



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

MAY
2014

Answers to Written Parliamentary Questions

Military training

6 May 2014 Sir Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether military training given to the Burmese Army by UK advisers advises soldiers to refuse orders that could result in human rights abuses.

Mr Francois: This issue was covered in a panel discussion during the export version of the Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context course that was delivered in Burma, in January 2014, by a mixed civil-military team from the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom and one of their academic providers, Cranfield university. The discussion sat within a lecture on Rules of Engagement. An international law academic from Cranfield university, who specialises in the law of armed conflict, set out the legal position with regards to obeying illegal orders and the consequences of disobeying them.

Rohingya

6 May 2014 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report *Marching to Genocide in Burma*; and what, if any, action they intend to take in response.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi) (Con): We share many of the concerns that United to End Genocide raise in their recent report on the plight of the Rohingya. We continue to press the Burmese Government to find a long-term solution to bring peace and reconciliation to the communities in Rakhine State. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), summoned the Burmese Ambassador on 7 April and called on the Burmese Government urgently to restore humanitarian access to all communities in need, and to ensure the security of humanitarian aid workers and all communities in Rakhine State. Mr Swire raised our wider concerns about the situation in Rakhine State with senior Burmese Ministers during his visit in January. I personally discussed the situation with the Minister of National Planning and Economic Development, Dr Kan Zaw, during his visit to the UK in March.

We remain in close contact with Médecins Sans Frontières and have made clear to the Burmese Government their responsibility to ensure services are adequately delivered. We continue to maintain that allegations of human rights abuses must be dealt with immediately through a clear and transparent investigative and prosecutorial process that meets international standards.

Travel documentation

7 May 2014 Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many travel document applications arising from each country were being processed as of 1 April 2014.

James Brokenshire: The following table gives a breakdown, by nationality, of outstanding applications for a Home Office Travel Document.

To align with protocol on publishing statistics, the list represents the position at 31 December 2013.

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However, most of the cases shown as outstanding have been concluded since that date.

(...)

Myanmar 84

(...)

Full list: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140507/text/140507w0003.htm#140507105000106>

Economic links

12 May 2014 Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what economic links there are with Burma; and what the value of (a) exports to and (b) imports from Burma was in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr Swire: Building a sustainable economy in Burma, including increased responsible international investment, is key to economic growth, alleviating poverty, improving livelihoods and improving stability.

As set out in the 'UK Activities in Burma' document published on 8 April alongside a written ministerial statement, the Government is working to encourage and support Burma to remove barriers to becoming a stable, prosperous and democratic country with a sustainable economy that benefits all its people and created a positive climate for domestic, international and UK trade and investment.

We are active in several areas including:

establishing a UK Trade and Investment office in Burma to provide practical support to British companies; establishing a UK Financial Services Task Force to support the development of sound financial structures and products;

funding two specialist economists from the International Growth Centre to support the Myanmar Development Resource Institute in providing high quality advice to Government;

providing £1.1 million to support Burma's application to the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative which will help improve the transparency and accountability of the revenues from Burma's natural resources;

supporting work to strengthen Burma's accountancy profession, to tackle financial crime and to increase local community involvement in investment decisions.

UK exports of goods to Burma in 2013 were worth £44 million (a 243% year on year increase) and imports from Burma were worth £65 million (a 44% year on year increase). The top UK exports were transport equipment and road vehicles while the top imports were clothing.

In 2012, the last year for which total goods and services figures are available, UK exports of goods and services to Burma were worth £20.8 million and imports from Burma were worth £46 million.

Religious minorities

13 May 2014 Chris Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the situation for religious minorities in Burma.

Mr Swire: British officials regularly receive reports on a wide range of human rights issues, including the treatment of religious minorities in Burma. We share UN Special Rapporteur for Burma Tomas Ojea Quintana's concerns, as noted in his final report to the UN Human Rights Council on 2 April 2014, that the Burmese Government is "not fulfilling its international human rights obligation to tackle incitement to violence based on national, racial or religious hatred".

We are particularly concerned by the rise in anti-Muslim attacks and hate speech over the last two years, continued intercommunal tensions in Rakhine state and the plight of the Rohingya. I raised our wider concerns about the situation in Rakhine state with senior Burmese Ministers during their visit in January and Baroness Warsi discussed the situation with the Burmese Minister of National Planning and Economic Development, Dr Kan Zaw, during his visit to the UK in March. During my visit to Burma in January, I also met the Kachin Baptist Convention, the largest religious organisation in Kachin state. We continue to encourage religious tolerance and dialogue and call on the Burmese authorities and community leaders to help create a conducive environment for this to take place.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140513/text/140513w0001.htm#14051391000017>

Human trafficking

14 May 2014 Angie Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to the answers of 30 April 2014, Official Report, column 717W and of 14 January 2014, Official Report, column 481W, on human trafficking: victim support schemes, for what reason the gender and location of each individual is not included in the information for February 2014; and if she will provide this information for future questions on the subject; (2) pursuant to the answer of 30 April 2014, Official Report, column 717W, on human trafficking: victim support schemes, how many of those referred were (a) men and (b) women; what steps are taken to ensure that after victims leave the shelter into which they have been placed by the Salvation Army they are not re-trafficked and do not contact their former traffickers; and if she will make a statement.

Karen Bradley: The requested information on the gender of potential victims and the regions in which they were found (answer 30 April 2014, Official Report, column 717W, refers) was not withheld and is provided in the following table.

The victim care contract does not require support providers to maintain any form of formal contact with victims after the recovery and reflection period. All support providers work with victims throughout their support period to help them move on from the service. Through the National Referral Mechanism review and the re-tender of the adult victims care contract, we are looking at what more we can do to help victims recover and reintegrate effectively.

The table contains the requested details of the 126 referrals in February 2014.

(...)

Nationality	Gender	Region	Agency Type
Burmese	Female	South East	Home Office

(...)

For full table, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140514/text/140514w0002.htm#1405153000103>

Prison inmates in the UK

14 May 2014 Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (...) (3) what the nationality was of (a) all people in prison and (b) people in prison who self-identified as Muslim on 1 January 2014; (...)

Jeremy Wright: Data are held centrally on the prison population in England and Wales on the last day of each month, so figures have been provided for 31 December 2013 (with the exception of PQ 197068 which has been answered as at 30 June 2013—the latest available data for criminal history information). (...) For PQ 197069, table 3 provides the prison population by nationality for self-declared Muslims and the total for all other religions. (...)

Table 3: Prison population by nationality and religion, as at 31 December 2013, England and Wales

Extract from table

	All	Muslims
All nationalities	84,163	11,729
British nationals	72,561	8,284
Myanmar	2	2

For full table, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140514/text/140514w0005.htm#1405159000033>

Burma mentioned in House of Commons Debate on Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion

1 May 2014 Mark Lazarowicz: “As many Members have already emphasised, it is not just the situation of Christians about which we should be concerned, so let me give a few more examples. Constituents have raised concerns with me about the incredibly terrible situation of the Muslim Rohingya in Burma.”

Mark Pritchard: “This has been a timely debate. We need to keep a watching brief on these issues. As more Members visit Burma—I know that members of the International Development Committee recently visited—I hope they will speak out for religious freedom.”

Mr Swire: “Let me make some progress, please. The examples extend from the restrictions on the Rohingya Muslims in Burma to reports of raids on house churches in China, from the persecution of both Christians and Jews across the middle east to the plight of the Baha’i in Iran and Shias in Bahrain. Indeed, official restrictions on religion are at their highest for six years. That is why we actively intend to do more, not least as a result of the recommendations of the all-party group on international religious freedom and of the Government’s expert advisory group on freedom of religion or belief, which is chaired by my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Warsi, who has responsibilities for those matters in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.”

For the full debate, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140501/debtext/140501-0003.htm#14050135000001>

Burma mentioned in House of Lords debate on amendments to the Immigration Bill

12 May 2014 Baroness Smith of Basildon: (...) The Government dispute that but the Minister confirmed to me in his letter of 25 March that the Government have not discussed the development of what was then Clause 60, on deprivation of citizenship, with other countries and do not consider it necessary to do so. I still find it quite incredible that the Government do not think that they have to consider other countries and debate this issue with them prior to implementation. In his letter, the noble Lord also relied on the statement that other countries allow for deprivations to make people stateless. He used, as the Immigration Minister, James Brokenshire, used in the other place, the Republic of Ireland and Belgium as examples. I was not aware of the position of Belgium on the issue and whether it has made anyone stateless in recent years, but the Minister could have quoted Tunisia, Lithuania, or countries that have rendered political opponents or ethnic minorities stateless—such as Zimbabwe, Burma, Serbia and Russia. (...)

For full debate, see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldhansrd/text/140512-0001.htm#14051211000459>

Burma mentioned in Westminster hall debate on Human Rights in North Korea

13 May 2014 Fiona Bruce: (...) I believe that we can be encouraged by what has happened in Burma, because that same man, Ben Rogers, worked assiduously for many years to highlight the difficulties that people in Burma suffered, and we have recently seen what has happened in that country. Just a few years ago, many of us might not have hoped for the changes that are occurring there. We must maintain the same degree of hope for the people in North Korea. (...)

For full debate, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140513/halltext/140513h0001.htm#14051374000001>

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR DEMOCRACY IN BURMA

On May the 6th the APPG Burma group held a meeting with FCO Minister with responsibility for Burma, Mr Hugo Swire. The meeting was for APPG members only.

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