



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

JUNE
2009

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Aung San Suu Kyi

1 June 2009 Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations (a) he and (b) the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Burma have made to the Burmese regime on the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi's physician, Dr. Tin Myo Win; and if he will make a statement. [276350]

Caroline Flint: Dr. Tin Myo Win, Aung San Suu Kyi's regular doctor, was detained by the authorities on 7 May 2009. We understand that he has now been released but we are not aware that he has been able to see Mrs. Suu Kyi since her arrest.

Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in ASEAN countries on the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi; and if he will make a statement. [276675]

Bill Rammell: We are in regular contact with Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) countries regarding Burma's actions, including on Mrs. Suu Kyi's arrest. We support the strong statements issued by a number of member countries, including Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

My European colleagues and I attended the EU-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting in Phnom Penh on 27-28 May 2009, where I raised Aung San Suu Kyi's arrest and our collective response with our Asian counterparts.

4 June 2009 Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his Japanese counterpart on the arrest and trial of Aung San Suu Kyi. [277407]

Bill Rammell: The Japanese Government released a statement on 15 May 2009 expressing their deep concern at the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi. The Japanese Foreign Minister, Hirofumi Nakasone, raised Aung San Suu Kyi's detention with his Burmese counterpart on 25 May 2009. We have raised her current trial and ongoing detention with the Japanese at official level. Japan, like the UK, is a major contributor of humanitarian aid to Burma and we remain in regular contact concerning the current situation both at the UN Security Council and via the UN Secretary-General's Group of Friends of Burma.

Most recently, I spoke with the Japanese Foreign Minister on 25 May 2009 in Vietnam. I also discussed Aung San Suu Kyi's arrest and the situation in Burma with Asian and European Ministers at the Asia-Europe Meeting in Hanoi on 25-26 May 2009 and at the EU-ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh on 27-28 May 2009.

15 June 2009 Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Burma on Aung San Suu Kyi. [279194]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We have regularly called for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, through direct contacts with the regime.

Most recently, our ambassador in Rangoon conveyed to the Burmese authorities our deep concern on receiving news of the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi on 14 May 2009. Whenever possible, he has attended the trial. In addition, my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Bill Rammell), the then Minister of State, raised recent developments in Burma with EU and Asian participants at the EU-Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit and Asia-Europe meeting in the region at the end of May. He spoke directly to Burmese foreign ministers to call for her release, and the release of all other political prisoners in Burma.

Political Prisoners

1 June 2009 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma about the Burmese political prisoner Myo Yan Naung Thein, in the light of recent comments by family members living in the United Kingdom. [HL3673]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Malloch-Brown): Our ambassador in Rangoon has repeatedly raised the need for the release of all political prisoners in Burma with ministers in the military government. In the case of Yan Naung Thein, like many other prisoners, we are concerned that he is not in good health. Our embassy in Rangoon continues to inquire about specific cases with political prisoner support networks and those non-governmental organisations concerned with prisoner welfare.

In the UN's human rights bodies we take every opportunity to press the regime to uphold international human rights norms and release political prisoners. We continue to support the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human rights in Myanmar, Mr Tomas Quintana. In a statement to the Human Rights Council on 18 March 2009, the UN Special Rapporteur called upon the Burmese authorities progressively to release all prisoners of conscience.

EU and Burma

3 June 2009 Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on proposals to add the judges, court officials and police involved in the recent trial of Aung San Suu Kyi to the list of members of the Burmese regime whose assets within the EU are frozen and who are banned from travel to the EU; and if he will make a statement. [277406]

Bill Rammell: In the event that the Burmese regime continues to ignore international protests about Aung San Suu Kyi's arrest and trial, the EU will need to consider what additional actions it should take in order to bring further pressure to bear. Adding further names to the current list of those covered by the visa ban and asset freeze would be an option for further measures. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised the prospect of such measures with his counterparts on 18 May 2009.

Sanctions

3 June 2009 Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which preparatory bodies the General Affairs and External Relations Council has asked to review proposals to reinforce existing restrictive measures on Burma; what role the UK has played in the process; and when the review is expected to be completed. [277408]

Bill Rammell: The Asia-Oceania Working Group (COASI) in Brussels has been charged with reviewing proposals to reinforce the restrictive measures. The UK has also instigated bilateral discussions on options with our partners. There is no set deadline for the completion of the review, but the UK is seeking to ensure that the EU is ready to respond swiftly to developments on the ground.

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals for further discussions with Asian countries on Burma have been made at EU level; what steps the UK is taking in this regard; and if he will make a statement. [277409]

Bill Rammell: Members of the EU share the UK's view that our Asian partners have a key role to play in encouraging the process of change in Burma. The EU raises the issue of Burma in its discussions with

China, India and other Asian states at every opportunity. I joined Asian and other EU Ministers at the Asia Europe Meeting on 25-26 May 2009 in Hanoi and at the EU-ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Summit on 27-28 May 2009 in Phnom Penh. Burma and the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi were among the issues discussed in detail at that meeting.

Politics and Government

15 June 2009 Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Burma on the pro-democracy movement in that country. [279195]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: Through the EU and United Nations, and directly with the regime, the UK has regularly called for the elections proposed to be held in Burma to be free and fair. We have made clear our views that unless all political prisoners are released, and democratic opposition and ethnic groups can participate freely in the 2010 elections, they will have no validity or international credibility.

Most recently, my hon. Friend the member for Harlow (Bill Rammell), the then Minister of State, spoke directly with the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister at the EU-Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Phnom Penh on 27-28 May 2009. He called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, and for the start of a genuinely inclusive political process.

Overseas Aid

8 June 2009 Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what consideration the Government has given to further measures to deliver aid to the Irrawaddy Delta region of Burma following Cyclone Nargis. [278260]

Mr. Michael Foster: In March the UK Government committed an additional £20 million to Burma over two years, increasing the Department for International Development's aid programme to £25 million in 2009-10 and £28 million in 2010-11. Approximately 60 per cent. of this additional funding will be allocated to further relief following Cyclone Nargis. No UK aid is delivered though the Government of Burma.

DEBATES IN HOUSE OF COMMON

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

9 June 2009

Mr. Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): May I say how pleased I am to have this opportunity to conclude our business this evening with a few remarks about the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi? She is rightly known and respected throughout the world for the quiet calm and the dignity with which she faces intolerable repression. She currently faces a process that, for the purposes of this debate, we will call a trial, but which, it is widely accepted, conforms to none of the recognised principles of natural justice that we would understand in this country.

I welcome the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Lewis) to his new position. I welcome his appointment; we are delighted to have him here. As the secretary of the all-party parliamentary group on democracy in Burma, may I say that we have always enjoyed a fruitful and close working relationship with his predecessors in the Foreign Office and with Ministers in the Department for International Development? I am confident that that relationship will continue under this Minister, whom I congratulate on his appointment. I wish him every success.

The charge facing Aung San Suu Kyi is that of violating of the conditions of her house arrest. If she is convicted—we might reasonably say “when she is convicted”, because the purpose of the trial is to obtain a further conviction—she stands to have a further five-year period of imprisonment imposed on her. The irony is that this imprisonment will be for the breach of a condition of her detention, which has already been declared illegal by the United Nations as a contravention of international law and of Burmese domestic law. This illegality heaped on illegality is a particular feature of Aung San Suu Kyi's position, and of the

loathsome regime by which she is being oppressed in Burma.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest on and off for 13 of the past 19 years. The process first started in 1989, when the martial law provisions of the time allowed for detention without charge or trial for a period of up to three years. It is a matter of public record that in the elections in 1990, the National League for Democracy, of which she is the leader, won some 82 per cent. of the available seats. That was a remarkable achievement, and an indication of the standing that she enjoys in her own country as well as in the wider international community. It is also a matter of record that the junta refused to recognise the results of the elections, and that at that point, it changed the rules to allow for her continued detention for up to five years.

Aung San Suu Kyi was released from detention—at that point she was under house arrest—in 1995. She was placed under house arrest again, with additional conditions restricting her entitlement to travel, in 2000. I mention the restriction on travel because it is well known that as a consequence of those restrictions, she was unable to visit her dying husband in London for fear of not being allowed to return to Burma.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cotswold) (Con): Is it not an indication of the nature of the Burmese authorities that in the forthcoming trial of Aung San Suu Kyi on 12 June—which, as the hon. Gentleman has said, could lead to her imprisonment for five years—three out of four of her defence witnesses have been denied access to the court? The Burmese Government are producing 14 witnesses for the prosecution, yet she is to be allowed only one. Is it not even more shocking that members of the pro-democracy 1988 movement who are in jail are being denied adequate food? They are not allowed food parcels, and those who have suffered severe medical conditions, including heart attacks, are not allowed any medical supplies. Is that not an indication of the nature of the Burmese regime?

Mr. Carmichael: It is. It is also an indication of the exceptionally unfair, ill-conceived process in which Aung San Suu Kyi finds herself. Speaking as one who previously practised as a court solicitor, I believe that it breaches just about every norm of international law. My only quibble with the hon. Gentleman is that I was told that the number of prosecution witnesses being produced was 16, compared with one defence witness, but the numbers make no difference. What is most obnoxious is the fact that the person standing trial is not being allowed to present her case.

Bob Spink (Castle Point) (Ind): The hon. Gentleman may be aware that—in 2003, I believe—I visited the Karen ethnic groups in the Burma jungle. Does he agree that while the Government of Thailand should be thanked for their tolerance of the refugee camps just over the Thai border, they nevertheless have a major part to play in putting pressure on the Burmese junta to respect human rights?

Mr. Carmichael: Like the hon. Gentleman, I have a great deal of sympathy for the position in which the Thai Government find themselves. We occasionally hear reports of some activities within the camps that are a cause of concern—for example, the suggestion that refugees are being pushed back across the Burmese border. The point was made in discussions with the Under-Secretary of State for International Development earlier today that the refugees in Thai camps are not allowed to work, which is also a cause of concern. I have to say that it would be difficult for the UK Government to argue that point too vociferously, given that asylum seekers in this country are so rarely entitled to find paid employment.

John Bercow (Buckingham) (Con): The institutionalised inhumanity of the Burmese junta is reflected in the denial of Aung San Suu Kyi's right even to use the telephone, and the frequent denial of her right to medical treatment. Are not those further examples of why, in the final analysis, multilateral action is vital if we are to give effect to the UN proclamation of the responsibility to protect?

Mr. Carmichael: Yes, that is absolutely the case, and it is fair to say that no country on its own can possibly hope to effect a solution to the difficulties currently facing the Burmese people. It has to be said, however, that the one power in the region that might have particular sway and influence is China. Clearly, that country is not minded to promote democracy movements—for reasons that largely speak for themselves—but the opportunity for multilateral action lies in efforts made to influence China to bring a more benign influence to bear on Burma.

Let me return to the history of Aung San Suu Kyi's detention. She was released for a period, but

subsequently re-arrested in May 2003 in the aftermath of a horrific attack on pro-democracy activists and herself in northern Burma. Seventy people were killed and more than 100 arrested. Aung San herself was held for a period of some three months in what was effectively secret imprisonment; at that stage, nobody really knew where she was or what she was suffering. Her house arrest then continued until 2007, at which point it expired. It was renewed for a further year until 2008, at which point, with a still further extension having been allowed, the UN intervened to clarify, if any clarification were needed, that the detention was a contravention of both international and domestic law.

It is interesting, although perhaps academic, to speculate on what might have happened if last month Mr. John William Yettaw—a US national, I am told—had not taken it on himself to swim through the lake surrounding Aung San Suu Kyi's house to break into the compound and remain there, giving rise to the charge she currently faces, which is breach of house arrest. That incident shows the Alice through the Looking Glass world that we are in when we deal with Burma. We have here one of the very few examples of a victim of housebreaking finding herself, rather than the perpetrator, to be the victim, or subject, of criminal proceedings.

The hon. Member for Buckingham (John Bercow) referred to health concerns. Aung San Suu Kyi is now being held in prison, as opposed to under house arrest, and those health concerns are real, substantial and widely held. It is said that she suffers from low blood pressure and severe dehydration. I know that the British embassy in Rangoon does what it can to stay in touch and to make itself as fully aware as possible of the circumstances in which she is being held, and I hope that the Minister will be able to update us on what the Government in this country understand her present medical condition to be.

I should also record the appreciation of many of us of the efforts of Mr. Mark Canning, the United Kingdom ambassador to Burma. He recently described Aung San Suu Kyi's trial as a "show trial". He has been allowed one day's access to the courtroom.

Mr. Jim McGovern (Dundee, West) (Lab): I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware that it is not only Members of Parliament here in Westminster who are gravely concerned about the welfare of Aung San Suu Kyi. Last night my local authority, Dundee city council, with cross-party support, backed a campaign to free this very brave lady. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the current trial is no more than an effort to ensure that she is incarcerated before the elections in Burma that are scheduled to take place next year?

Mr. Carmichael: I do, and I think that that view is held fairly widely. The history of Aung San Suu Kyi's detention is a remarkable, albeit perverse, tribute to her strength, and the extent to which the junta truly fears the influence that she could have if she were left at liberty. The irony is that while she may become physically more frail, politically she becomes stronger with every day that she passes in detention. We should be interested to hear from the Minister whether he has any information from Mark Canning on what he has been able to discern about the conduct of the trial from the limited access that he and other external monitors have been given.

I once heard Aung San Suu Kyi described as

“an outstanding example of the power of the powerless”.

That encapsulates rather nicely the point that I just made to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. McGovern). The real tragedy is that while she herself is a remarkable woman who is widely recognised for her achievements throughout the world, inasmuch as she is a political prisoner she is by no means unique in Burma. It is estimated that there are some 2,100 political prisoners there, and the figure may be even higher.

It is clear that Aung San Suu Kyi's detention is a political detention. There is no question of any criminality. There is also no doubt that the wish to keep her in detention is clearly related to the elections due in 2010. If we imagine the position from the generals' point of view, we can well see why they would want to do that.

It is fair to recognise the strong and effective efforts made by the United Kingdom Government in recent years. I was particularly impressed by the words of the Prime Minister in his contribution to the "64 words" project. We were all invited to offer 64 words in anticipation of Aung San Suu Kyi's 64th birthday next

Friday. The Prime Minister put it rather well when he wrote:

“The clamour for your release is growing across Europe, Asia, and the entire world. We must do all we can to make this birthday the last you spend without your freedom.”

President Obama perhaps understated the position when he said that Aung San Suu Kyi’s detention

“cast serious doubt on the Burmese regime’s willingness to be a responsible member of the international community”.

It is not often that we would accuse President Obama of understatement, but on this occasion it appears that he did not indulge in any hyperbole.

Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) (LD): My hon. Friend mentioned the entire international community. While it may be no surprise that Russia is no champion of democracy and human rights, does he not agree that it is a great disappointment that a neighbour of Burma—India, the world’s largest democracy—has not only failed to provide adequate support for the plight of Aung San Suu Kyi, but has actually given comfort to the Burmese regime?

Mr. Carmichael: Yes, I do. When speaking earlier about the role of China in the region, I was remiss in not referring to India, which could have done—and, indeed, can yet do—a great deal more. I think it is fair to say that the further away a country is from the region, the more diluted its influence. India is part of the Commonwealth, as we are, and I hope that the Minister will do all he can to maximise the benefits from such links.

When the Minister replies, I hope we will hear a bit more about what the Government are doing to build the broad international coalition that we all think is necessary. I hesitate to use the phrase “when Aung San Suu Kyi is convicted” when we are still in the process of the trial, as it offends my sensitivities as a lawyer, but such is the nature of this exercise that we have to be realistic and acknowledge that she will be convicted: the prospect of acquittal is so negligible as not to be worthy of consideration. What measures do we anticipate taking in that event? It seems to me that there is an obvious response: to build this broad international coalition, particularly for an international arms embargo. Everybody seems to support such an embargo, but no matter how strongly they do that, it never seems to happen. Within the European Union, will the UK press for a travel ban to be extended to the prosecutors and judges who have been responsible for this sham of a trial?

In essence, those are our concerns. I know that the Government remain committed to bringing democracy to Burma. I hope that, whatever happens to Aung San Suu Kyi, she will not be left to suffer in vain, and that everything that happens to her will only serve to redouble our determination to bring democracy to that beautiful but benighted country.

10.37 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Ivan Lewis): I congratulate the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Carmichael) on securing this Adjournment debate on this incredibly important issue, and on the responsible yet passionate way in which he made his argument from a very informed perspective. I also thank him for his generous congratulations on my appointment to my new post; I regard it as a tremendous honour to be a Minister of State in the Foreign Office with responsibility for the middle east, Burma and other similar issues. I am in day two of the job, so I hope Members will be tolerant as I respond to the best of my ability. May I also assure the hon. Gentleman that I intend to work very closely with his all-party group, and indeed with all all-party groups who have an interest in my new portfolio of responsibilities?

A number of Members are present who have consistently raised issues in relation to Burma over a long period, and I believe that the cumulative pressure from Members in all parts of the House does in the end make a difference in international opinion. There are doubts about how much that impacts on the regime, but it is important that the House continues to offer oxygen in terms of the political situation and political realities in Burma. I therefore congratulate all Members who take an interest in these issues on continuing to bring them to the Floor of the House.

As Members are aware, in the early morning of 14 May Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested simply for not reporting an intruder. Her trial on these absurd charges began on 18 May. The hon. Gentleman gave a different analogy, but a prisoner is being prosecuted apparently because the prison guards were asleep on the job. Our ambassador in Rangoon—I noted that the hon. Gentleman paid tribute to his leadership on these issues—has reported the following:

“It’s difficult to see anything but a guilty verdict...these trials tend to be pre-scripted. All decisions of any significance in Burma are made by the ubiquitous ‘higher authority’.

He continued:

“The generals will want to make sure Suu Kyi is unable to play a role in the elections next year.”

That seems pre-scripted and pre-destined, and the point has been made by hon. Members.

He continued:

“So the betting is on a sentence that extends her house arrest well into 2010 or beyond”.

I have no information on the medical condition of Aung San Suu Kyi. I shall inquire into that and write to the hon. Gentleman, and I shall try to find a way of making other hon. Members aware of the current situation, particularly in relation to her mental and physical health.

I am proud that the UK has led, in many ways, the international response to this outrage. We have spoken to EU leaders and members of the UN Security Council. Burma’s neighbours, including China, India, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries, are in no doubt that they have a critical role to play and need to use their influence—I reiterate that call in this debate. I wish to pay tribute to the tremendous work done by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Bill Rammell), when he held this portfolio. He spoke up at the meeting of 45 Asian and EU Ministers in Hanoi only last month and he did not pull any punches. He said that the charges against Aung San Suu Kyi were baseless, he called for her to be released, along with the other 2,100 political prisoners who are detained in Burma—those are the ones we know of—and he asserted that without her and other opposition leaders the 2010 elections would simply not have any credibility in international eyes.

In Hanoi and in Phnom Penh, my predecessor spoke directly to Burmese Ministers to urge them to take positive steps to restore democracy. As hon. Members will be aware, and as the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland mentioned, the UK is taking action within the European Union. The Prime Minister intends to raise the issue of Burma at the June European Council. On 19 May, the Foreign Secretary discussed further steps that the EU should take in Brussels, and our officials continue to work with EU member states on tighter measures that target the regime. The Government believe that further measures, including financial sanctions, will increase pressure on the regime.

May I return to the comment that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland made about Aung San Suu Kyi’s health? We believe that she is not in bad health, but she has severely limited access to medical staff and we do not have any further information. She is, as ever, a remarkable woman—we would all accept that—and we believe that she is well enough to defend herself appropriately during the course of these proceedings, however unfair and unjust we know them to be. That is the best information we can offer at the moment, but I am certainly willing to provide any further information that I can get to him.

May I return to the UK’s contribution? We have ensured that Burma is discussed at the United Nations, including in the Security Council. The UK will be pushing for the firmest of responses, but it is only right on occasions such as this to be honest and frank about the boundaries of the effectiveness of our efforts. For example, hon. Members will be aware that our efforts to secure a Security Council resolution in 2007 following the saffron revolution were blocked, and the current composition of the Security Council means that any binding resolution against Burma is unlikely. Of course, the UK supports the imposition of a universal arms ban against Burma, but we know that an arms embargo requires a mandatory chapter 7 resolution.

I am also aware that there are calls for Burma to be referred to the International Criminal Court. Appalling and unforgivable crimes are undoubtedly being committed in Burma as we speak, but that country is not party to the Rome statute, and again a Security Council resolution would be required. We believe that it is incredibly important that we focus on practical measures that will convince the regime to choose the path of reform and national reconciliation.

What we have achieved so far is two unprecedented presidential statements, and we should regard that as positive. Two weeks ago, the Security Council expressed its concern about the arrest and called for political prisoners to be released and involved and engaged in the political process. As the hon. Gentleman said, we know that President Obama and the Secretary of State in the American Administration share our concern for Burma, and recently US sanctions against the regime were renewed.

Although it is right that there be a focus on Aung San Suu Kyi, the hon. Gentleman rightly made the point that she is one of more than 2,100 political prisoners in Burma. People have been imprisoned for up to 65 years simply for asking for help for cyclone victims—an appalling state of affairs.

Another crucial requirement for national reconciliation has to be the involvement of all ethnic groups in Burma. The UK has condemned the continuing human rights abuses that ethnic groups in Burma have suffered. Recently, we received worrying reports about the situation in Karen state, which the hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink) referred to. Thousands of people have been forced to flee to Thailand because of an offensive by the Burmese army, and tragically there have been a number of civilian casualties. Violence in Karen state can only prolong the suffering of the Karen people.

The Rohingya people are abused in Burma, and abused as refugees throughout the region. We have drawn the attention of the international community, including the United Nations Human Rights Council, to the plight of minorities. The conflicts with the Karen community and others are regrettable consequences of the regime's attitude to the people of Burma. The full and equitable participation of Burma's ethnic groups in the political process has to be the key to a durable, sustainable solution to its problems.

I refer to my previous responsibilities in saying that way in which we respond to the humanitarian crisis is equally important. We are the biggest donor of humanitarian aid to Burma. On top of our contribution to cyclone relief of £45 million, we intend to spend another £25 million on aid to the people of Burma this year.

There is a worldwide public campaign calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. The Prime Minister and global leaders have added their weight to that of millions who have spoken out about the plight of Burma.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the Minister undertake on behalf of the British Government to make renewed representations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, that one of his utmost priorities should be to talk to the Burmese regime, and indeed the Chinese regime, to see how this tyranny can be ended? What we have heard in the House this evening is totally unacceptable according to all international norms of human behaviour.

Mr. Lewis: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I hope to meet the Secretary-General next week, although that is not confirmed, and of course this will be one of the major issues that I raise. We believe that it is very important that he use his good offices and reputation to intervene in a way that will change the dynamic of the country. His office and his role are absolutely crucial to securing progress, so if I am able to meet him next week, I intend to raise this specific matter.

We are in an interesting time in our domestic political scene, and at a time like this one might think that the Prime Minister would have other things on his mind. However, hon. Members should know the level of his focus on and concern about this issue. He feels personally engaged in what has happened to Aung San Suu Kyi. He regards her as a fellow leader in the international community—

EARY DAY MOTIONS

EDM 1452 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BURMA
07.05.2009

Signed by 120 MPs

EDM 1490 AUNG SAN SUU KYI

14.05.2009

Signed by 74 MPs

EDM 1336: HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

23.04.2009

Signed by 77MPs

EDM 670: THAILAND TREATMENT OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES

03.02.2009

Signed by 52 MPs

EDM 671: CLOSURE OF CHURCHES IN RANGOON

03.02.2009

Signed by 120 MPs

EDM 343: UNITED NATIONS AND POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BURMA

17.02.2009

Signed by 177 MPs

To view the whole list of EDM, please see the below link
<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/Search.aspx>

EU: General Affairs and External Relations Council Statement

15 June 2009

On Burma, we expect the council to discuss developments in the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi, and in particular the need for a robust EU response in the event of a guilty verdict. It is not yet clear whether a verdict will come before the GAERC. Were Aung San Suu Kyi to be subjected to a further period of house arrest, or worse, imprisoned, this would remove the last shred of credibility from elections planned for 2010. In such circumstances we would expect the council to issue strong conclusions outlining the steps the EU planned to take in response.

Birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi, US Department of State

18 June 2009

The United States sends its best wishes to Aung San Suu Kyi on the occasion of her 64th birthday on June 19. She continues to inspire those who support freedom and democracy in Burma and around the world. Sadly, though, Aung San Suu Kyi will once again spend her birthday in confinement – isolated from her family, friends, and the Burmese people – as Burmese authorities pursue unjustified and indefensible charges against her.

We call on the Burmese authorities to drop those charges and release Aung San Suu Kyi immediately. Aung San Suu Kyi has dedicated her life to achieving democratic change and promoting progress in Burma. We will continue our efforts to support that change, and we salute the courage of Aung San Suu Kyi and the more than 2,100 other political prisoners who have sacrificed so much for a noble cause. We, along with all of her admirers in Burma and abroad, look forward to the day when she will be able to celebrate her birthday in freedom.

Pelosi Calls on the Government of Burma to Release Aung San Suu Kyi on Her 64th Birthday

18 June 2009

“On June 19th, Burma’s democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi will celebrate her 64th birthday under continued house arrest as she awaits trial on dubious charges.

“The Burmese military junta’s continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi is deplorable and deserves the full condemnation of the international community. A clear message must be sent that Aung San Suu Kyi and all other prisoners of conscience in Burma must be released, immediately and unconditionally.

“Aung San Suu Kyi has made every conceivable sacrifice that could be asked from any leader. She has seen her supporters beaten, tortured and killed yet she has never responded to hatred and violence in kind. All she has ever asked for is peaceful dialogue and to play a role in the future of her country.

“Aung San Suu Kyi has called on individuals, organizations, and governments to support Burma’s democracy movement saying ‘Please use your liberty to promote ours.’ She is to be commended for her courage and her leadership.

“I am proud that last year the U.S. Congress passed and President Bush signed into law a resolution awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to Aung San Suu Kyi for ‘her courageous and unwavering commitment to peace, nonviolence, human rights, and democracy in Burma.

“Let there be no doubt that we stand with Aung San Suu Kyi and the freedom-seeking people of Burma in their just cause.”

EU Council Declaration on Burma

19 June 2009

The European Council calls for the immediate unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi, who has tirelessly defended universal values of freedom and democracy. Unless she is released, with all other political prisoners, the credibility of the 2010 elections will be further undermined. The EU will respond with additional targeted measures. We urge Burma/Myanmar to embark on a genuine transition to democracy bringing peace and prosperity to its people.

In this regard the European Council welcomes the clear calls from neighbouring countries for a free, fair and inclusive political process. Moreover, the EU reiterates its strong support for the UN Good Offices Mission and for the personal engagement of the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, including his early visit to Burma/Myanmar.

Statement by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on Aung San Suu Kyi’s birthday

June 19, 2009

Today is the 64th birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi. The fact that she remains under arrest is tragic for Burma and for all those who believe in democracy. The trial of Ms Suu Kyi is an absurd mockery of justice. The real injustice was not that someone broke into her compound, but that she was imprisoned in the first place.

Ms Suu Kyi has now been imprisoned for 13 of the past 19 years, since the party she led won the last elections in her country. More than 2000 others are imprisoned across Burma for sharing her commitment to a better future for the long-suffering population.

Even in the face of such injustice, Ms Suu Kyi has always supported the path of peace and reconciliation. But the regime has consistently spurned her offer of dialogue and reconciliation. It wants to isolate her from the people of Burma, for whom she has long been a symbol of hope and defiance.

Her refusal to buckle in the face of tyranny is an inspiration. But words of support are not enough. The region, the European Union and the United Nations are all urging the junta to release Ms Suu Kyi. So far all requests for moderation have been spurned. In the face of such obstinacy, the world must now act. I believe there are three things we must do.

First, we need to support the countries of the region as they step up efforts to secure democracy and reconciliation. I have been struck by how Burma's neighbours have led the world in calling for Ms Suu Kyi's release. We need to translate this outrage into political pressure for change.

Second, we need the UN Security Council to reinforce its calls for Ms Suu Kyi's release and to support the Secretary-General's efforts to bring about political progress through an early visit to Burma.

Third, we should impose a new set of tough sanctions that target the regime's economic interests. We will be pushing for stronger EU action in this regard. Such a step would hit the business interests of the generals and their cronies. I also believe we should identify and target those judges complicit in the recent political show trials.

The growing sense of outrage and the unity of the international community behind this message should mark a turning point. The regime is at a crossroads. Long-promised elections in 2010 will remain a charade while political prisoners are being tortured, ethnic minorities are persecuted, the media muzzled, freedom of speech and assembly are non-existent and Ms Suu Kyi is silenced. The regime can choose to ignore the clamour for change. But this will only condemn the country to deeper isolation, poverty, conflict and despair.

Or it can choose the path of reform, as the region has urged. Burma is rich in natural and human resources, at the heart of a dynamic continent. Democratic reform would unleash the country's enormous potential. Britain and the international community would be ready to extend the hand of friendship. If the Burmese generals rethink their ways, we will be ready to recognise and embrace any genuine reforms they make. Some may question why Burma warrants so much attention. There are other countries where human rights are ignored or people live in poverty. But the Burmese junta stands virtually alone in the scale of its misrule and the sheer indifference to the suffering of its 50 million people. How we respond to this injustice will send a message about our resolution to tackle similar injustices across the globe.

To those that stand for human rights, freedom and democracy, our message remains clear - you are not alone.

European MPs call for a global arms embargo to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

19 June 2009

Parliamentarians from 16 European countries, members of the European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma (EPCB), today called on United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to immediately impose a global arms embargo against the military regime in Burma to pressure the dictatorship to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Burma.

In a letter to all Security Council members, the EPCB expressed its deep concern over the continued detention of Burma's democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi saying; "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of Burma's democracy movement, is now spending her 14th birthday in detention, and a sham of a trial will ensure she will remain detained when elections take place next year."

The EPCB pointed out that three statements by the Security Council calling on the dictatorship to reform have been ignored by the ruling regime, the State Peace and Development Council.

"This defiance cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged. The time is long overdue for a global arms embargo against Burma, and we call on your government to publicly commit itself to such a step" the letter said.

The European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma was founded in June 2008 to raise awareness on Burma in Europe and promote human rights and democracy in Burma.

G8 Foreign Ministers issue statement on Burma

26 June 2009

We are deeply concerned about the recent developments. A real process of dialogue and national

reconciliation is needed, with the full participation of representatives of all political parties and ethnic groups, leading to transparent, fair and democratic multiparty elections. In this regard we call on the Government of Myanmar to release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi whose continued detention would undermine the credibility of the elections planned for 2010.

We reaffirm our full support to the UN Secretary General's good office mission and the initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue and democratic transition in Myanmar, demanding international community to do likewise. We call on the Government of Myanmar to fully cooperate with the UNSG Special Advisor, as well as with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar. We remain prepared to respond positively to substantive political progress undertaken by Myanmar.

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