



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

SEP
2014

Answers to Written Parliamentary Questions

Aid

1 September 2014 Mark Hendrick: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much the UK gave in aid to Burma in (a) 2010, (b) 2011, (c) 2012 and (d) 2013; and how much aid it plans to give to Burma in 2014; and what pre-conditions have been applied to such aid donations for Burma receiving aid.

Mr Swayne: The latest version of Statistics for International Development was published in October 2013 and contains the following UK Official Development Assistance outturn figures for Burma: 2010, £29 million; 2011, £39 million; 2012, £30 million. In June 2013 DFID published a revised Operational Plan for Burma, which contains projected figures for DFID spend in: 2012-13, £32 million; 2013-14, £56 million; 2014-15, £60 million. No UK aid goes directly to the Government of Burma, as programme or budget support. Support to the Burmese Parliament

11 September 2014 Mr Simon Burns: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, who authorised the secondment of a member of the House of Commons Library staff to work in Burma with the Burmese Parliament; how long this secondment has lasted; and how much the staff member has been paid in (a) salary and (b) expenses while on secondment.

John Thurso: In her speech to Members of both Houses in Westminster Hall on 21 June 2012 Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi urged the UK to provide “practical help” to support moves to democracy in Burma.

The initial secondment of a senior researcher from the House of Commons Library to work with the Burmese Parliament for 6 months from January 2014 was authorised by the Clerk of the House. The Burmese side subsequently requested an extension of the secondment for a further 6 months; this was agreed by the Clerk of the House and confirmed in a letter of 14 July 2014. The secondment overall will accordingly run from January 2014 to January 2015. The secondment is referred to in the House of Commons business plan 2014/15 and contributes to the House Service’s objective of supporting other parliaments, especially those in transition towards democracy.

The researcher is paid on the A2 salary scale, currently £46,532 to £61,255. As at the end of August 2014, total expenses have amounted to £24,100.50 including accommodation, travel and local project costs.

Rohingya

1 September 2014 Mark Hendrick: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many UK aid agencies are currently operating in Rakhine State, Burma.

Mr Swayne: The UN managed Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) lists international NGOs working in Rakhine State. MIMU’s information is available on the internet. The choice of where individual UK agencies operate is a matter for those agencies.

11 September 2014 Greg Mulholland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Burmese Government on their treatment of the Rohingya

Mr Swire: We have raised the treatment of the Rohingya in every one of our recent ministerial contacts with the Burmese Government. The former Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), raised the situation in Rakhine State in a call with his Burmese counterpart, U Wunna Maung Lwin, in April 2014. He called for the Burmese Government to facilitate humanitarian assistance to all communities in the State. I also raised this issue with Khin Maung Soe, Burmese Minister for Electric Power in July, as well as with the Burmese ambassador, whom I summoned in April to register my concerns.

More recently, the Minister of State, Department for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Mr Swayne), discussed Rakhine with Minister for the President's Office, U Soe Thein in August.

Our ambassador and embassy officials consistently discuss these concerns with representatives of the Burmese Government.

Violence against Muslims

1 September 2014 Mark Hendrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his counterpart in Burma on the recent violence against Muslims in Mandalay and the growth of Buddhist extremism in that country.

Mr Swire: On 3 July, I expressed my concern about the violence which took place in Mandalay, and called for restraint. The British embassy in Rangoon has discussed the incident with the Government of Burma and we continue to monitor the situation.

More broadly, we remain deeply concerned by the violence directed against Muslim and other minority groups in Burma and have been consistently clear that we look to the Government to ensure the security of all communities. Through the EU the UK is supporting a project to develop the capacity of the Burmese police force, including in Mandalay, so they are better trained to respond to such incidents in line with international standards. We are also providing funding to support organisations that run interfaith dialogue, which will be important in bringing communities together.

Religious Intolerance and Human Rights Abuses

26 September 2014 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Lord Wallace of Saltaire on 24 July (HL Deb, cols 1324–8) to the debate on Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, what representations they have made to the Burmese authorities about proposed new legislation to restrict religious conversions and inter-religious marriages there; and whether they will call on the United Nations Secretary-General to visit Burma to address religious intolerance and to encourage the creation of an international and independent inquiry into violence in Rakhine State, Kachin State and other parts of the country.

Baroness Anelay: We have voiced our strong concerns over proposed legislation on inter-faith marriage and religious conversion to members of the Burmese government and parliamentarians. If enacted, these laws would harm religious tolerance and respect for diversity in Burma, and contravene international standards and treaties to which Burma is a signatory. Most recently, our Ambassador raised our concerns with Minister of the President's Office, U Soe Thein, in June.

The UN Secretary-General (UNSG) currently chairs the Partnership Group on Burma, which last met in April. The UNSG and his Special Representative to Burma, Vijay Nambiar, both play vital roles in raising the international community's human rights concerns with the Burmese government whilst providing encouragement for the wider reform process.

We welcome the recent visit by the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation

in Burma, Ms Yanghee Lee, who rightly highlighted that the government needs to do more to stop the spread of hate speech and incitement to violence based on religious grounds and recommended the adoption of specific legislation to address this.

We remain deeply concerned by continued violence in Burma, particularly in Rakhine State and Kachin State. Our approach is to seek an end to all violations, and to prevent their further escalation, irrespective of whether these violations fit the definition of specific international crimes. Allegations of human rights abuses must be dealt with through a clear, independent and transparent investigative and prosecutorial process that meets international standards. We have made this clear to the Burmese government and will continue to do so. We continue to believe an independent investigation, supported by appropriate technical assistance, would make a significant contribution to accountability and reconciliation.

Rape, Sexual Violence and PSVI

5 September 2014 Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many of the survivors of rape by the Burmese Army whose cases have been documented by the Women's League of Burma have received humanitarian and specialist support from her Department.

Mr Swayne: DFID provides support for women affected by sexual violence and rape, including referrals to specialist centres, but it is part of a wider package of assistance which is not recorded in this way.

11 September 2014 Ann Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many survivors of sexual violence by the Burmese Army have received specialist assistance as a result of funding through the preventing sexual violence initiative.

This question was referred to the answer to Valerie Vaz' question above (5 September 2014).

26 September 2014 Baroness Uddin: To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of Preventing Sexual Violence (PSVI) summit earlier this year, what representation, if any, have they made to the government of Burma with regards to sexual violence and rape in that country to ensure perpetrators are held accountable and brought to justice.

Baroness Warsi: Baroness Warsi: We continue to raise our strong concerns about reports of rape and sexual violence in Burma with senior members of the Burmese Government and military. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), met Deputy Foreign Minister U Thant Kyaw during the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict on 13 June 2014. He publicly stated that Burma's attendance at the summit was a signal of their support to the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) and readiness to take action against perpetrators, including members of the military. We welcomed the Burmese Government's attendance at the summit and have made clear that concrete action is needed, including a credible action plan that involves the military. Our Ambassador in Burma has also raised this with U Thant Kyaw following the summit.

It is our view that the investigation of human rights abuses in Burma is the responsibility of the Burmese Government. We have made clear to the Burmese Government that all allegations of human rights abuses must be dealt with through clear, independent and transparent investigative and prosecutorial processes which meet international standards.

26 September 2014 Baroness Uddin: To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of Preventing Sexual Violence (PSVI) summit earlier this year, what action they are taking to support the establishment of an international investigation to end sexual violence and rape in Burma.

Baroness Warsi: We continue to raise our strong concerns about reports of rape and sexual violence in Burma with senior members of the Burmese Government and military. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), met Deputy Foreign Minister U Thant Kyaw during the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict on 13 June 2014. He publicly stated that Burma's attendance at the summit was a signal of their support to the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) and readiness to take action against perpetrators, including members of the military. We welcomed the Burmese Government's attendance at the summit and have

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Military training & Rape

26 September 2014 Baroness Uddin: To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of on-going allegations of rape against military officials in Burma, what conditions, if any, were agreed with the government of Burma on ending the use of rape as a weapon of war prior to any training provided by the British Armed Forces.

Baroness Warsi: To date, the UK has only provided one educational course to the Burmese military: "Managing Defence in a Wider Security Context", a non-combat, academic course delivered to 30 military officers and government officials in January 2014. The course covered the importance of good governance in defence and professionalism in a nation's Armed Forces, the observation of human rights obligations and preventing sexual violence. We did not make provision of this course conditional; such education and our exchanges with the Burmese military are themselves aimed at changing mindsets.

We regularly address the issue of sexual violence by the Burmese army with the Burmese Government and with the military. We continue to make clear that where serious crimes have been committed, those who have perpetrated them should be held accountable for their actions. We lobby on preventing sexual violence in conflict areas, on encouraging the Burmese military to step back from politics, and on action to tackle human rights issues such as the use of child soldiers.

The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), raised the issue of rape and sexual violence with the Burmese army's Commander-in-Chief and military northern commander during his visit to Burma in January. Mr Swire also urged the Burmese Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, who attended the Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict Summit in the UK in June 2014, to ensure a quick and credible action plan to implement the Declaration on Ending Sexual Violence.

Answers to Oral Parliamentary Questions

Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border

3 September 2014 Greg Mulholland: Many people are still stuck in camps on the Burma-Thai border, unable to return home and in a precarious situation, without enough food or supplies. Will the Minister meet Kidz in Kampz in my constituency, which does a wonderful job helping people to understand the problems on the ground?

Mr Swayne: I will undoubtedly do so.

Burma mentioned in Parliamentary debate on Hazaras (Afghanistan and Pakistan)

1 September 2014 Mr Spellar: (...) I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I am sure it has been noted by the Foreign Office Minister. Part of the effectiveness of this debate is in raising this in the order of priorities of not only the Foreign Office, but the Department for International Development, which has been mentioned by a number of hon. Members.

The only redeeming feature at the moment of this situation is the much greater level of public awareness and debate on these issues, and the welcome attention in the political world. Today's debate is one example of that. In this House there has been a growing interest in the persecution of not only the Hazaras, but of Rohingya Muslims in Burma, of Baha'is in Iran and of the Ahmadiyya community in a number of

Muslim countries. Increasingly, we have also seen persecution of various Christian groups in a variety of countries across the world, particularly in the middle east and Indian subcontinent, including Pakistan, to which I will return in a moment. For many people, campaigning on their behalf often seems a lonely road to be travelling, as they try to get a message across about the horrors to a world that is unaware, as many colleagues have rightly indicated. Therefore, this level of interest from Parliament and Government is particularly welcome. As we are seeing tonight and in other debates, these issues unite those on both sides of the House—Government and Opposition alike. (...)

For full debate see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140901/debtext/140901-0004.htm>

Burma mentioned in Westminster Hall Debate on Social Economy

2 September 2014 Mr Hurd: (...) Secondly, to reinforce the point made by the right hon. Lady, we lead the world in this area. One of the things that struck me most in office was how many visits I got from representatives from a bizarre range of countries, from Canada to the country that I still call Burma, who said, “We notice what you are doing. We are interested in social enterprise and social investment, and for us the place to come and learn is Britain.” We must not surrender that lead, because if we are right about the movement, it will be a source of competitive advantage for this country as we think about how we shape the future. (...)

For full debate, see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140902/halltext/140902h0001.htm#14090235000001>

Burma mentioned in Public Bill Committee Debate on Modern Slavery Bill

2 September 2014 Diana Johnson: (...) One could say that was some time ago, but just this summer there was a report in The Guardian about Asian slave labour producing prawns for supermarkets in the US and UK. A six-month investigation showed that a large number of men were being bought and sold like animals and held against their will on fishing boats off Thailand collecting prawns destined for supermarkets, including Tesco, Aldi, Morrisons, the Co-op and Iceland. The company responsible is CP Foods, one of the world’s largest prawn producers.

I thought it would be interesting to remind the Committee of this story.

“Men who have managed to escape from boats supplying CP Foods and other companies...told the Guardian of horrific conditions, including 20-hour shifts, regular beatings, torture and execution-style killings. Some were at sea for years; some were regularly offered [drugs] to keep them going. Some had seen fellow slaves murdered in front of them.

Fifteen migrant workers from Burma and Cambodia also told how they had been enslaved. They said they had paid brokers to help them find work in Thailand in factories or on building sites. But they had been sold instead to boat captains, sometimes for as little as £250.

‘I thought I was going to die,’ said Vuthy, a former monk from Cambodia who was sold from captain to captain. ‘They kept me chained up, they didn’t care about me or give me any food ... They sold us like animals, but we are not animals – we are human beings.’

Another trafficking victim said he had seen as many as 20 fellow slaves killed in front of him, one of whom was tied, limb by limb, to the bows of four boats and pulled apart at sea.

‘We’d get beaten even if we worked hard,’ said another. ‘All the Burmese, [even] on all the other boats, were trafficked. There were so many of us [slaves] it would be impossible to count them all.’” (...)

For full debate, see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmpublic/modernslavery/140902/pm/140902s01.htm>

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: 20

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: 59

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Thank you.

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