



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

MARCH
2010

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH

Arms Trade

02 March 2010 Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 10 February 2010, Official Report, column 978W, on Burma: arms trade, whether his Department has had discussions with the government of (a) Canada, (b) New Zealand and (c) Brazil on a UN-mandated arms embargo against Burma.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's letter to the UN Secretary General and Security Council members in August 2009, we have made broad appeals to international governments to join the EU and ban the sale of arms to Burma. We have recently focused our diplomatic effort on raising the issue of a universal arms embargo with Burma's neighbors. We have also communicated our views to the Russian Government, as Russia is a notable supplier of arms to Burma. We have not yet raised an arms embargo with the Governments of Brazil, New Zealand or Canada. These and many other countries will be covered in a structured global campaign that will be launched shortly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Human Rights

02 March 2010 Dr. Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 10 February 2010, Official Report, column 979W, on Burma: human rights, what discussions he has had in the United Nations Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly on reports of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In both the Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly we have consistently raised our serious concern at reports of human rights abuses in Burma. Our approach reflects the representations we have had from a number of concerned parties who report on situations they believe amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Our judgment is that we would not be able to secure support within the UN Security Council for the actions that would be necessary to follow up with formal charges on those grounds.

However, resolutions secured with strong UK support in the UN's human rights bodies make specific reference to human rights violations by the military regime.

Myitsone Irrawaddy Dams

16 March 2010 Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had recent discussions with the Chinese government on the construction of dams on the Irrawaddy river by the China Power Investment Corporation and Burmese Ministry of Energy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have discussed Burma with their Chinese counterparts. In recent weeks officials have discussed our broad concerns about the

impact of large-scale construction projects on the human rights of the local population. We have not raised the specific issue of the construction of dams on the Irrawaddy River, but are following developments closely and with increasing concern. Our embassy in Rangoon is also supporting work to assess the social and environmental impact of these projects.

22 March 2010 Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the forcible relocation of civilians by the Burma regime for the Myitsone dam construction in Kachin State, Burma.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are concerned about the impact of the construction of the Myitsone Dam on the environment and the human rights of local people. Officials from our embassy in Rangoon have visited the dam site on several occasions, most recently in January 2010. We understand that local people have been told to leave the area, although have so far refused to do so. Our embassy in Rangoon is supporting work to assess the social and environmental impact of this and other dam projects.

Ethnic Groups

16 March 2010 Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on deportations from Thailand to Burma of ethnic Karen people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are closely monitoring reports about the possible forced return of Karen refugees to Burma. Our Ambassador to Thailand has raised our concerns with the Thai authorities stressing the importance of adherence to international standards and to Thailand's international obligations. We understand that the Royal Thai Government decided not to deport the 30 families it had originally identified for removal. We are coordinating closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, US and EU partners and will continue to raise the issue with Thai authorities.

22 March 2010 Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of the mortar-bombing of a school in Karen, Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are aware of reports detailing State Peace and Development Council attacks on unarmed civilians that took place in February 2010, in which two people were injured and unfortunately one schoolboy was killed. We remain deeply concerned about the situation in Karen State where attacks carried out by the Burmese army and their Karen client organizations on civilians have been particularly intense over the past two years. We have repeatedly called for a halt to such offensives and called on the military regime and the Karen National Union to intensify their efforts to bring about a permanent end to the conflict.

Nyi Nyi Aung (Political Prisoner)

16 March 2010 Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had (a) at EU level, (b) with the US administration and (c) with the Burmese government on the case of Nyi Nyi Aung.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Our embassies in Rangoon and in Washington have discussed the plight of Nyi Nyi Aung and developments in his case with US officials. While we regularly urge the Burmese regime to release all of the more than 2,100 political prisoners currently in detention, we have not raised this specific case directly with the authorities. We would naturally be ready to do so were the US Government to indicate this would be helpful. There has been no formal EU discussion on the case of Nyi Nyi Aung.

Forced Labour

17 March 2010 Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received recent reports on trends in the level of forced labour in Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We continue to be gravely concerned that forced labour, including forced portage and

underage military recruitment remain widespread practices, in marked and continued non-compliance with the Convention on Forced Labour. We note the co-operation, albeit limited, of the Burmese authorities with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) under the ILO's Supplementary Understanding with the Government of Burma, which includes a complaints mechanism for victims of forced labour. We received a report from the ILO last November on progress in the implementation of the Supplementary Understanding and expect a further progress report in advance of the ILO Governing Body session on Burma next week. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials in London and Rangoon are in regular contact with the ILO liaison officer in Rangoon, and met him most recently on 15 March. The EU presidency will make a statement on behalf of member states at the ILO Governing Body next week.

Gems (EU Sanctions)

17 March 2010 Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had recent discussions at EU level on the export of gems originating in Burma from Asia to Europe.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: There have been no recent discussions on this issue among EU member states. Sanctions were agreed after the crackdown on peaceful protests in late 2008, and the EU imposed a ban on the import of gems from Burma, as well as prohibiting the provision of financial or technical assistance to entities engaged in the mining and processing of precious and semi-precious stones. These measures target the economic interests of the military regime and their cronies. Discussions will begin shortly in Brussels on the annual renewal of all EU measures against Burma, due at the end of April.

17 March 2010 Mr. Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the effectiveness of sanctions designed to prevent the export of gems originating in Burma to the EU.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Sanctions prohibiting the export of gems from Burma to the EU were introduced after the crackdown on peaceful protests in late 2007, on the basis that the sector played a particular role in sustaining the military and their grip on power. No formal assessment of the effectiveness of the export ban has been made by the Government, but we continue to believe that targeted sanctions are an important means of maintaining pressure for political reform and respect for human rights in Burma.

Asylum

22 March 2010 Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of recent arrests and deportation to Burma of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are concerned by the recent reports by Medecins Sans Frontieres and Physicians for Human Rights on the situation facing displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh. We have raised the plight of the Rohingyas and their status with the Government of Bangladesh, both bilaterally and in concert with EU partners. Officials from our High Commission in Dhaka, including the High Commissioner, have visited the camps for displaced Rohingyas, which are run by UN agencies. We are also supporting the European Commission and UN programmes for Rohingyas through the UK's core funding to the EU and the UN.

24 March 2010 Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the number of displaced people who have fled from Burma to Thailand since January 2010; whether he has had discussions with the government of Thailand on the safety and welfare of those people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We received reports of people fleeing from Burma to Thailand since January 2010 but the numbers are unconfirmed. Following news that Thailand was intending to force 3,000 refugees to return to Burma, our ambassador to Thailand raised this matter with the Thai authorities stressing the importance of adherence to international standards and to Thailand's international obligations. We understand that the Royal Thai Government decided not to deport the 30 families it had initially identified for removal. We continue to closely monitor the situation and are coordinating closely with UN High Commission for Refugees, US and EU partners and will continue to raise the issue with Thai authorities.

Aung San Suu Kyi

22 March 2010 Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Burmese government on the publication of an election law preventing Aung San Suu Kyi from participating in the forthcoming elections in Burma.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: There have been no opportunities for discussions with the Burmese government since the election laws were announced. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a statement describing the targeting of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party “vindictive and callous”. He also wrote to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon referring to the forthcoming meeting of the Group of Friends to ensure a united and effective international response to the unfair terms imposed by the regime’s election laws. At the Human Rights Council on 15 March, at which Burmese Government representatives were present, the Government condemned the election laws. Our Ambassador in Rangoon continues to remind the military regime at every opportunity that without the participation of ethnic groups and the democratic opposition the forthcoming elections will not be credible.

Nuclear Power

23 March 2010 Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of Burma’s (a) nuclear capability and (b) ability to produce uranium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are aware of recent media reporting suggesting that Burma is seeking to develop its nuclear capability. We take such issues very seriously, and remind all states to adhere to their obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

23 March 2010 Mr.Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had discussions with his EU counterparts on the matter of possible nuclear co-operation between Burma and North Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We are aware of recent media reports suggesting that North Korea and Burma are expanding their military relationship. We regularly raise concerns regarding North Korean nuclear proliferation in discussions with EU counterparts, as well as with states involved in the Six-Party Talks process. The UK continues to urge all countries, including Burma, to respect their obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874.

United Nations

24 March 2010 Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how often he receives reports from the EU Special Envoy on Burma on his activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The EU Special Envoy for Burma, Piero Fassino, regularly reports to EU member states including on his 20 November 2009 meeting with the Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation of Burma and his engagement with regional parliamentarians and officials in Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam also in November 2009. More recently, Mr. Fassino reported on the EU Troika meeting with the Burmese Foreign Minister in December 2009 and on his meetings with Assistant Secretary of State, Kurt Campbell and other partners, at the United Nations at the end of January 2010.

There are currently no plans to make a statement but the UK welcomes Mr. Fassino’s continued efforts to communicate the EU’s position to the Burmese authorities, countries in the region and international partners, to try and bring positive change to Burma.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Health Services

23 March 2010 Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding he plans to allocate to the Mae Tao Clinic on the Thailand-Burma border in each of the next three years.

Mr. Thomas: The Department for International Development (DFID) allocated £120,000 to the Mae Tao Clinic in 2009-10. DFID has recently received a funding request from the Mae Tao Clinic, for a continuation of funding over the next two financial years, which we are considering.

International Assistance

23 March 2010 Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of World Bank (a) funding and (b) technical advice for development projects in Burma.

Mr. Thomas: The World Bank has approved no new funding for Burma since 1987 and has no plans to resume its program. It does not give advice on development projects in Burma. It did however provide valuable technical advice as part of the international humanitarian response to Cyclone Nargis which struck Burma in May 2008.

The UK Government would not support a resumption of World Bank funding for Burma until the country has made genuine progress towards political reconciliation and respect for human rights.

Rohingya Refugees

29 March 2010 Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he is taking with the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to improve the humanitarian situation in the camps for Rohingya refugees on the Bangladesh-Burma border.

Mr. Douglas Alexander: We have raised the plight of the Rohingyas and their status with the Government of Bangladesh, both bilaterally and in concert with EU partners. Most recently, my right hon. friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Mike Foster raised the conditions of the Rohingyas in the camps with the Minister for the Environment and Forests during a meeting in London on 17 March. Officials from the British High Commission in Dhaka, including the High Commissioner, have visited the camps for displaced Rohingyas. Officials also held discussions with representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on 15 March in Dhaka.

29 March 2010 Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he is taking to provide assistance for Rohingya refugees in camps on the Bangladesh-Burma border.

Mr. Douglas Alexander: UK support is channelled through our central contributions to the European Commission and United Nations agencies. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) manages the official camps. UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Population Fund also work with the refugees within the camps or in the surrounding communities. The European Commission is providing financial support.

We have raised the plight of the Rohingyas and their status with the Government of Bangladesh, both bilaterally and in concert with EU partners. Officials from the British High Commission in Dhaka, including the High Commissioner, have visited the camps for displaced Rohingyas.

Topical Question with Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs:

02 March 2010 Lindsay Roy: Will my hon. Friend tell me what steps his Department is taking to promote free and fair elections in Burma later this year?

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Recent events in Burma do not encourage us to believe that the elections will be free and fair. For example, Aung San Suu Kyi faced trumped up charges, a bogus trial, and a sentence that was an offence to any notion of justice, and now her appeal has been thrown out. Of course, we continue to hope that the Burmese authorities will miraculously change their position in the weeks and months ahead, so

that the elections will be free and fair, but that will require not only the release of Aung San Suu Kyi but the changing of the constitution and the release of more than 2,000 political prisoners. We continue to hope, but I must say that we are very sceptical about the prospect of those elections being free and fair.

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Myitsone Irrawaddy Dam

17 March 2010 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the relocation of 15,000 civilians by the Government of Burma for the Myitsone dam construction in Kachin State.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: We are concerned about the impact of the construction of the Myitsone Dam on the environment and the human rights of local people. Officials from our embassy in Rangoon have visited the dam site on several occasions, most recently in January 2010. We understand that local people have been told to leave the area, although have so far refused to do so. Our embassy in Rangoon is supporting work to assess the social and environmental impact of this and other dam projects.

Arms Trade

17 March 2010 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether North Korea is supplying arms to Burma.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: We are aware of recent media reporting suggesting North Korea and Burma are engaged in illicit arms trading. The UK continues to urge all countries, including Burma, to respect their obligations under UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874 which prohibit the export from North Korea of "all arms and related material".

Rohingya Refugees

17 March 2010 Lord Alton of Liverpool : To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Bangladesh over the recent arrests and forced displacements of Rohingya refugees; and whether they have asked Bangladesh to recognise undocumented Rohingya refugees.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: We are concerned by the recent reports by Medecins Sans Frontieres and Physicians for Human Rights on the situation facing displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh. We have raised the plight of the Rohingyas and their status with the Government of Bangladesh, both bilaterally and in concert with EU partners.

Officials from our High Commission in Dhaka, including the high commissioner, have visited the camps for displaced Rohingyas, which are run by UN agencies. We are also supporting the European Commission and UN programmes for Rohingyas through the UK's core funding to the EU and the UN. In 2009, the Government also funded a British Council project to train English teachers within the camps.

Human Rights Abuses

17 March 2010 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Karen Women's Organisation Walking Amongst Sharp Knives about alleged human rights abuses against Karen women village chiefs in eastern Burma.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: This report documents horrific abuses against women in Karen State, and reflects the environment in many parts of Burma where individual rights and rule of law are not respected. Officials from our embassy in Rangoon are not permitted access to the areas highlighted in the report, but through the Department for International Development and embassy-funded programmes, we provide significant support to vulnerable communities in Karen State and along the Thai Burma Border.

We continue to urge the Burmese authorities to respect human rights and begin an inclusive and credible transition to democracy.

Election

25 March 2010 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether elections due in Burma later this year will be free and fair.

Lord Brett: Election laws published by the Burmese regime in early March compound the iniquities of the 2008 constitution. The laws appear to force the National League for Democracy to expel Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners from the party, or disband and withdraw from the political process. The laws also require political parties to endorse a constitution imposed through a sham referendum and place severe restrictions on their ability to campaign. In view of these and other restrictions, planned elections cannot be free and fair. The military government appear intent on further marginalising the democratic opposition and Burma's many ethnic groups, when only a fully inclusive political process stands any chance of delivering stability and solving Burma's many problems.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Internally Displaced People

25 March 2010 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government following the report of the International Development Committee on DfID Assistance to Burmese Internally Displaced People and Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border (10th Report, session 2006-07), how much funding has been provided to community-based organisations on the Thai-Burma border to build schools, clinics and shelter in Burma.

Lord Brett: Since 2007, approximately £660,000 of funding from the Department for International Development (DfID) has been used by non-governmental organisations, based in Thailand, to provide humanitarian assistance in Burma. This assistance includes the provision of health, education and other services, and financial support to enable particularly vulnerable people displaced by conflict to buy food. About £18,000 of this funding has been used to build classrooms and water and sanitation facilities for people displaced by conflict.

HOUSE OF LORDS

ORAL PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

24 March 2010 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking regarding the Government of Burma's decision to ban Aung San Suu Kyi from standing or voting in Burma's elections.

Lord Brett: My Lords, first, I commend to the noble Lord, Lord Alton, and to the House the Written Answer to a similar question he put a few days ago, which makes absolutely clear our belief that the election laws are manifestly unfair and fall well short of international demands and standards. On 15 March the Prime Minister described the targeting of Aung San Suu Kyi and opposition political parties as "vindictive and callous". He has written to the UN Secretary-General supporting an early meeting of the Burma Group of Friends and a possible discussion in the UN Security Council. The Government have reiterated their call for a universal arms embargo against Burma.

Lord Alton of Liverpool: In the light of the outrageous decision of the Burmese Government to ban Aung San Suu Kyi from not only contesting but even being able to vote in elections, I strongly welcome what the Minister has just said about the demarche planned by the Prime Minister. Do we intend to seek to enlist the ASEAN countries and China in that initiative? Can the Minister also tell the House what our response is to the recent report from the United Nations special rapporteur on Burma about the continuing atrocities against ethnic minorities in Burma? He identified crimes against humanity and war crimes and suggested that a UN commission of inquiry should be established. Will we support that?

Lord Brett: My Lords, on the noble Lord's first question, the Government continue to raise Burma at the highest level both within the EU and the UN. Over the past months our network of embassies in the region has lobbied numerous countries. The Prime Minister raised the issue with the President of China at the UN General Assembly last September, as did the Foreign Secretary with his opposite number, the Vietnamese Minister of Foreign Affairs-the ASEAN network is chaired by Vietnam at the moment-and Indonesia. Singapore and Thailand have publicly condemned the Burmese election laws.

On the noble Lord's second question, it really is a matter of timing. We strongly support the rapporteur's recommendation, but if we are to press the issue it is important to do so in a way that carries support within the Security Council and not to fall victim to veto or lack of support, as that will be seen in Rangoon as a victory for the military junta. But we are strongly supportive of it and are seeking support.

Lord Avebury: My Lords, can we propose that the European Union make representations to ASEAN not to recognize these sham elections and the fake parliament that will result from them as being contrary to the ASEAN charter? That provides for member governments to adhere to the rule of law and good governance, and the principles of democracy and constitutional government. How can they support these elections, which do none of these things?

Lord Brett: The noble Lord makes an important point. Those issues have been raised, and as I have said the Governments of Singapore and Thailand have already indicated the view the noble Lord sets out. We hope that by the time the elections are announced and take place that view will be shared by the whole ASEAN group.

Lord Howell of Guildford: My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Alton, quite rightly mentioned China. Does the Minister accept, as I am sure he does, that although the arms embargo is entirely right, one effect of sanctions and cutting off links with Burma is simply to open the way for more and more Chinese enterprise and official activity to move into Burma? Chinese activity has moved in this way into east and west Africa, Latin America, Sri Lanka and many other places as well. Will he ensure that any further pressures on the dreadful Burmese Government are tailored in a way that does not simply open the door even wider to Chinese undermining of our efforts, and that we gain the support of the Chinese in putting real pressure on that regime?

Lord Brett: The noble Lord makes an important point. As I previously stated, the Prime Minister raised this issue at the highest level with the President of China in New York in September. We continue to raise it, not only within the ASEAN group but in particular with those important south Asian nations that have trading and other links with the Burmese regime. The influence of those who are in the ASEAN group is perhaps greater than that of those of us in Europe, but we take on board the point made previously that we should work through the European Union. We shall continue to press at all levels-as it is seen as a very high priority by the Prime Minister-to bring about democracy in that country as opposed to sham elections to maintain a military Government.

Lord Dubs: Will my noble friend confirm that India has recently supplied helicopters with possible military uses to the Burmese Government? If that is the case, what representations have been made to India that it should desist from this?

Lord Brett: I have to confess to not being aware whether India has provided helicopters to the regime in Rangoon. I shall make inquiries in that regard and respond to the noble Lord.

Lord Elton: My Lords, the Minister mentioned the contact between our Prime Minister and the Chinese in New York late last year. What response did he get?

Lord Brett: The dialogue is ongoing.

EARLY DAY MOTION

EDM 238 REPORTS OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY IN BURMA

25.11.2009

Carmichael, Alistair

Signed by 185 MPs

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

EDM 391 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

08.12.2009

Evans, Nigel

Signed by 109 MPs

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

EDM 955 THAILAND AND THE RETURN OF ETHNIC KAREN REFUGEES TO BURMA

26.02.2010

Opik, Lembit

Signed by 42 MPs

That this House condemns the actions of the government of Thailand, which is threatening to deport 3,000 ethnic Karen refugees back to Burma; is appalled that on 5 February 2010 thirteen refugees were forced to return against their will to an area which is infested with landmines, and occupied by a military force, allied to the dictatorship in Burma, which is likely to use the villagers as slave labour and children as child soldiers; expresses deep concern that the government of Thailand has made false claims to the international community that the refugees want to return; calls on the government of Thailand to turn its temporary halt of the deportations into a permanent one, and to end the harassment and intimidation of the refugees; and calls on the British Government to make the strongest possible representations to Thailand on this matter, and to examine whether the actions of the government of Thailand in forcing refugees to return could break international humanitarian and human rights law.

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**for Human Rights, Democracy
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