



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

NOV
2012

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Rohingya and Rakhine State

13 Nov 2012 Lord Avebury: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will raise concerns about the situation of the Rohingya people of Burma in the United Nations Security Council.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): The UK continues to raise the plight of the Rohingya at the UN Security Council. At our request, we have had three separate briefings in the past year from Mr Vijay Nambiar, the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Burma. The most recent briefing by Mr Nambiar on 20 June included a discussion of the sectarian violence which had erupted in Rakhine State at the beginning of June.

We strongly supported a UN Human Rights Council resolution on Burma this year, which included an extension to the mandate of the UN's Special Rapporteur for Burma, Mr Quintana. We are in the process of negotiating an EU-led UN General Assembly Third Committee (Human Rights) resolution on Burma. As in previous years, we will be pressing for the situation in Rakhine State and the plight of the Rohingya to be reflected.

13 Nov 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of satellite images obtained by Human Rights Watch of the town of Kyaukpyu in Burma, and of allegations that they represent evidence of violent attacks.

Baroness Warsi: The satellite images obtained by Human Rights Watch of the town of Kyauk Pyu, as part of its 27 October report *Burma: New Violence in Arakan State*, provide a further indication of the unstable security environment which exists across Northern Rakhine State.

Having led the first independent diplomatic mission to the areas affected by violence in early October, on 1 November our ambassador in Rangoon visited Kyauk Pyu and saw for himself the destruction of the neighbourhood. The satellite images are clear evidence of what appears to have been pre-planned and systematic violent attacks. He also visited former residents of the area, currently living in makeshift internally displaced person camps outside the town.

The UK continues to urge the Burmese Government to put in place measures to bring the violence to an end. This point was reiterated by the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), to the Burmese Charge d'Affaires on 29 October. The Foreign Secretary, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), raised our concerns with Burmese President Thein Sein directly on 6 November at the Asia-Europe Meeting in Laos. This followed calls for an end to the violence in our respective public statements of 24 and 28 October.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi about the situation of the Rohingya people.

Baroness Warsi: The Foreign Secretary, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) and the Prime Minister, my right honourable friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), raised the

plight of the Rohingya community with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi during her visit to the UK in June. In these meetings, Ministers made clear their concerns about the issues affecting the Rohingya, including their rights to nationality.

Officials from our embassy in Rangoon remain in regular contact with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and continue to discuss a range of issues, including the UK's concern about the situation in Rakhine State. Officials discussed the latest outbreak of violence with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 30 October. Our ambassador also raised the situation in Rakhine State and the plight of the Rohingya with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi prior to her visit to the US in September and on 11 October following his visit to Rakhine State.

20 Nov 2012 Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether her Department has considered directing bilateral assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Mr Duncan: DFID does not provide bilateral funding directly to assist the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. DFID does provide core contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which manages the official camps, and to other organisations that provide support including the European Commission. We have raised the plight of the Rohingyas and their status with the Government of Bangladesh, both bilaterally and in concert with European Union partners. DFID has allocated £2 million of bilateral funds for humanitarian relief for victims of violence in Rakhine state in Burma. This includes the supply of emergency water, sanitation and health care to more than 58,000 people affected by the outbreak of violence in Rakhine State.

26 Nov 2012 Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what technical assistance her Department is providing for reconciliation inside Rakhine State, Burma.

Mr Duncan: DFID has focused on meeting urgent humanitarian needs in Rakhine and is not currently providing technical assistance for reconciliation inside Rakhine State. In addition to core funding of multilateral working in the area, DFID has allocated £2 million of bilateral funds for humanitarian relief for victims of violence in Rakhine state. This includes the provision of improved drinking water and sanitation facilities and treatment for malnutrition. UK Ministers have made several public statements to express our deep concern about the violence. We welcomed the formation of an independent Investigative Commission to probe the violence but made clear that for the Commission to be credible it needed to involve a consultative process with all the affected communities.

27 Nov 2012 Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the prevalence of anti-Muslim prejudice in Burmese society.

Mr Swire: The recent violence in Rakhine state has once again highlighted the tensions felt between communities in Burma. We have left senior members of the Burmese Government in no doubt about our concerns over the reported Human Rights abuses. I will again raise these concerns with Burma's political leaders during my forthcoming visit to the country.

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. There are severe restrictions on the freedom of all religions in Burma, including towards Christians and Muslims, particularly if they are perceived as anti-government groups. Ethnic minority communities, many of whom are non-Buddhists (eg. the Rohingya and Kachin). Are disproportionately affected by the wider pattern of human rights abuse carried out by the Burmese authorities. We continue to raise our concerns directly with senior members of the Burmese Government at every opportunity.

Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to verify reports of rape of ethnic Rohingya women and girls by Burmese government security and military personnel.

Mr Swire: We have received many reports of human rights abuses in Rakhine State since the outbreak of violence in June, including reports that allege the involvement of government security forces in the rape of Rohingya women and girls. I am travelling to Rakhine State in December to see the situation in the state for myself.

Following our calls for an investigation into allegations of abuse in Rakhine State, calls echoed by the wider international community and in particular by the UN Special Rapporteur Tomas Ojea Quintana, the Burmese Government set up an independent Investigative Commission to probe the causes of the violence. We welcomed this development but made clear that for the commission to be credible it needed to involve a consultative process with all the affected communities, including the Rohingya. I will again raise these concerns with the Burmese Government during my forthcoming visit to the country.

The publication of the Commission's final report has been delayed so that the Commission can incorporate its findings on the violence of late October. It will be important for investigations into alleged atrocities, including rape, to be transparent and thorough ensuring that those who have committed crimes are held to account for their actions.

Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on whether Rakhine and national Burmese government officials were involved in inciting hatred and violence against the Rohingya ethnic minority.

Mr Swire: Through our regular contact with ethnic groups and non-governmental organisations we continue to receive reports of human rights abuses in Rakhine State, including reports that allege local security services and government officials were involved in inciting hatred and violence against the Rohingya ethnic minority. I will travel to Burma's Rakhine State in December to see the situation in the state for myself.

Following our calls for an investigation into allegations of abuse in Rakhine State, calls echoed by the UN Special Rapporteur Tomas Ojea Quintana, the Burmese Government set up an independent Investigative Commission to probe the causes of the violence. We welcomed this development but made clear that for the commission to be credible it needed to involve a consultative process with all the affected communities, including the Rohingya. I will again raise these concerns with the Burmese Government during my forthcoming visit.

Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding she is providing to identify and assist ethnic Rohingya women who have reportedly been raped by Burmese government soldiers and security forces in recent months.

Mr Duncan: We are not providing specific funding to identify and assist ethnic Rohingya women who have reportedly been raped by Burmese Government soldiers and security forces. We have, however, emphasised to the Burmese Government the need for a greater security presence in Rakhine State to protect all civilians and to prevent further violence. We have also called for unrestricted access for the United Nations and non-governmental organisations to provide humanitarian support.

29 Nov 2012 Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what representations her Department has made to the Burmese Government on creating a road map to ending the segregation policies in Sittwe which remove the Rohingya from their livelihoods and make them dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Mr Duncan: UK Ministers and officials in the DFID office and British embassy in Rangoon continue to lobby the Government of Burma for a long-term solution to the plight of the Rohingya in Rakhine, including their right to citizenship. Ministers recently raised this directly with Minister Soe Thane when he visited the UK on 7 November.

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions her Department has had on ensuring effective co-ordination between the different humanitarian aid agencies providing assistance in the Rakhine district.

Mr Duncan: DFID has provided £2 million in humanitarian relief for the victims of violence in Rakhine state. DFID support is being provided by a consortium of international non-governmental organisations. In this work, and throughout DFID's funding in Burma, DFID encourages the United Nations (UN) to strengthen its co-ordination of assistance; and works to ensure the Burmese Government co-ordinates its response with the UN and others. DFID also takes steps to allow full, co-ordinated, humanitarian access to the areas affected by conflict such as Rakhine state.

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether her Department plans to provide any funding for technical assistance with reconciliation inside the Rakhine state.

Mr Duncan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 26 November 2012, Official Report, column 82W, to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord).

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether she has considered directing humanitarian funding towards the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Mr Duncan: DFID does not currently provide bilateral funding directly to assist the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, but if additional funding is requested by operational agencies we will consider it. DFID does provide core contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which manages the official camps, and other organisations that provide support including the European Commission. We have raised the plight of the Rohingyas and their status with the Government of Bangladesh, both bilaterally and in concert with EU partners.

29 Nov 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: To ask Her Majesty's Government what engagement there has been to ensure that international monitors can operate in Rakhine State.

Baroness Northover: We have not raised the specific issue of international monitors. We have, however, emphasised to the Burmese Government the need for a greater security presence in Rakhine State to protect all civilians and to prevent further violence. We have also called for unrestricted access for the United Nations and non-governmental organisations to provide humanitarian support.

The Burmese Government have, to date, allowed independent observers from foreign Governments and international organisations to visit the areas affected by the violence. Officials from the British embassy have visited Rakhine State on numerous occasions, including the British ambassador, who led the first independent diplomatic mission to Rakhine State in early October and visited again in early November.

30 Nov 2012 Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had on the need for international observers to be deployed in Rakhine state.

Mr Swire: We continue to raise our concerns about the recent violence in Rakhine state, and the need for improved security and unrestricted humanitarian access there, with the Burmese Government. The Burmese authorities have, to date, allowed independent observers from foreign governments and international organisations to visit the areas affected by the violence. Officials from our embassy have visited Rakhine state on numerous occasions, including the British ambassador, who led the first independent diplomatic mission to the state in early October and visited again in early November. I will visit Rakhine state during my forthcoming visit to Burma.

We welcomed the formation of the independent Investigative Commission to probe the causes of the violence, but made clear that for the commission to be credible, it needed to involve a consultative process with all the affected communities, including the Rohingya. We are awaiting the initial findings of this commission. It will be important for any investigations into alleged atrocities to be transparent and thorough, ensuring that those who have committed crimes are held to account for their actions.

Political Prisoners

22 Nov 2012 Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Burma on the formation of a joint domestic and International board to investigate the number of political activists in Burma's prisons and detention centres.

Mr Swire: In September the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), met with Burmese Foreign Minister, U Wunna Maung Lwin, during the UN General Assembly in New York and pressed for the Burmese Government to set up an independent, non-political process for assessing those still detained. He also urged the Burmese government to lift restrictions on those who had been released, including on their travel.

We continue to press the Burmese Government for the unconditional release of all political prisoners at every opportunity. My upcoming visit to Burma in December will provide me a timely opportunity to raise those concerns again directly with senior members of the Burmese authorities.

27 Nov 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma about the release of Dr Tun Aung.

Baroness Warsi: While we welcome the release of a number of political prisoners on the 19 November, we believe that Dr Tun Aung remains in detention.

The British Government continue to call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners at every opportunity. In September, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), met with Burmese Foreign Minister, U Wunna Maung Lwin, during a UN General Assembly session in New York. He pressed for unconditional release of all political prisoners and urged the Burmese Government to set up an independent, non-political process to define the number of political prisoners that remain detained. He also urged the Burmese Government to lift restrictions on those who had been released, including on their travel.

The forthcoming visit to Burma in December by the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), will provide timely opportunity to continue to raise these concerns directly with senior members of the Burmese Government.

Kachin and Shan State

1 Nov 2012 Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the People's Republic of China in regard to its forced repatriation of Kachin refugees from Burma.

Mr Swire: I raised the issue of the reported forced repatriation of Kachin refugees with the Chinese ambassador to London on 1 November 2012. In August 2012, in the wake of the recent Human Rights Watch report on Kachin refugees, officials from the British embassy in Beijing raised the issue with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs while at the same time Foreign and Commonwealth Officials in London brought it to the attention of the Chinese embassy in London.

Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to urge the government of Burma to cease attacks on Kachin civilians and seek a peace process with the Kachin Independence Organisation.

Mr Swire: We continue to highlight the importance of finding a long-term solution to Burma's ethnic conflicts, including that in Kachin State, in all our discussions with the Burmese Government. We welcome the Burmese Government's attempts to build trust with and between 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.

We are actively supporting the reconciliation process between Burma's ethnic groups. The Prime Minister announced the allocation of an additional £5 million for immediate peace-building activities during Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to the UK in June. 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 in order to support the reconciliation process.

Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the government of Burma on the conflict in Kachin State.

Mr Swire: We continue to press the Burmese Government for unrestricted humanitarian access to internally displaced persons across Burma, and to urge the Government to put in place a long term solution to end ethnic conflict in Burma, particularly in Kachin State. Officials from our embassy in Rangoon are also in regular contact with representatives of the Kachin for updates on the peace talks and the humanitarian situation there.

On 15 July our ambassador met senior figures in the Burmese Government, including the Vice President, to raise the importance of bringing the conflict in Kachin State to an end. The meetings were organised as part of a visit by UK experts focusing on inter-communal trust-building and peace processes.

22 Nov 2012 Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what plans she has to extend and increase humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people in Kachin State, Burma; (2) what assistance the Government is providing to internally displaced people in Kachin State, Burma. (3) what recent assessment she has made of the humanitarian needs of the Kachin people displaced by conflict.

Mr Duncan: The instability in Kachin and Shan states, which started in June 2011, has led to the displacement of over 70,000 people, loss of lives and livelihoods, and damage to infrastructure. Humanitarian priorities include the provision of shelter, water and sanitation, and food for those displaced. The security situation makes access difficult, particularly for international organisations and the United Nations. Humanitarian organisations have, however, had some level of access to displaced populations in hard-to-reach areas.

DFID has provided £2 million to support humanitarian needs in Kachin through a number of local non-governmental organisations. This is helping 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. We continue to review the needs of the internally displaced people in Kachin but at this stage do not have any firm plans to provide additional funding.

26 Nov 2012 Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reason, under the Joint Action Plan between the UN and the Government of Burma, the UN is forbidden from entering areas controlled by non-state armed groups.

Mr Swire: There are restrictions on humanitarian access to ethnic areas, particularly in Kachin State. The Burmese Government state this is due in part because the security of UN staff cannot be guaranteed. There have been a few aid convoys allowed into areas controlled by ethnic groups over the last six months, but we recognise that the frequency and geographical scope of these convoys needs to improve. Our ambassador and officials from our embassy in Rangoon continue to regularly raise the need for unrestricted access for humanitarian aid with senior members of the Burmese Government. I will again raise these concerns with Burma's political leaders on my forthcoming visit to the country.

27 Nov 2012 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Burma regarding dialogue with the Kachin Independence Organisation.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): Resolving Burma's long-running ethnic conflicts is vital to long-term stability and prosperity in Burma. Our ambassador met senior Burmese government Ministers on 13 November to discuss a range of issues, including the progress of reconciliation talks between the Burmese Government and the Kachin.

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.

Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Government of Burma about allowing international humanitarian access to internally displaced Kachin people.

Baroness Warsi: We believe that resolving Burma's long-running ethnic conflicts is vital to Burma's long-term stability and prosperity. We regularly press the Burmese Government for unrestricted humanitarian access to internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Burma. During their respective visits to Burma this year, both the Prime Minister, my right honourable friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), raised the need to resolve ethnic conflict and allow unhindered humanitarian

access to the areas affected by conflict, notably Kachin State.

Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government what aid they are providing to assist local community groups in Kachin in helping internally displaced people.

Baroness Northover: DfID has provided £2 million to support humanitarian needs in Kachin through a number of local non-governmental organisations. This is helping to meet the needs of around 27,500 internally displaced people, largely in border camps not controlled by the Government, for food security, shelter, water, sanitation, health and bedding.

29 Nov 2012 Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether human rights abuses committed by the Burmese Army in northern Shan State and Kachin State, Burma would provide grounds for investigations of whether war crimes and crimes against humanity may have been committed.

Mr Swire: We remain seriously concerned about reported human rights abuses committed by the Burmese army and armed ethnic groups in northern Shan and Kachin States. On 27 November, the UN General Assembly Third Committee passed a resolution by consensus that addresses the human rights situation in Burma, including the need for the Burmese Government to prosecute those responsible for human rights violations. That this was agreed by consensus demonstrates for the first time the Burmese Government's commitment to resolving the many areas of concern, including accountability for past human rights abuses. We continue to urge the Burmese Government to meet that commitment. It will be important for any investigations into alleged atrocities to be transparent and thorough, ensuring that those who have committed crimes are held to account for their actions.

29 Nov 2012 Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the United Kingdom team of experts devoted to combating and preventing sexual violence in armed conflicts has been mobilised in Burma in response to the reported rapes of ethnic Kachin and Shan women by soldiers of the Burmese army.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: We continue to receive reports of human rights abuses in Burma's conflict-affected areas, including reports that allege the involvement of Government security forces in the rape of women and girls. We continue to call on the Burmese authorities to take urgent measures to end the targeting of civilians in military operations. and rape and other forms of sexual violence.

On 29 May, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), announced a new initiative to prevent sexual violence in conflict. It includes the establishment of a dedicated UK team who will operate as a flexible task force which can be deployed overseas at short notice in support of efforts to improve investigations and increase prosecutions of sexual violence in conflict.

We are currently in the process of identifying where deployments might take place. We envisage that these will be at the request of a national government or to contribute to the existing efforts of international partners (for example in support of the UN). We will identify, with the UN and partners. those countries where the UK Team of Experts can add most value.

We continue to raise the issue of human rights abuses at every opportunity directly with the Burmese Government, both at ministerial level and through our embassy in Rangoon. We also continue to raise our concerns with our international partners, and in international institutions, such as the UN.

Refugees and IDPs

22 Nov 2012 Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding her Department has provided to organisations based on the Thailand-Burma border to support refugees and people displaced by conflict and human rights abuses.

Mr Duncan: Between 2009-12 DFID has been providing a programme of assistance, totalling around £9 million, for humanitarian and protection support to over 140,000 refugees in nine camps in Thailand and

internally displaced people in conflicted-affected border areas of Burma. This month DFID announced further, increased, support for organisations based on the Thailand-Burma border delivering assistance in areas including food, shelter, health care and legal assistance with additional focus on preparations of refugees for the possibility of return. Funding for this is likely to exceed £13 million.

Humanitarian aid

26 Nov 2012 Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps her Department is taking to ensure greater co-ordination of the work of relief agencies in Burma.

Mr Duncan: DFID ensure that the funds are well coordinated with the work of other agencies; by encouraging the United Nations (UN) to strengthen its coordination of relief work; and by working to ensure the Burmese Government coordinates its response with the UN and others. DFID also takes steps to allow full coordinated humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas.

Ethnic conflict

30 Nov 2012 Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the Four-point Plan proposed by the President of Burma as a means of alleviating ethnic conflict in that country.

Mr Swire: We are cautiously hopeful about the progress the Burmese Government has made in trying to rebuild trust with ethnic groups. We recognise that the reconciliation process, led by President Thein Sein, remains fragile, and we continue to urge all parties to work towards a peaceful future for all of Burma's people.

We are actively supporting the reconciliation process. On 7 November, the Department for International Development announced that the UK Government would contribute a total of £27.17 million for humanitarian support of refugees and internally displaced persons and peace-building activities in Burma.

National League for Democracy

7 Nov 2012 Lord Kennedy of Southwark: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conditions under which members of the National League for Democracy in Burma operate.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: We welcome the increasing political space in Burma as a result of the reform process taking place. While there are many challenges ahead, not least the recent outbreaks of intercommunal violence in Rakhine State, reforms to date have led to more active participation by political parties, including by the National League for Democracy (NLD), in Burmese politics. Following the registration of the NLD as a political party in November 2011, the NLD contested by-elections in April 2012. These by-elections were considered by most to have been largely free and fair, with the NLD winning 43 seats of the 44 they contested.

Members of the NLD, including Aung San Suu Kyi, are now playing an active and constructive role in Burma's Parliament. The NLD is in the process of opening offices across the country and plans to hold a party conference in the coming months. Officials at our embassy in Rangoon, including our ambassador, regularly meet Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior NLD members.

Trade & Investment

27 Nov 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice they have given to United Kingdom companies trading and investing in Burma about operating in a transparent manner.

Baroness Warsi: There has been significant interest in trade and investment in Burma from UK businesses following the suspension in April of EU trade sanctions. In April the UK lifted its policy of actively discouraging trade with Burma. Since then, 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.

As part of this policy we funded a Wilton Park conference “Business and Human Rights: Setting Standards for Responsible Business in Burma” in early November. This was organised by the Institute of Human Rights and Business (IHRB) and as part of broader project to establish a framework for the implementation of the UN guiding principle on business and human rights in Burma. It was attended by senior representatives of the Burmese Government, the Opposition, British officials and business leaders. UK Trade and Investment now has a presence in Burma and is able to provide services to UK businesses, including tailored market research to help them plan how to sustainably and responsibly invest in the market.

Myanmar Peace Support Initiative

27 Nov 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty’s Government what financial contribution they have made to the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative.

Baroness Northover: The UK has pledged up to £3 million-subject to the results it will achieve-for immediate short-term peace-building initiatives in ceasefire areas, including through the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative.

Human Rights Law

27 Nov 2012 Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty’s Government in the light of continuing allegations of violations of human rights by the Burmese army in Kachin State and Rakhine State, what representations they have made to the Government of Burma about signing the Rome Statute and compliance with international human rights laws.

Baroness Warsi: We have had no discussions with the Burmese Government on the signing of the Rome Statute. However, our ambassador recently lobbied senior Burmese government Ministers on 13 November on the prospect of accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We also continue to support UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions on human rights in Burma. We continue to stress that, until the Burmese Government resolves the many outstanding issues in line with international principles on human rights, we will press for UN resolutions which highlight the strength of our concerns. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right honourable friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire) will be travelling to Rakhine State shortly to assess for himself the situation on the ground.

ANSWERS TO SPOKEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Rohingya / Rakhine state

8 Nov 2012 Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con): Tomorrow marks the international day of action for the Rohingya people in Burma. Will a Minister from the Department for International Development come to the Dispatch Box to make a statement explaining to the House how the UK Government intend to use their overseas aid programme to help these internally displaced people, given that the Government of Burma fail to recognise them as citizens of the country?

Mr Lansley: My hon. Friend will recall that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development did update the House on the situation in Burma in a written ministerial statement last week. Of course we are deeply concerned at the recent violence in Rakhine state in Burma. October saw an increase in communal violence between the de facto stateless, Muslim Rohingya and the majority, Buddhist, Rakhine communities. The United Kingdom is providing £2 million to enable emergency water, sanitation and health care provision to go to more than 58,000 people affected. We are pledging £3 million, subject to the results it will achieve, for short-term peacebuilding initiatives. We will do all we can to support and strengthen the wider peace process in Burma, but I will ask colleagues at the Foreign Office to ensure, as they have done, that the House is continually updated.

8 Nov 2012 Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab): May I reinforce the point made by the hon. Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) on the Rohingya community in Burma? A few weeks ago, we had a

Westminster Hall debate on this to which many Members came along. Horrific sectarian violence has unfolded again in recent days. We would welcome a statement from the International Development Secretary to update us on what her Department is doing to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to that part of the world.

Mr Lansley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who makes an important point. Many Members across this House are very concerned about the situation in Burma. We care deeply about its people, not least because the visit of Aung San Suu Kyi gave us the opportunity to appreciate the prospects for peace and democracy there, which we do not want to be undermined. I will of course speak to my right hon. Friend to see whether she might find an opportunity to make a statement of some description to the House.

22 Nov 2012 Mr Michael Meacher (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab): I wish to present this petition to the House, which has nearly 1,000 signatures, and is from Mr Ali and residents of Coldhurst and other parts of Oldham. I am grateful for the opportunity to present this petition.

The petition states:

The Petition of Mr Ali and residents of Coldhurst, Declares that the Petitioners believe that as a result of a recent attack on the Rohingya ethnic minority in June 2012 there is now a humanitarian crisis in Burma and that more than 90,000 Rohingya have been displaced; further that the Petitioners believe that since 1962 no Rohingya have been issued with birth certificates which renders them aliens to their own country and means they have no citizen's rights and that innocent civilians are being targeted because of their ethnic background; further that the Petitioners believe that this is a modern ethnic cleansing and that it has been described as such by many independent journalists and NGOs and that the Rohingya require relief and aid. The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to cease its economic ties with Burma and to assist in providing aid for the displaced Rohingya of the region. And the Petitioners remain, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

13 Nov 2012 Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead: My Lords, the UN has described the Rohingya people as among the most persecuted minorities in the world. In view of that reality, why have the UK Government been silent and inactive about the callous treatment by Bangladesh of the desperate Rohingya arriving on their shores? Will HMG now press the Bangladeshi Government to offer at least temporary refuge and access to humanitarian aid instead of sending thousands of Rohingya back to sea and to appalling danger?

Baroness Warsi: My Lords, the Government have been neither silent nor inactive on this matter. In fact, I personally raised it with the Foreign Minister, Dipu Moni, only a few weeks ago. We continue to press this matter. The former Secretary of State for the Department for International Development raised it earlier this year in a meeting with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. We have specifically raised the issue of being allowed to deliver aid to the refugee camps where the Rohingya community live.

13 Nov 2012 Baroness Uddin: My Lords, I understand that my noble friend the Minister has some sympathy with Bangladesh and its management of the vast numbers of refugees entering that country and no doubt she will continue to pressure Bangladesh for a proper solution and an international response to the refugee crisis. Does she accept that ethnic cleansing is in process? Will she ensure that she and the Government use the special relationship which we seem to have with the United States of America to brief her counterparts regarding the upcoming visit of President Obama to that country and on how the Rohingya people are desperately concerned about the indication that that will make to their plight?

Baroness Warsi: I accept that this is a desperate situation for a desperate community which has suffered now for many years. We raise this matter in many of our bilateral discussions both with the European Union and the US and specifically in discussions with Turkey, which has been playing a huge role in humanitarian assistance. The noble Baroness is right that we must continue to press. While we welcome the progress in Burma, I can absolutely assure the House that we continuously raise this matter.

13 Nov 2012 Lord Avebury: When my noble friend met Dipu Moni, did she tell her frankly that closing the borders against the Rohingya refugees is contrary to customary international law? If so, what reply did she receive from the Foreign Minister?

Baroness Warsi: I had a number of discussions with the Foreign Minister both at the United Nations

General Assembly ministerial week in New York and thereafter when she was travelling through London. I specifically raised the concern about the Rohingya community in this country, both in the wider community and among the Bangladeshi diaspora community which is crucial to the Bangladeshi Government. I left her with no illusion about the level of our concern.

13 Nov 2012 Baroness Nye: My Lords, have the Government pressed the Burmese Government to allow the High Commission for Human Rights to set up an office in Burma? It would not only provide technical assistance to the Government and civil society groups during this transitional period but also be able to monitor not only the awful situation of the Rohingya but the dreadful rapes of ethnic Kachin and Shan women by the Burmese army.

Baroness Warsi: I am not sure what representations we have made so I shall write to the noble Baroness with a specific response. However, I can assure her that our ambassador, Mr Andrew Heyn, has been to Rakhine state twice over the past four weeks, including a visit to Kyaukpyu, the area which Human Rights Watch has been monitoring through satellite imaging.

Ethnic conflict

13 Nov 2012 Baroness Cox: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of recent developments in Burma with regard to the ethnic nationalities, in particular the Rohingya, Kachin and Shan peoples.

The Senior Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Warsi): My Lords, despite the continuing process of political reform taking place in Burma, we are concerned by the reports of serious abuses being committed by government forces and armed ethnic groups against civilians, both in Kachin and across the border in Shan. Inter-communal violence in Rakhine state between the Rohingya and the Rakhine communities has again highlighted our ongoing concerns about the plight of the Rohingya, who are denied citizenship and civil and social rights.

Baroness Cox: My Lords, I thank the Minister for her sympathetic reply. Can she confirm the scale of the suffering caused by the Burmese Government's policies of violence and oppression to which she has referred? In recent months, many hundreds have been killed, and an estimated 100,000 Kachin, 30,000 Shan and 100,000 Rohingya people have been displaced from their homes to live in appalling conditions in camps or in exile. When I was in Shan state earlier this year one of the Shan leaders said: "When the lights went on in Rangoon all the world flooded there-and no one stopped to see us in the darkness".

Will Her Majesty's Government ensure that, during the forthcoming ministerial visit, the Minister will not only celebrate the lights of relative freedom in Rangoon but also engage with the ethnic peoples trapped in the darkness which still covers much of Burma today?

Baroness Warsi: My Lords, the noble Baroness raises a very important issue. She will accept that huge progress has been made in Burma but that it is important that that progress is felt by all communities in Burma. It is therefore right that the Government raise these concerns at every opportunity. The Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister raised them earlier this year when they visited Burma. They also specifically met with members of the Rohingya community. Indeed, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary raised our specific concerns about the Rohingya community with President Thein Sein. My honourable friend the Minister of State hopes to visit Rakhine state when he visits Burma in December.

Humanitarian aid

13 Nov 2012 Baroness Falkner of Margravine: My Lords, can my noble friend tell the House what resources from the stabilisation unit and the Conflict Pool are being used to provide humanitarian assistance to the three countries -Thailand, Burma and, indeed, Bangladesh-to alleviate the suffering of these people and to plan in the longer term for their rehabilitation and settlement within the three countries?

Baroness Warsi: The funds currently being provided are not from the Conflict Pool but from humanitarian assistance provided through DfID. We remain the largest bilateral donor to Burma having committed £187

million which has been allocated over a period of four years until 2015. Our aid predominantly focuses on healthcare, responsible and good governance, and improving livelihoods.

Burmese Parliament

13 Nov 2012 Lord Elton: My Lord, we are accustomed to being encouraged to welcome the new dawn of democracy in Burma but can my noble friend say to what extent the elected members of the Burmese Parliament really represent their electors and to what extent they have any control or influence on the actions and policies of the Burmese Government?

Baroness Warsi: My Lords, we welcome and make much of the progress that has been made in Burma, especially in relation to the emerging of democracy. However, it is right that we regularly raise our concerns about matters where we feel that progress is not being appropriately made. Indeed, on her historic visit to the United Kingdom, these matters were raised with Aung San Suu Kyi.

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT FROM DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DfID)

Press Release:

UK to boost peace process in conflict-stricken Burma

The UK government today underscored its commitment to helping strengthen the peace process in Burma, announcing a package of support that will also continue the UK's work to help Burmese refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). Some 155,000 Burmese citizens affected by conflict will be able to access this humanitarian relief.

Responding to recent political developments in Burma, the Department for International Development (DFID) is working to improve conditions and provide support activities for those who we hope may be able to return to their homeland in the future. The assistance will be split into three main areas: humanitarian, access to justice and protection, and peace building and preparation to return.

The UK's Humanitarian Support for Refugees and IDPs will include:

- Food for 139,000 refugees and 17,000 IDPs in camps;
- Improved sanitation facilities for over 100,000 IDPs;
- Ante-natal care for 30,000 displaced pregnant women;
- Action to reduce the tuberculosis death rate among displaced and refugee populations.

On Access to Justice and Protection, the UK's support will include:

- Ensuring that refugees understand their human and legal rights; and
- Ensuring that serious crimes reported in the camps are properly referred to the Thai justice system.

On Peace building and Preparation for return, the UK's support will include:

- Development of agricultural and business skills to help create viable livelihoods on return to Burma
- Making sure that 8,000 refugee camp residents understand the Burmese legal framework so that they have relevant knowledge to return to Burma

Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, said:

“Refugees and IDPs are some of the most vulnerable people from Burma and are in need of urgent humanitarian relief. Recent political developments mean that for the first time in decades there is a very real opportunity to help refugees prepare for return and support peace building. This must take place alongside political dialogue to address grievances which have caused such bloody conflicts.

“The recent outbreak of violence in Rakhine State makes these issues even more pressing. Inter-communal violence there has forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes. Many are living without basic water and sanitation. We must act now to relieve the immediate suffering and to ensure that conditions do not worsen to cause further loss of life.

“I hope that British support for this programme will not only improve the livelihoods of Burmese refugees and IDPs but also help create a stable and peaceful political situation in which they can integrate on return to their homeland.”

Notes to editors:

- Long running conflicts in the ethnic states of Burma have led to the displacement of approximately 140,000 Burmese refugees to Thailand and between 300-500,000 IDPs in Burma.
- Humanitarian needs amongst those displaced by conflict are acute, as is the need to improve the voice and access to justice of refugees and IDPs and the control they have over their own lives.
- DFID's aim is for a durable political solution to on-going displacement of Burmese ethnic minorities within Burma and in Thailand.
- The UK Government will contribute a total of £27.17 million over 3 years to the programme for humanitarian support of refugees and IDPs and peace-building activities in Burma.

All Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma

Meeting with representatives from Kachin community

On 22 November 2012, APPG Burma organized a meeting with the Kachin National Organization (KNO). A leader of the KNO and former political prisoner, Hkun Sa Mahkaw, discussed the ongoing persecution of Kachins in the context of the new 'reform' process. His findings were supplemented by Kai Htang, who has been working with the Kachin Relief Fund to help implement programs of provision for over 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the current conflict zone in north Burma.

The military-backed government in Burma broke its 17 year ceasefire agreement with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and escalated military offensive in Kachin State in June 2011. Kachin civilians have suffered from human rights violations, including rape of women and children, arbitrary execution, torture, forced labour, mortar bombing, burning and looting of the villages. More than 100,000 Kachin civilians have had to flee from their homeland to refugee camps and internally displaced areas. The Burmese government continues to block access for humanitarian aid to thousands of Kachin refugees.

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN KACHIN STATE, BURMA

22.11.12

That this House is alarmed that whilst the world is celebrating the political reforms made in Burma, ethnic violence and persecution carried out by the Burmese military persists, largely unacknowledged, in Kachin State; notes that this includes the targeted killings of civilians, torture and the burning of 1,000 villages, illustrating the severe human rights violations the Kachin people are being subjected to by the Burmese Army; and urges hon. Members to ask the Government to put pressure on the international community to provide much needed humanitarian aid for the Kachin people, to put pressure on the Burmese government to stop attacking Kachin civilians and to allow international humanitarian organisations access in Burma to provide aid and to urge the United Nations to instate a UN envoy in Kachin to monitor and improve this worsening situation.

Total number of signatures: 20

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