



# LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

OCT  
2012

## ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

### *Rohingya/ Rakhine State*

**29 Oct 2012 Mr Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the treatment of the Rohingya peoples in Burma.

**Mr Swire:** I have received disturbing reports of further outbreaks of clashes in Rakhine State in western Burma between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims.

The latest outbreaks of inter-communal violence in Rakhine State seem to be the most serious since the initial violence in June and, according to reports, have left several thousand people homeless and resulted in an unverified number of casualties.

I issued a statement on 24 October which called for an immediate end to the violence. I further urged the Government to take all necessary action to protect civilians, and to grant full humanitarian access to the areas affected as soon as possible. In a subsequent statement of 28 October, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), again called on all parties to cease the violence and for the Burmese authorities to take all necessary measures to guarantee security in the region.

**19 October 2012 Graham Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of which Na Sa Ka bases in Arakan State are being used to detain ethnic Rohingya.

**Mr Swire:** We are aware of unverified reports of Rohingya being detained in Na Sa Ka bases in Rakhine (Arakan) State.

At the UN General Assembly in September 2012, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pressed the Burmese government to seek a long term solution to the issues affecting Burma's ethnic groups, including the Rohingya.

Our Ambassador in Rangoon visited Rakhine State in early October. This was the first independent diplomatic mission to the area since the violence erupted in June. The Ambassador met community leaders and saw some of the worst affected areas for himself, including the state capital Sittwe which was the scene of some of the worst violence during the recent unrest. The UK is providing humanitarian support through core contributions to UN and EU and has stressed the importance of ensuring the aid does not support or lead to the permanent displacement of Rohingya communities.

**11 October 2012 Baroness Goudie:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what information they have received regarding ethnic Rohingya of Burma not being allowed to return to their homes following recent violence in Arakan State.

**Baroness Warsi:** We are aware of reports concerning restrictions on movement which prevents members of the Rohingya community from returning to their homes. Our ambassador to Burma visited Rakhine State on 2 and 3 October 2012, accompanied by officials from our embassy and officials from the Department for International Development. Our ambassador met community leaders and saw some of the badly-affected

areas for himself, including the state capital Sittwe, scene of some of the worst violence during the recent unrest.

The UK is providing humanitarian support through contributions to the UN and the EU and has stressed the importance of ensuring this aid does not support or lead to the permanent displacement of Rohingya communities.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his Burmese counterparts on Burma's refusal to allow ethnic Rohingya to be included in the 2014 Census.

**Mr Swire:** Our Ambassador in Rangoon discussed the importance of including all those living in Burma within the census with the Borders Minister in September. We will continue to raise these issues with both the Burmese authorities and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) which is working with the Burmese government on the census planning.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he has held with UK representatives of the ethnic Rohingya of Burma since violence began in Arakan State in June 2012.

**Mr Swire:** Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) officials met representatives of the Rohingya on 5 July and again on 21 August 2012. FCO officials are in close and regular contact with the UK representatives of the Rohingya community and are kept up to date with their concerns.

**19 October 2012 Lyn Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Bangladeshi government on closure of the border between Burma and Bangladesh.

**Alistair Burt:** Border trade between Bangladesh and Burma resumed on 28-August, following meetings between respective border security officials. The crossing had previously been closed since 8 June following the onset of sectarian violence in the north Rakhine State in Burma.

The British Government is in regular contact with the Government of Bangladesh about the humanitarian situation in the Bangladesh-Burma border area. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague)—during a meeting with the Bangladeshi Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, on 28 July—raised the issue of Bangladesh's international obligation to accept refugees and offer emergency medical support to those attempting to cross into Bangladesh to flee the violence in north Rakhine State, Burma. The then Secretary of State for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), also discussed the humanitarian situation in the southeast of the country with Prime Minister Hasina on 12 August.

The British high commission in Dhaka, along with EU partners, has regular conversations with senior interlocutors in the Government of Bangladesh to stress the importance that essential aid agency programmes in south-eastern Bangladesh are able to continue.

**08 October 2012 Baroness Goudie:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what projects are funded by the Department for International Development to promote communal understanding between ethnic Rohingya and ethnic Rakhine in Rakhine State, Burma.

**Baroness Northover:** The UK has called on the Burmese Government and representatives of ethnic groups to end the violence, grant full humanitarian access to affected areas and build a process of reconciliation among the communities in Rakhine state, Burma. No bilateral projects are funded by DfID to promote communal understanding between ethnic Rohingya and ethnic Rakhine in Rakhine State, Burma. DfID has provided humanitarian support in Rakhine through core contributions to the UN and EU.

**11 October 2012 Baroness Goudie:** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have raised the blocking of humanitarian aid to internally displaced people in Rakhine State, Burma with (1) the United Nations Secretary General, and (2) the United Nations Secretary General's Special Adviser on Burma.

**Baroness Warsi:** During the recent UN General Assembly session, on 28 September 2012, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire) represented the UK Government at the Friends of Myanmar (Burma) meeting. This meeting was hosted by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and attended by Mr Vijay Nambiar, the UN Secretary General's Special Adviser on Burma.

Mr Swire highlighted our concerns in a number of areas, including the violence in Rakhine State. We continue to call on the Government of Burma to allow full and unrestricted humanitarian access to all areas of Burma.

**31 October 2012 Simon Danczuk:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment her Department has made of the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state in Burma.

**Mr Duncan:** The recent increase in communal violence between the de-facto stateless Muslim Rohingya and the majority Buddhist Rakhine communities has taken the reported number of displaced people to over 100,000. The majority lack food, safe drinking water or adequate sanitation.

A written ministerial statement today announces bilateral humanitarian support to provide urgent water, sanitation and nutrition support to more than 58,000 people.

**11 October 2012 Baroness Goudie:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the 1982 citizenship law in Burma is compatible with Burma's obligations as a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Baroness Warsi:** The Burmese 1982 citizenship law in its current form effectively denies the Rohingya community basic civil and political rights, including citizenship. During his meeting with the Burmese Foreign Minister, U Wunna Maung Lwin, at the UN General Assembly session on 25 September 2012, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) urged the Burmese Government to amend the 1982 citizenship law in order to ensure it conformed with established human rights principles.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his Burmese counterpart on revising Burma's National Registration Card so that it no longer identifies the bearer's religion and ethnicity.

**Mr Swire:** The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the issue of the 1982 Citizenship Law with the Burmese Foreign Minister during their meeting in New York in September. Our Ambassador also raised the issue of citizenship with the Borders Minister in September.

### ***Kachin State***

**30 Oct 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead :** To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the humanitarian needs of the Kachin people displaced by conflict in Burma.

**Baroness Northover:** The instability in Kachin and Shan States, which started in June 2011, has led to the displacement of over 70,000 people (as of September 2012), loss of lives and livelihoods, and damage to infrastructure. Humanitarian priorities include the provision of shelter, water and sanitation, and food for those displaced. DfID has provided £2 million to support humanitarian needs in Kachin through a number of local non-government organisations. This will help to meet the needs of around 27,500 internally displaced people, largely in border camps not controlled by Government, for food security, shelter, water, sanitation, health and bedding.

**30 Oct 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead :** To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance they provide to internally displaced people in Kachin State, Burma.

**30 Oct 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead :** To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to extend and increase humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people in Kachin State, Burma.

**Baroness Northover:** To date, DfID has provided £2 million to support humanitarian needs in Kachin

through a number of local non-government organisations which is helping meet the needs of around 27,500 internally displaced people for food security, shelter, water, sanitation, health and bedding. UK support has gone largely to people in border camps not controlled by Government. We will continue to keep the situation under review.

### **Chin State/ Religious Rights**

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the findings of the Chin Human Rights Organization's report entitled Threats to Our Existence: Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma published in September 2012.

**Mr Swire:** Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials, accompanied by colleagues from the Department for International Development, met a delegation from the Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO) during their visit to UK in September. They read with great interest the full and comprehensive report produced by the CHRO and are considering its recommendations.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to ensure that reports of violations of religious freedom in Chin State and throughout Burma are included in the UN General Assembly's 2012 Resolution on Burma.

**Mr Swire:** During the upcoming UN General Assembly 3rd Committee (human rights) discussion of Burma, we will press for a UN resolution which highlights our concerns in a number of pressing areas, including the need to find long term solutions to issues affecting Burma's ethnic groups, including religious freedom.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of the potential role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Burma in violating the right to freedom of religion for religious minorities.

**Mr Swire:** We have taken careful note of the findings of the Chin Human Rights Organisation's report, 'Threats to Our Existence' including the allegations made against the Ministry of Religious Affairs. We are considering the report's recommendations. Ministers and officials continue to raise our concerns about religious freedom with the Burmese government at every opportunity.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the involvement of the Burmese Department of Education and Training in violating the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

**Mr Swire:** We have taken careful note of the findings of the Chin Human Rights Organisation's report, 'Threats to Our Existence,' including the allegations of the involvement of the Burmese Department of Education and Training in violating the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. Ministers and officials continue to raise our concerns with the Burmese government over reports of human rights abuses, including religious intolerance, at every opportunity.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his Burmese counterpart regarding violations of freedom of religion or belief in Burma, including Chin State.

**Mr Swire:** The protection of and support for human rights in Burma remains central to the UK's policy towards Burma. While recognising the progress in Burma over the last 18 months, Ministers and officials continue to raise our concerns over reports of human rights abuses at every opportunity.

Most recently at the Friends of Burma meeting at the UN General Assembly in September, I raised our concerns over the violence in Rakhine and Kachin States.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the government of Burma regarding reports that the Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training Schools are run by the military and that youth from Chin Christian backgrounds are forbidden from practising Christianity and forced to convert to Buddhism.

**Mr Swire:** We have taken careful note of the findings of the Chin Human Rights Organisation's report, 'Threats to Our Existence' including the allegations surrounding the Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training Schools. In discussions with the Burmese government the UK continues to condemn all instances where individuals face persecution or discrimination because of their faith or beliefs, wherever they happen and whatever the religion of the individual or group concerned.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the government of Burma regarding reports of orders for the destruction of large Christian crosses in Chin State; and what his policy is on ensuring that Chin Christians have full freedom of religion in accordance with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Mr Swire:** Reports of religious and ethnic intolerance continuing in Burma remain of deep concern, not only in Chin, but also in Kachin and Rakhine States. In discussions with the Burmese government we continue to condemn all instances where individuals face persecution or discrimination because of their faith or beliefs, wherever they happen and whatever the religion of the individual or group concerned. Ministers and officials continue to raise our concerns with the Burmese government over reports of human rights abuses, including religious intolerance, at every opportunity.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to encourage the Burmese government to issue a formal invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion and Belief to visit Burma, including Chin State, to conduct an independent investigation into reports of violations of religious freedom in Burma.

**Mr Swire:** We are encouraging the Burmese government to issue a formal invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion and Belief to visit Burma.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy and other political parties in Burma regarding violations of religious freedom in Chin State and other areas.

**Mr Swire:** We continue to raise the importance of ensuring that the human rights of all those living in Burma are protected in discussions with the Burmese government, the National League for Democracy and other political parties. Our Ambassador in Rangoon raised these issues with Aung San Suu Kyi during a meeting with her on 11 October.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times British Embassy officials in Burma have visited Chin State in the last year; and whether he proposes that such officials should seek regular access to Chin State.

**Mr Swire:** Officials from our Embassy in Rangoon visited Chin State in March of this year. A further visit is planned for early 2013.

### ***Ceasefire Negotiations***

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the government of Burma regarding the continuing military presence in Chin State; and what steps he is taking to urge the Burmese government to reduce troop numbers in Chin State and all ethnic ceasefire areas.

**Mr Swire:** Resolving Burma's long-running ethnic conflicts are vital to long-term stability and prosperity in Burma. We continue to highlight the importance of this issue in all our discussions with the Burmese government. We welcome the Burmese authorities' attempts to build trust with ethnic groups including signing cease-fire agreements with 10 ethnic groups. We are now urging the government to take the next steps towards a process of national political dialogue.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Chin State following the ceasefire agreed between the Burmese Army and the Chin National Front.

**Mr Swire:** Officials from the British Embassy Rangoon regularly meet representatives from Chin political parties to discuss their concerns. We have also taken careful note of the findings of the Chin Human Rights Organization's report, 'Threats to Our Existence' and are considering its recommendations.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Burmese government on plans to move from the current ceasefire talks to substantive national political dialogue and address the key issues of self-determination for ethnic nationalities within a federal constitutional framework.

**Mr Swire:** We are actively supporting the reconciliation process. In June the Prime Minister announced the allocation of an additional £5 million during Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to the UK for immediate peace-building activities. Our Embassy in Rangoon also hosted a visit of UK experts in July with experience of trust-building and peace-building between communities in Northern Ireland. We intend to continue to draw on UK expertise in this area to support the continuation of the reconciliation process.

### **Human Rights**

**19 October 2012 Graham Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of crimes against humanity being committed by the Burmese government against Burmese people.

**Mr Swire:** The promotion of the rule of law and protection of human rights are central to our relationship with Burma. As the largest aid donor to Burma, we are in regular contact with ethnic groups and Non Governmental Organisations, and remained concerned about reported human rights, abuses particularly in ethnic areas.

We strongly supported a UN resolution at the UN Human Rights Council in March which called on the Burmese government to take urgent measures to end the targeting of civilians in military operations, and prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence.

During the upcoming UN General Assembly 3(rd) Committee (Human rights) discussion of Burma due to take place in November we will again press for a UN resolution which highlights again these concerns.

**11 October 2012 Baroness Goudie:** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have discussed Burma signing the Rome Statute with any representatives of the Government of Burma.

**The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi):** We have had no discussions with the Burmese Government on the signing of the Rome Statute.

However, we continue to support UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly resolutions which encourage the Burmese Government to conform to established international human rights principles in a number of areas. We continue to stress that, until the Burmese Government resolve the many outstanding issues, we will press for UN resolutions which highlight the strength of our concerns.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to encourage the Burmese government to sign and ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

**Mr Swire:** As a long term supporter of those promoting the protection of human rights in Burma, our Embassy in Rangoon will continue to encourage the Burmese government to meet its obligations under existing treaties. We continue to urge the Burmese government to ensure its domestic law complies with international human rights norms and that it ratifies human rights treaties including International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to support the International Labour Organisation's efforts to work with the Burmese Government to eradicate all forms of forced labour by 2015.

**Mr Swire:** We remain concerned by reports of forced labour in Burma, including in Rakhine State.

We regularly raise forced labour issues in UN Resolutions. We work closely with, and commend, the efforts of International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Burma. We also welcome the efforts of the Burmese government and its commitment to eradicate forced labour by 2015. We will be closely following the implementation of this commitment.

**19 October 2012 Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he plans to take to encourage the Burmese government to ensure the teaching of ethnic minority languages is included in the national curriculum.

**Mr Swire:** We continue to assist the Burmese government and ethnic groups in efforts to turn the numerous initial ceasefire agreements into lasting political settlements. We are also exploring ways in which the UK can support Burma's educational structures. Officials from our embassy in Rangoon have also raised the issue of including ethnic minority languages in the national curriculum with Burmese Ministers.

### ***Political Prisoners***

**22 October 2012 Baroness Parminter:** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have received reports that torture is still being used against political prisoners in Burma.

**The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi):** We remain seriously concerned about all allegations of ill-treatment and torture in Burmese prisons, including of those imprisoned for their political views.

In a statement on 5 August, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma, Tomas Quintana, referred to unverified reports of the use of torture in places of detention following the violence in Rakhine state.

We continue to call for the release of all political prisoners at every opportunity. In a statement on 18 September 2012, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), welcomed the release of a number of political prisoners on 17 September 2012, urged all remaining political prisoners to be released and called on the Government to establish an independent mechanism to look into disputed cases. He also pressed for the lifting of restrictions, including on travel, on those already released.

On 25 September 2012, the Foreign Secretary reiterated these concerns to the Burmese Foreign Minister, U Wunna Maung Lwin, when they met at the UN General Assembly session.

**22 October 2012 Baroness Parminter:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to obtain the release of the Burmese human rights activist, U Myint Aye.

**Baroness Warsi:** U Myint Aye was not included in the most recent release of political prisoners on 17 September 2012 and remains in detention.

We continue to call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners at every opportunity, most recently by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), during his meeting with Burmese Foreign Minister, U Wunna Maung Lwin, when they met at the UN General Assembly session on 25 September 2012.

**29 Oct 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool :** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have taken steps to obtain the release of Zaw Zaw Aung and other political prisoners in Burma; and what meetings they have had with representatives of Burma's democracy movement since the Foreign Secretary's visit to Burma in 2011.

**The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi):** There are no restrictions on Burmese diplomats travelling within the UK.

Officials from our embassy in Rangoon intending to travel beyond main urban centres must apply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for travel permission in advance. Permission is usually granted, allowing our embassy officials to travel extensively throughout Burma to meet a wide cross section of Burmese civil society and political representatives.

**29 Oct 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool :** To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma regarding its refusal to grant passports to members of the 88 Generation Students group.

**Baroness Warsi:** In a statement of the 18 September, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) pressed for the lifting of restrictions, including on travel, on those political prisoners already released. On 20 September, officials at our embassy in Rangoon were informed that nineteen 88 Generation leaders had been granted passports.

### **Aid**

**08 October 2012 Mr Burrowes:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what reports she has received on refugees from Burma in camps in Thailand having to leave the camps due to reductions in funding.

**Mr Duncan:** We have had no reports from the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) or other implementing partners relating to the number of refugees leaving camps in Thailand as a direct result of reductions in funding. According to TBBC's latest biannual report (January to June 2012), at the end of June 2012 verified refugee numbers had increased to 142,192 as compared to 137,157 at the end of December 2011.

**08 October 2012 Mr Burrowes:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of the effect of the level of rations provided to children in refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border on levels of malnutrition.

**Mr Duncan:** The Thai-Burma Border Consortium last conducted a Nutrition Surveillance for children aged 6-59 months in all camps in 2011. It made a number of recommendations to improve nutrition education programmes, promote maternal health and strengthen early detection and treatment of acute malnutrition in young children. The direct effect of the most recent changes in the level of rations provided to children in the nine refugee camps in Thailand on levels of malnutrition is yet to be formally assessed.

**26 Oct 2012 Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what sanitation projects her Department funds in Burma; and what funds were provided for such projects in (a) 2011 and (b) 2012.

**Mr Duncan:** DFID does not fund specific sanitation projects in Burma. Some small amounts of funding have gone towards sanitation issues through wider projects, such as through our education portfolio, where DFID funds have helped to build latrines in schools and pre-schools and ensure basic hygiene practices are taught. DFID's response for immediate needs following Cyclone Giri also provided 66,000 people with access to clean water. DFID's work in the health sector is primarily focused around reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health services as well as HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria services.

**26 Oct 2012 Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of levels of malnutrition of internally displaced children in Karen State, Shan State and Karenni State in Burma.

**Mr Duncan:** The Thai Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) have measured acute malnutrition (or wasting) levels among internally displaced children in South-East Burma. Their 2010-11 survey of 1,670 internally displaced children in South-East Burma found moderate and severe wasting of 4.7% of those surveyed and mild wasting of 15.6%. The survey does not disaggregate findings between states within South-East Burma.

**30 Oct 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool :** To ask Her Majesty's Government how much British aid goes each year to the private sector in Burma.

**Baroness Northover:** The private sector will be an important part of the transition to a better governed, more peaceful and prosperous Burma. The Department for International Development (DfID) is looking at how it can engage the private sector to be a positive part of this transition by ensuring that economic development in Burma is broad-based, sustainable and creates economic opportunities for poor people. We are already creating these opportunities for the poor in rural areas through our work on livelihoods. At present none of DfID's bilateral aid programme goes directly to private sector companies in Burma.

### **Trade & Investment**

**24 October 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead :** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in the last year, issues related to investment in Burma were raised in meetings they have had with representatives of British companies.

**The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint):** There has been significant interest in Burma from UK businesses following the suspension in April of EU sanctions, apart from the arms embargo, when the UK also lifted its policy of actively discouraging trade with Burma. We have sought to encourage responsible investment in Burma as we believe such investment can support Burma's economic and social development and aid its democratic transition.

Lord Marland led a trade mission to Rangoon and Naypyitaw in July of this year including businesses from a range of sectors interested in trade and investment opportunities in the market.

UKTI now has a presence in the market and is able to provide services to UK businesses, including tailored market research to help them plan how to sustainably invest in the market. UK Government officials have spoken at a number of events related to investing in Burma since April.

**29 Oct 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead :** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Burmese lobbying and public relations companies now operate in the United Kingdom.

**Baroness Warsi:** We are not aware of any Burmese lobbying and public relations companies operating in the UK.

### **Travel restrictions**

**29 Oct 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool :** To ask Her Majesty's Government what restrictions are placed on diplomats from Burma travelling in the United Kingdom; and what restrictions are placed on United Kingdom diplomats in Burma travelling in Burma.

**Baroness Warsi:** There are no restrictions on Burmese diplomats travelling within the UK.

Officials from our embassy in Rangoon intending to travel beyond main urban centres must apply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for travel permission in advance. Permission is usually granted, allowing our embassy officials to travel extensively throughout Burma to meet a wide cross section of Burmese civil society and political representatives.

### **Burmese Parliament**

**29 Oct 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead :** To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma regarding the case for the Burmese Parliament to have a fixed timetable.

**Baroness Warsi:** Officials from our embassy in Rangoon have discussed with Burmese Members of Parliament (MPs) from a wide spectrum of parties the issue of parliamentary calendars and shared UK parliamentary processes. However, the Burmese parliamentary calendar remains an issue for Burma's parliament to decide.

As part our policy of engagement with the Burmese Government and their reform agenda, we support a number of organisations including the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the British branch of the Inter-Parliamentary Union who are putting together programmes for parliamentary engagement in support of representative governance in Burma.

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy visited Burma in July accompanied by a small cross-party delegation of MPs. We look forward to the forthcoming report following their visit.

## ANSWERS TO SPOKEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

### *Rohingya / Rakhine State*

**30 Oct 2012 Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab):** What discussions he has had with his international counterparts on sectarian violence in Rakhine state in Burma.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire):** Yesterday, I called the Burmese chargé d'affaires into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to discuss our serious concerns about the violence in Rakhine state. This follows the meeting of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary with Burma's Foreign Minister in New York in September, and my own meetings during the UN General Assembly. There is an urgent need for an end to the violence, for the Burmese authorities to ensure security in the region, and for humanitarian access.

**30 Oct 2012 Jonathan Ashworth:** I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. Given the levels of sectarian violence that have unfolded in recent days, particularly against the Rohingya community, but also against all communities, with thousands of homes destroyed and thousands of people displaced, and people being killed, do we not need the clearest possible assurances from the Burmese Government that they will end the violence, ensure an end to impunity and work with the UN to address the underlying causes of the tension in that region?

**Mr Swire:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing a Westminster Hall debate on the Rohingya community a few weeks ago. It is worth pointing out that any suggestion that the violence has been orchestrated by the Burmese Government is erroneous. We look forward to hearing from their independent investigation commission, which will shortly report on what has caused the violence. In early October, the British ambassador led the first independent diplomatic mission to Rakhine state to meet key leaders and visit camps sheltering internally displaced people from both communities. I am pleased to say that we are doing a lot on aid, but we need this to be settled, as it is extremely worrying to everyone who is following these events.

**30 Oct 2012 Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD):** Burma's failure to address the welfare of the Rohingya people and, indeed, Bangladesh's failure to recognise them at all, means that they are virtually stateless. Will the Minister ensure that he takes a bilateral approach to the problem, so that we can secure the safety of people in Rakhine state?

**Mr Swire:** The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely good point. The British high commission in Dhaka, along with our EU partners, has had regular conversations on the matter. It is important to talk to Bangladesh, and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has spoken to Sheikh Hasina, as has the Prime Minister. It is important on two counts: first, to ensure that those people receive humanitarian aid on the Bangladeshi border and, secondly, that people are allowed free movement across the border, because there is a serious humanitarian problem there.

**30 Oct 2012 Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab):** With reports by Human Rights Watch of major human rights violations, along with the displacement and the killing of 78 people, what action has the Foreign Secretary taken to secure international pressure on the Burmese Government, because previous representations have clearly not worked, and we need urgent action?

**Mr Swire:** I do not think that that is particularly fair on the Burmese Government. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I discussed these matters extensively in New York. We await the report from the Burmese Government, and our ambassador has been to the area. We think that the Burmese Government are doing what they can with their army and police. Inter-communal violence has gone on for a number of years in that part of the world, as the hon. Lady will be aware. The matter needs to be resolved, not least the issue of citizenship for the Rohingya people.

**30 Oct 2012 Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab):** I welcome the Foreign Secretary's recent support

for a review of the 1982 Citizenship Act which, as we have already heard, is one of the underlying factors rendering the Rohingya stateless. It is also important that Bangladesh is brought into discussions about citizenships. Will the Minister tell the House what efforts are being made to bring those parties to the table?

**Mr Swire:** The hon. Lady is right. I alluded to that in my earlier remarks. We think citizenship is important. We have been pressing for many years for the Burmese Government to recognise this. The Foreign Secretary raised the matter with his opposite number back in September. On Bangladesh, yes, again the hon. Lady is right. Bangladesh does have a role to play. The first thing is to solve and to stop the violence that flared up again as recently as a few days ago. That must come to an end. We must make sure that there is proper humanitarian access and that aid gets in to those people who are displaced and homeless, and then we must see the report that comes out from the Burmese Government.

Certainly, any long-term solution needs to address the long-standing issue that has too often been ignored about the right of those people to have a state. That needs to be resolved in the round. I wholly concur with the hon. Lady's remarks.

## **Discuss about Burma in House of Lords Oral Debates on EAC Report: Development Aid**

### ***The Economic Impact and Effectiveness of Development Aid***

#### **Motion to Take Note**

**Lord Hollick:** Visits that I made to Burma and Palestine this year provided further insight into the complexities of overseas aid. In Burma I met with people from Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy to discuss election campaigning—she did not need much advice, as it was more of a coronation and policy formulation. They were keen to secure support for Burma's development from the outside world but warned against a sudden flow of funding, which they said would immediately be siphoned off into the wrong hands. Instead, they wanted to rebuild civil society, which has been hollowed out over the past 50 years, to ensure that the country has the professional and administrative skills and structure to cope with the anticipated rush of inward investment. They were in particular looking to Britain to provide that support and suggested that DfID might partner with UK professional bodies representing accountants, lawyers, engineers, tax experts and civil administrators to help to fill the capacity gap. This is a potentially fruitful co-operation which could deliver direct economic benefit to the UK—something that we should also bear in mind—without compromising the quality or effectiveness of what we offer to Burma.

## **Question for Short Debates at House of Lord**

### ***Discuss about Rakhine State on Building Stability Oversea Strategy***

**30 Oct 2012 Lord Hunt of Chesterton:** One of the features of these agencies is that they provide services following conflicts. One should mention the work of Habitat—one organisation that provides important information and support in the rehabilitation of housing and cities, following disasters or conflicts. I do not know whether noble Lords saw the pictures this week of the devastation of a whole area destroyed in ethnic conflict in the Muslim part of the coastal city of Myanmar. Satellite pictures showed only too clearly what had happened. This area will have to be rebuilt, and the kind of help provided through the United Nations system will be important.

## **Written Ministerial Statement from House of Lords and House of Commons**

### ***Rakhine State, Burma (Humanitarian Response)***

**31 October 2012 The Secretary of State for International Development (Justine Greening):** In Rakhine state, in south-west Burma, there has been a recent increase in communal violence, between the de facto stateless Muslim Rohingya and the majority Buddhist Rakhine communities, which has led to over 100,000 people being displaced since the violence began in June.

In addition to the UK's contributions to the UN central emergency response fund, I have just approved

Department for International Development (DFID) humanitarian funding of £2 million to provide urgent support to internal refugees and vulnerable people affected by the unrest in Rakhine state, Burma which includes ensuring improved safe hygiene for over 58,000 people, more than 32,000 of which are children, and improving access to treatment for acute malnutrition for 5,000 children.

The UK will make a positive difference to the pressing humanitarian needs in Rakhine state with this intervention. We are also working hard to ensure that others in the international community play their part to assist those in need.

I am deeply concerned about the situation in Rakhine state, and in particular that in recent days there have been further outbreaks of inter-communal violence. The UK Government are calling on all parties for an immediate end to the violence. We further urge the Government, and local security forces to take all necessary action to protect civilians, and to grant full humanitarian access to the areas affected as soon as possible.

The latest violence reinforces the need for a long-term solution to the situation in Rakhine state, involving an inclusive political settlement that protects the rights of all members of the local population.

The UK and international community will continue to monitor the situation very closely. We have welcomed the significant reform programme underway in Burma, led by President Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi, and hope that they as a matter of urgency can work with the local authorities and communities to resolve the situation in Rakhine state in a peaceful and constructive manner.

## **EARLY DAY MOTIONS**

### **AUNG SAN SUU KYI AND VISIT TO PARLIAMENT 21 JUNE 2012**

**23. 05. 2012**

That this House welcomes Aung San Suu Kyi's election into Pyithu Hluttaw, the Lower House of the Burmese Parliament, as an indication of change in the country; congratulates the National League for Democracy on its success in the by-election; welcomes change in the Burmese government; notes that Burma still holds a considerable number of political prisoners, who should be released immediately; welcomes Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to speak to both Houses of Parliament on 21 June 2012; and calls on the Government to continue actively to promote the transition to free democratic government in Burma.

Total number of signatures: 44

### **COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN BURMA**

**16.07.2012**

That this House sends condolences to the families and friends of all those killed and affected by recent communal violence in Arakan (Rakhine) State in Burma; expresses concern that the government of Burma and local community leaders have not taken sufficient action to stop continuing sporadic violence; is deeply concerned by reports of widespread rape and of mass arrests, predominantly against the ethnic Rohingya minority; calls on the government of Burma to stop obstructing international agencies from delivering desperately needed humanitarian assistance to around 90,000 displaced people; further calls on the the government of Burma to stop obstructing ethnic Rohingya from returning to their homes and villages; further calls on all parties in Burma to reform the 1982 citizenship law, which discriminates against ethnic minorities in Burma; and requests that the Government ensures the swift delivery of aid to the region.

Total number of signatures: 31

### **HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA**

**06.09.2012**

That this House calls on the Government to work with the international community to encourage the Burmese government to use this period of political transition to take action to improve the human rights situation in that country; and congratulates the excellent work being done by Aung San Suu Kyi and other Burmese human rights campaigners to bring to the world's attention the greatly troubling situation that has

persisted for many decades, and tragically still continues, in Burma.  
Total number of signatures: 40

## **IDENTIFICATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BURMA**

**15.10.2012**

That this House recognises the importance of identifying all the remaining political prisoners in Burma and recommends that a review mechanism should be initiated, with assistance from the United Nations and civil society; and believes that upon identification an individual should either be charged with an internationally recognised offence and tried by proceedings recognisable with international fair trial standards, or released without charge.

Total number of signatures: 34

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