as a result many of them are forced to flee; further notes that the Burmese government's refusal to accept the Rohingya as full citizens alongside its failure to stop the toxic anti-Muslim rhetoric and propaganda has led to a situation that can only be described as ethnic cleansing; and further notes that this government along with the regional governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Bangladesh must act decisively to force the Burmese authorities to take action to defend the Rohingya people and restore their basic human rights and freedoms as a matter of the utmost urgency.

RESTRICTIONS ON JOURNALISTS IN BURMA (Early Day Motion 57)

Date tabled: 01.06.2015

Signatures: 51

That this House deplores the restrictions recently imposed on journalists in reporting proceedings in the Burmese parliament, the Assembly of the Union; notes that the restrictions have now been lifted; believes that the reporting of parliamentary proceedings is vital for public information and to hold Members accountable; further notes the importance of the fight by John Wilkes to secure reporting of Parliament in the development of the UK's own democracy; further notes the latest report on Burma in 2015 by Human Rights Watch that highlights increasing intimidation of the media over the past year, including new restrictions on both foreign and domestic journalists; further notes the current imprisonment of 13 journalists and the shooting in October 2014 of the freelance reporter, Ko Par Gyi, by the army whilst held in custody; and calls on the Government to raise concerns about the restrictions on parliamentary reporting in Burma and to express its determination to monitor developments in media freedom in Burma in the future.

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy in Burma

During July, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy in Burma held two meetings, one with Andrew Patrick, Ambassador to Burma, on 6 July and one with Gavin McGillivray, Head of DFID in Burma on 16 July.

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Thank you.

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