



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

DEC
2008

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

UNITED NATIONS

17 Dec 2008 Mr. Keith Simpson: *To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Burma has had with the UN Secretary General on his forthcoming trip to Burma; and when his visit is scheduled.*

Bill Rammell: *My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary regularly discuss the situation in Burma with the UN Secretary General. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised the issue with Ban Ki Moon as recently as 9 December. The UN Secretary-General announced earlier this month that he would not now be travelling to Burma later this month, because he did not believe the conditions were right. He expressed his frustration at the lack of progress made; called on the regime to respond to the concerns of the international community; and urged all countries with influence to encourage the regime to co-operate with the UN. We share his concerns and echo his call for the international community, and particularly Burma's neighbours, to do more to support his efforts. Should the Secretary-General choose to visit next year he will, of course, have our full support. We continue to believe that the UN Goods Offices Mission, and Ban Ki Moon's personal engagement, can have a positive impact on Burma's transition to democracy.*

HUMAN RIGHTS

18 Dec 2008 Mr. Gray: *To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government has taken to strengthen mechanisms for the reporting of human rights violations in Burma. [243093]*

Bill Rammell: *We remain deeply concerned at the human rights situation in Burma. We use every appropriate opportunity to highlight the ongoing abuses in the UN's human rights bodies. The UK helped to secure a further resolution of the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly on 21 November 2008. The resolution called on the regime to comply with its international human rights obligations, and set out a range of specific concerns. It echoed a Human Rights Council resolution, passed on 18 June, with strong UK support. These resolutions underpin the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Thomas Ojea Quintana, whose mission is the primary reporting mechanism on the situation in Burma. Mr. Quintana visited Burma from 3-7 August and produced a substantive report. We hope he will be able to return to Burma soon to continue his work, and urge the Burmese authorities to give him their full co-operation. Our embassy in Rangoon continues to monitor the human rights situation, and our ambassador raises our concerns in meetings and correspondence with Burmese Ministers and officials. He last met Burmese Ministers at the beginning of December. Our embassy in Rangoon continues to monitor the human rights situation, and our ambassador raises our concerns in meetings and correspondence with Burmese Ministers and officials. He last met Burmese Ministers at the beginning of December.*

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

EDM 343: UNITED NATIONS AND POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BURMA

17.12.2008

*Signed by 54 members
(Battle, John)*

That this House condemns the arrest of over a thousand further political prisoners since the democracy

uprising in September 2007, bringing the total to more than 2,100; further condemns the sentencing of hundreds of these activists to long jail terms; notes that many of the prisoners have been moved to jails hundreds of miles from where their families live; further notes that the United Nations Security Council, United Nations General Assembly, European Union and ASEAN have all called for the release of political prisoners in Burma and that these calls have been ignored; further notes that 37 visits by United Nations envoys have failed to secure a single reform; calls on the United Nations Secretary General to travel to Burma to negotiate the release of all political prisoners; further calls on the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution giving full support to the Secretary General's efforts; and further calls on the British Government to continue to work for a Resolution by the Security Council.

The Italian Parliament: Asking for strengthening the EU targeted sanctions a stronger role of the UN General Secretary

HUMAN RIGHTS: SOLIANI (PD) AND BONIVER (PDL): "STRONGER SANCTIONS AGAINST THE BURMESE ARMY"

ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE SENATE AND CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES OF A MOTION SIGNED

BY SENATOR ALBERTINA SOLIANI AND MP MARGHERITA BONIVER

Rome, 10 December 2008

On the day marking the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Senator Albertina Soliani (PD – Democratic Party) and MP Margherita Boniver (PDL – "People of Freedom" Party) presented – to the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, respectively – a motion that commits the Government: "to freeing immediately and unconditionally Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who has been held under house arrest for 13 years, and all political prisoners." And also requesting "that the results of the referendum of 10 May 2008 and the Constitution consequently approved be invalidated, asking the European Union to undertake all initiatives necessary to prevent the military junta from promoting the 2010 elections on the basis of a constitution drafted without consulting all the parties involved, and which envisages institutions in which the army continues to wield the predominant influence, without having established a true dialogue for democracy." The motion also commits the Government to "acting, within the European Council, to tighten the EU's economic sanctions to include, amongst the sectors affected by the sanctions, the blocking of access to international banking services for enterprises owned by Burmese military personnel, the suspension of all imports of textile products made in Burma, and the barring of access to business opportunities, health care, purchases of goods, and education abroad for certain generals and their families." And also, "to put in place, through development cooperation, not only humanitarian aid initiatives, but also programmes aiming to support and strengthen the Burmese democratic organizations in exile, in order to increase their capacity to promote democratic initiatives and activities denouncing human and labour rights violations." Lastly, "to act at all international levels," the motion states, "to support the start-up of a dialogue among the parties interested in a rapid transition towards democracy in Burma." The members of parliament stress that "fundamental human rights – as recognized by the Italian Constitution, sanctioned by the United Nations Declarations, and mentioned in the treaty establishing the European Union – represent the common horizon for peoples of the whole world, and must be a constant point of reference for international policy and, in particular, for the initiatives of democratic governments towards countries where such rights are denied and oppressed."

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**CAMPAIGNING
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AND DEMOCRACY IN BURMA**