



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

OCT
2010

HOUSE OF COMMONS

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH

Burma: Crimes Against Humanity

11 October 2010 Bob Russell : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take into account the findings of the report by the Irish Centre for Human Rights entitled Crimes against Humanity in Western Burma: The situation of the Rohingyas in developing his Department's policy on Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Browne : The Government take careful note of reports such as this one, which documents the appalling human rights abuses endured by the Rohingya ethnic group. We are working to highlight their plight, and seeking to end impunity for such abuses, through the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly.

Burma: Refugees

18 Oct 2010 Jo Swinson : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what plans his Department has to increase the level of funding provided to refugees from Burma who are in camps in Thailand.

Alan Duncan : The Department for International Development (DFID) has more than doubled its total support for Burmese refugees in Thailand since 2007-08. We have allocated £1.1 million to the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) for 2011, the majority of which will be used to provide food and shelter for refugees in Thailand.

In addition, we plan to provide around £650,000 to the International Rescue Committee to improve access to legal assistance for refugees in Thailand in 2010-11.

The overall size of DFID's future programme in Burma will be decided on the basis of the bilateral aid review and the results of the comprehensive spending review.

Burma: Christianity

18 October 2010 Chris Evans : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment his Department has made of the situation of Christian communities in Burma.

Jeremy Browne : The Government condemn all instances where individuals face persecution or discrimination because of their faith or belief. In Burma, we are particularly concerned at the treatment of Christian and Muslim minorities who are disproportionately affected by the wider pattern of human rights abuses. Our ambassador in Rangoon regularly raises human rights concerns directly with the regime and we will continue to highlight the situation in the UN's human rights bodies, pursuing strongly worded resolutions in the General Assembly and at the Human Rights Council.

Burma: Foreign Relations

18 October 2010 Chris Evans : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aims and objectives his Department has set for its policy on Burma.

Jeremy Browne : The Government wish to see a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Burma, where human rights are fully respected. Our immediate objectives are the release of more than 2,100 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi and the start of a genuine process of national reconciliation involving the military regime, the democratic opposition and all ethnic groups.

Burma: Politics and Government

20 October 2010 Chris Evans : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the (a) leadership and (b) political objectives of the Burmese government.

Jeremy Browne : Burma is a military dictatorship. Power is controlled by Senior General Than Shwe. He has presided over a wide range of human rights abuses and political prisoners have increased under his leadership. He is the architect of the regime's so-called 'roadmap to a disciplined democracy', including elections scheduled for 7 November. These elections are designed to perpetuate military rule. The Governments are clear that they will not be free and fair and lack international credibility.

Burma: Human Rights

21 October 2010 Yvette Cooper: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps his Department has taken in the UN Human Rights Council to achieve the release of political prisoners in Burma.

William Hague : The UK raised human rights in Burma at the Human Rights Council in September. Both the UK and EU called for the release of political prisoners in Burma in their statements on Countries of Concern. The EU also raised political prisoners in their response to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights opening statement. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is currently working to achieve a robust resolution on human rights in Burma at the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee and intends to work on a further resolution on Burma at the next session of the Human Rights Council in March. I regularly raise the situation in Burma with my counterparts in the region. We continue to support the work of Mr Tomas Ojea Quintana, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in Burma, mandated by the Human Rights Council.

Religious Freedom: Christianity

26 October 2010 Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of which countries he has received reports of attacks on Christians in the last three months; and what discussions he has had on this issue with his counterpart in each such country.

Jeremy Browne : The Government condemn all instances of violence and discrimination against individuals and groups because of their faith or belief. Our overseas missions monitor human rights in their host countries, raise our concerns about individual cases and lobby for changes in discriminatory practices and laws. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights, including freedom of religion and belief.

Examples over the last three months include in Morocco, where our ambassador to Morocco raised concerns with the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs over the expulsion of 16 British nationals for alleged proselytising; in Pakistan, where the Minister for South Asia raised the issue of persecution of religious minorities with the Pakistan Federal Minister of Minorities; and in Burma where, following reports of attacks on Christian communities in Karen and Chin State, embassy officials met with representatives of these groups. Our ambassador to Burma also recently raised human rights concerns directly with the Burmese military Government.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Burma: Overseas Aid

11 October 2010 Bob Russell : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much aid the UK has given to Burma in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Alan Duncan : Details of UK aid expenditure in developing countries, including Burma, are published in Statistics on International Development (SID) which is available in the House Library or online at www.dfid.gov.uk.

UK Bilateral Gross Public Expenditure (GPEX) and imputed expenditure through multilateral organisations in Burma from 2004-05 to 2008-09 are reproduced as follows. Figures for 2009-10 will be published in the next addition of SID later this year.

£000		
Financial year	Total bilateral GPEX	UK imputed multilateral shares
2004-05	6,008	3,376
2005-06	6,483	3,625
2006-07	7,610	3,140
2007-08	8,915	7,195
2008-09	57,601	5,583

Overseas Aid: Drugs

11 October 2010 David Burrowes : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department has paid to (a) the International Harm Reduction Association and (b) others to support harm reduction drug treatment overseas in the last five years; and what assessment has been made of the effectiveness of such payments.

Stephen O'Brien : The Department for International Development (DFID) has committed £2,230,252 over five years ending 30 September 2011, in support to the International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA). DFID has also supported the provision of HIV services for injecting drug users through bilateral programmes in Bangladesh, Burma, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam and the central Asia region, and through support to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. It would entail disproportionate costs to collect information on the amount spent on these individual harm reduction programmes as they are part of broader public health programmes. All programmes funded by DFID are reviewed annually against agreed performance indicators and targets to ensure progress and assess impact and effectiveness. An independent annual review of IHRA was last conducted in December 2009 which demonstrated significant impact.

HOUSE OF LORDS

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Burma

11 October 2010 Lord Lester of Herne Hill: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will encourage the United Nations to set up a commission of inquiry into alleged abuses of human rights in Myanmar.

Lord Howell of Guildford : We support the UN Special Rapporteur's call for the UN to consider a Commission of Inquiry and are working with a number of countries to build the necessary international support. The Government believe that Burma's leaders must be held to account for the human rights abuses catalogued by the UN over many years.

Flooding

11 October 2010 Lord Hunt of Chesterton: To ask Her Majesty's Government, following this year's exceptional floods in Pakistan and the danger of further flooding in many developing countries, whether they will be increasing the United Kingdom's contribution to international programmes by the World Meteorological Organisation and other United Nations agencies to reduce flooding and ameliorate its consequences.

Baroness Verma : The UK is the fourth largest contributor to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), giving £40 million per annum. In addition, the Met Office gives funds to the WMO Voluntary Co-operation Programme which supports developing country national met services. The UK Met Office provides weather forecasts direct to the Pakistan met department to support its forecasts during the floods.

In Pakistan, as well as supporting humanitarian needs, we will ensure that poor peoples' livelihoods are rebuilt to withstand future disasters, including floods. We have also funded similar work in other disaster-prone countries such as Haiti and Burma. The Department for International Development (DfID) gives £1 million per annum to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and £1.7 million per annum to the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery to build resilience to disasters.

Future funding provided by DfID will be based on the findings of the ongoing multilateral aid review and outcome of the comprehensive spending review.

ANSWERS TO ORAL PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

BBC and British Council

21 October 2010 Lord Judd : To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the BBC and the British Council concerning the political situation in Burma, Russia and the North Caucasus; and what was the outcome.

Lord Howell of Guildford : My Lords, we regularly discuss our mutual global priorities with the BBC World Service and the British Council, both in the UK and in posts overseas, including the ones which the noble Lord mentions. This in no way detracts from the independence of the two organisations, which we strongly support. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary has made plain the importance he places on both these institutions as key partners in projecting British values.

14 October 2010 Mark Pritchard : May we have an urgent debate on Burma? With the Burmese elections due on 7 November, does the Leader of the House agree that those elections need to be free and fair, and that if the Burmese regime is serious about engaging with the international community it needs to honour its pledge and release Aung San Suu Kyi?

George Young : I wholly agree with my hon. Friend's point about the release, and I know that the British Government share that concern. He will have an opportunity on 16 November to ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs about this. Alternatively, he can apply for a debate in Westminster Hall or through the Backbench Business Committee.

Early Day Motions

Early Day Motion 112: Human Rights in Burma

John Pugh

30.05.2010

Signed by 148 MPs

That this House sends its best wishes to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who will spend her 65th birthday in detention on 19 June 2010; calls for the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Burma; rejects the elections planned by Burma's generals later this year which, due to election

laws and ongoing repression in Burma, cannot be free and fair; condemns Burma's new constitution which is designed to maintain dictatorship in civilian guise and does not grant rights or protection to Burma's ethnic minorities; notes that all diplomatic efforts to reform the dictatorship's sham roadmap to democracy have failed; recalls that the United Nations Security Council, General Assembly, Secretary General and Human Rights Council have all stated that the solution to the problems in Burma lies in dialogue between the dictatorship, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, and ethnic representatives; and calls on the Government to support a United Nations-led effort to pressure the dictatorship to enter into such dialogue.

**Published by The Burma Campaign UK, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT
www.burmacampaign.org.uk tel: 020 7324 4710 fax: +44 20 7324 4717**



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