



# LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

## A summary of Burma-related issues in the British Parliament

OCT  
2014

### Answers to Written Parliamentary Questions

#### *Declaration to End Sexual Violence in Conflict*

**13 October 2014 Rushanara Ali:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an assessment of whether the actions and policies of the government of Burma are consistent with the commitments that government made when it signed the declarations on ending sexual violence in conflict.

**Mr Hugo Swire:** We welcome the Burmese government's endorsement of the Declaration of Commitment and attendance at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June 2014. There have been some positive signs that the Burmese authorities are taking seriously the commitments contained in the Declaration. In his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2014, Burmese Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin reaffirmed the Government of Burma's "zero tolerance" policy towards the use of rape and sexual violence in the military.

In September, a civilian court in Shan State heard a case involving the alleged rape of a minor by a Burmese soldier. While much more must be done to hold perpetrators of sexual violence to account, this was a step towards accountability for survivors of sexual violence. We continue to encourage the Burmese government to take concrete action, including by strengthening legislation and improving access to justice for survivors. I urged the Burmese government swiftly to create a credible action plan to tackle sexual violence when I met Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister U Thant Kyaw on 13 June. The UK also funds projects to provide women with basic legal skills so they can advise survivors of sexual violence, and workshops to help community leaders and local government staff prevent sexual violence in their communities.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-09-11/209150/>

#### *Rape and Sexual Violence*

**13 October 2014 Ms Diane Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has met representatives of the Women's League of Burma to discuss rape and sexual violence in that country.

**Mr Hugo Swire:** The Women's League of Burma (WLB) was one of several civil society and religious organisations invited by the Government to attend the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in June. I met representatives of many of these organisations at a roundtable during the Summit to hear their views and concerns first-hand, but unfortunately no WLB representatives were able to attend. They were, however, able to meet officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and attend much of the Global Summit. Officials in London and Rangoon remain in contact with the WLB, along with other non-governmental organisations working to address the issue of sexual violence in Burma.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-09-09/208754/>

## **Andy Hall**

**27 October 2014 Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the government of Thailand in the last six months regarding the prosecution of Andy Hall.

**Mr Hugo Swire:** I have been following Mr Hall's case since 2013, and raised it while I was in Thailand in May 2013. Officials at our Embassy in Bangkok and at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London continue to monitor his case closely, ensuring that it is raised with the Thai authorities where appropriate. We continue to remind the Thai authorities of their obligations to ensure international human rights standards are upheld. We fully support the right of activists to carry out their work and voice their opinion in order to promote human rights peacefully.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-10-22/211574/>

## **Myanmar Education Initiative**

**23 October 2014 Baroness Cox:** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the emergency component of the Myanmar Education Initiative will reach internally displaced children in areas under the control of the Kachin Independence Organisation.

**Baroness Northover:** The Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC) currently reaches internally displaced children in Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) controlled areas. It is not funded out of the emergency component, but is funded out of the main MEC grant pool.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2014-10-13/HL2055/>

## **Myanmar Education Consortium**

**23 October 2014 Baroness Cox:** To ask Her Majesty's Government in which states and regions of Burma the Myanmar Education Consortium will operate.

**Baroness Northover:** The Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC) allocates support in response to calls for proposals. The first call, in November 2013, invited proposals from organisations in all of Burma's states and regions. This was followed by a specific call on Education in Emergencies in June 2014. The 14 projects funded as a result of these first two calls are or will be operating in Ayeyarwady, Bago (East, West), Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Magway, Mandalay, Naypyidaw, Rakhine, Sagaing, Shan (South, North), Tanintharyi, and Yangon. The next call for proposals is currently under development and is planned for 2015.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2014-10-13/HL2054/>

## **Distribution of Rice in Kachin State**

**23 October 2014 Baroness Cox:** To ask Her Majesty's Government where rice supplied by the Department for International Development for internally displaced people in Kachin State, Burma, is purchased; and which companies transport the rice.

**Baroness Northover:** DFID partners purchase rice for internally displaced people in Kachin State from a variety of sources and work with local organisations on the delivery of the rice. Given the sensitive operating environment, we do not provide detailed information on suppliers or transporters of rice.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2014-10-13/HL2053/>

## ***The Back Pack Health Worker Team***

**27 October 2014 Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how many people have received assistance from the Back Pack Health Worker Team programme funded by her Department.

**Mr Desmond Swayne:** DFID has funded around 18% of a health project in Burma that includes the work of the Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) from 1 August 2011 – 31 July 2014. During this period the project as a whole reached approximately 225,000 people in 644 villages, providing services that included bednets to prevent malaria, malaria treatments and other basic healthcare, improved water sources, construction of latrines, water sources, hygiene promotion, and assisting pregnant women with ante-natal care.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-10-22/211573/>

## ***Recruitment of Child Soldiers***

**29 October 2014 Simon Kirby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking with African Union governments to end the recruitment of children into the national armed forces of countries where this practice takes place; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** The UK Government is committed to helping countries end the recruitment and use of children in conflict.

During the United Nations General Assembly in New York, I hosted a Ministerial roundtable, chaired by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms Leila Zerrougui. The event brought together Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Yemen and African Union (AU) Commissioner for Peace and Security, Mr Smail Chergui.

The meeting looked at ways to end the recruitment and use of children in conflict by government forces, particularly through the implementation of UN Action Plans. It allowed countries that have successfully ended this practice to share lessons with those who are working towards this goal.

The roundtable built on an event during the End Sexual Violence in Conflict Summit in London in June, led by my Honourable friend Mark Simmonds MP, where Ministers from Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia underlined their commitment to ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

The UK is also the majority funder of a Child Protection Adviser at the AU. This post is designed to ensure child protection policies are mainstreamed in AU peace enforcement operations on the continent.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-09-26/209687/>

## ***Support from Armed Forces to Humanitarian Relief***

**30 October 2014 Mr Jim Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the contribution by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 20 October 2014, Official Report, column 66, on troop deployment: West Africa, whether it is normal practice of her Department to provide funding for support from the armed forces for humanitarian relief.

**Justine Greening:** MoD personnel are performing an invaluable role in the UK response to the Ebola crisis, working alongside DFID and NGO staff. All deployments are consistent with the Oslo Guidelines which define how military assets can be used for humanitarian purposes.

MoD and DFID have worked together in this way in Haiti, Chile and Indonesia, cyclones in Burma and the

Philippines, flooding in Pakistan, the conflict in Iraq and the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-10-27/212058/>

**30 October 2014 Mr Jim Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the contribution by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 20 October 2014, Official Report, column 66, on troop deployment: West Africa, on how many previous occasions her Department has funded support from the armed forces for humanitarian efforts; and whether it is her policy that such support will continue to be so funded in future.

**Justine Greening:** MoD personnel are performing an invaluable role in the UK response to the Ebola crisis, working alongside DFID and NGO staff. All deployments are consistent with the Oslo Guidelines which define how military assets can be used for humanitarian purposes.

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<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2014-10-27/212057/>

## Answers to Oral Parliamentary Questions

### *Political Prisoners*

**28 October 2014 Sir Bob Russell:** When he last raised with the Burmese Government the subject of political prisoners in Burma.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire):** I last raised the subject of political prisoners with Burma's Deputy Foreign Minister Thant Kyaw in June. We welcome the release of more than 1,000 political prisoners since 2011, but we are concerned by the recent rise in politically motivated arrests and we continue to lobby for the unconditional release of all political prisoners.

**Sir Bob Russell:** I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. He has confirmed that the number of political prisoners in Burma is going up. Will he tell us how many additional political prisoners have been arrested there this year?

**Mr Swire:** Since 8 October, 3,000 petty criminals have been released, as well as 91 in August and 109 in September, including child soldiers. The answer, however, is that one political prisoner in Burma is one too many, and we will continue to make that point to visiting Ministers, who come here fairly regularly these days.

**Valerie Vaz:** As well as raising the subject of political prisoners, will the Minister also raise the subject of the killing of the journalist Aung Naing by the Burmese army?

**Mr Swire:** I shall certainly raise that matter; we have raised it already, but I shall give the hon. Lady an update on the results of our investigations.

**Kerry McCarthy:** The Minister has rightly raised concerns that the headline figures for the release of political prisoners are perhaps not what they seem. Concerns have been raised about conditions being attached to the release of prisoners, for example, and about the continuing arrests of human rights defenders and journalists. Does he share the concern of the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights about signs of possible backtracking by the Burmese regime? What can we do to ensure that Burma remains on the road to democracy as we approach next year's elections?

**Mr Swire:** As the hon. Lady knows, we have continuing concerns, not least in Rakhine and Kachin. Only yesterday I was discussing these concerns with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has just been there. The big goal in all this is the parliamentary elections next year. We will continue to do everything we can

to ensure that they are inclusive and credible elections, from which can flow a better and more democratic Burma for all the component parts of that wonderful country.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141028/debtext/141028-0001.htm#14102866000005>

### **Burma mentioned in Westminster Hall Debate on Antibiotic Resistance**

**15 October 2014 Jeremy Lefroy:** My hon. Friend mentioned malaria and the treatments against it that have been discovered. He may know that, through misuse of the latest generation of artemisinin-based antimalarials, resistance to those is already coming up through Thailand and Burma and will possibly, eventually, get to sub-Saharan Africa, with devastating consequences, as was the case with previous antimalarials.

For full debate, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141015/halltext/141015h0001.htm#14101591000001>

### **Burma mentioned in Westminster Hall Debate on Arms Export and Control**

**30 October 2014 Jeremy Corbyn:** (...)The Committees report that Angola, Burma, Israel, North Korea and South Sudan have not signed the chemical weapons convention, however, and it is time that they did. It is time that the whole world signed up to it, because if we can have a worldwide convention on small arms and landmines, we should be able to insist that there is a genuine worldwide agreement on the abolition of chemical weapons, and then move on to other weapons. (...)

For full debate, see: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141030/halltext/141030h0001.htm#14103044000001>

### **Issues relating to Burma mentioned in Prime Minister's Questions**

**22 October 2014 Stella Creasy:** (...) Can the Prime Minister tell us why he sent police to Thailand to pursue a murder case on Friday, and what he will do in order to finally live up to his promise to help secure justice for Tyrell Matthews-Burton?

**The Prime Minister:** (...) As for the case in Thailand, I think that because of the uncertainties over that case and the fact that two British citizens were murdered, it is right to offer the Thai Government the assistance of British police, and for the police to go out there to look at some of the technical evidence in particular. I was very pleased that the Thai Prime Minister agreed to that while we were at the Europe-Asia summit in Milan last Friday.

On all these cases, I am very happy to help, and I should be very happy to hear from the hon. Lady what more she thinks we can do in regard to the important case that she has raised.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141022/debtext/141022-0001.htm#14102266000006>

## **EARLY DAY MOTIONS**

### **BURMA (Early Day Motion 182)**

Date tabled: 25.06.2014

That this House supports the call for action for peace in Kachin State signed by 55 organisations worldwide; further supports calls from 80 organisations for Burma to scrap proposed legislation that would unlawfully restrict the right to freely choose a religion; notes that it has been over three years since the Burma Army broke a 17-year ceasefire with the Kachin Independence Army; calls on the government of Burma to cease its attacks in Kachin State; further notes since June 2011 over 120,000 Kachin people have been

displaced and over 200 villages have been destroyed; condemns the human rights abuses and breaches of the Geneva Conventions in Kachin State, especially the use of sexual violence; acknowledges the need for further peace talks between the Burmese government, the Burma Army, Kachin Independence Organisation and the Kachin Independence Army; welcomes Charles Bo, the Archbishop of Yangon's call for the rights of all ethnicities and religious faiths to be protected and his message of peace; call on the Government to provide humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced people in Kachin and Northern Shan States; and further calls on the Government to establish an independent investigation into the use of rape and sexual violence.

Signatures: 21

### **70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BURMA CAMPAIGN (Early Day Motion 285)**

Date tabled: 22.07.2014

That this House recognises with respect and gratitude all who fought in the war in Burma 70 years ago; notes that this was the longest land campaign of the Second World War; salutes the memory of nearly 40,000 British and Commonwealth Service personnel who died in the fighting, as well as the thousands more killed in captivity; and commends the work of The Not Forgotten Association, a tri-service charity for the wounded in keeping alive the memory of such sacrifices.

Signatures: 63

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