



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

SEP
OCT
2007

SEPTEMBER 2007

PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENTS

2 September: I deeply deplore the Burmese government's violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations. I call upon the Burmese authorities to release immediately all those detained merely for protesting at the hardship imposed on them by the government's economic mismanagement and failure to uphold fundamental human rights. I also reiterate the British Government's call for the release of all political prisoners, including Nobel Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi who has now spent almost 12 years of her life under house arrest.

As the lives of ordinary Burmese people continue to deteriorate, it is all the more important that all countries and organisations with an influence over the regime impress upon the generals the need for an early transition to democratic rule, full respect for human rights and genuine national reconciliation.

I support calls for the grave situation in Burma to be considered by the UN Security Council at the earliest opportunity. I also call for the UN General Assembly to address this issue.

We give our full support to the efforts of the UN Secretary-General's good offices mission. It is time for the UN human rights bodies to give this alarming situation the attention it so patently deserves.

I am asking the Foreign Secretary to discuss this issue with our European partners next week.

I will seek an early opportunity to raise the situation in Burma with my counterparts in the key regional countries and with our partners in the EU and the US.

26 September: Prime Minister: The whole world is now watching Burma and this illegitimate and oppressive regime should know that the whole world is going to hold it to account and that the age of impunity for neglecting and over-riding human rights is over.

I want to pay tribute to the courage and the resilience and the bravery of the Burmese people and of Aung San Sun Kyi who everybody around the world admires.

And as a result of the deterioration of the situation I think there's three things that have got to be done immediately. The European Council will be meeting at official level immediately and I believe that they will decide that if there is action taken against human rights that there will be an extension of sanctions. And I hope the whole of the European Union will support that.

At the same time I hope the Security Council will meet immediately - meet today - discuss this issue and look at what can be done. And the first thing that can be done is that the UN Envoy should be sent to Burma - and I hope he's in a position to go - to make sure that the Burmese regime directly is aware that any trampling of human rights that takes place will have the whole eyes of the world upon them and will not be acceptable in future.

STATEMENTS BY MPs

Foreign Secretary, David Miliband - 21 September 2007

'Yesterday's briefing on Burma in the Security Council was an important step. The UK government has continually pressed the Burmese regime to stop their oppression and intimidation and called for a robust international response, including at the UN.

The timely discussion in the Council demonstrates the international community's concern at a time when the situation in the country is tense. The Burmese authorities recently resorted to using tear

gas in their attempts to suppress the peaceful demonstrations of the brave monks, whose protests reflect the will of the majority of their fellow countrymen in wanting change in Burma.

The Security Council was united in its calls for the Burmese government to engage constructively with the UN Secretary General's envoy, Professor Gambari, and encouraged him to visit as soon as possible. We shall continue to work with our colleagues at the UN and in other multilateral bodies to keep up the pressure for positive change.

I intend to raise the situation in Burma with colleagues in New York next week. In the meantime the UK will continue to take the lead in providing humanitarian assistance to relieve the suffering of the Burmese people.'

John Bercow MP - 24 August 2007

In a letter to the Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon David Miliband MP, John Bercow said: "I implore you urgently to raise this matter at the EU and the UN. It is vital that the international community supports the brave people of Burma. For 19 years, UN has been content to wring its hands impotently whilst the regime continues to brutalise its citizens. The UN envoy, Ibrahim Gambari, is due to visit Burma next month. It is vital that he sends a clear message to the regime and sets a deadline for genuine reform, including the release of all political prisoners. I hope that the British Government will lead the calls for reform."

IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Brussels, 28 September 2007

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the evolution of the situation in Burma/Myanmar:

The European Union is very concerned by the latest reports from inside Burma/Myanmar which suggest that the authorities are moving military forces to city centres. We reiterate our call on the authorities in Burma/Myanmar not to use violence against people who are committed to non-violence, and to pursue genuine reconciliation and negotiation. We also call on all those with influence over the military government to bring that influence to bear to ensure that the authorities respond in a non-violent manner.

The EU further underlines to the authorities in Naypyidaw that it will not hesitate to reinforce and strengthen the existing sanctions regime, should they resort to using violence against the unarmed and peaceful demonstrators.

OCTOBER 2007

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Overseas Trade

30 Oct 2007: Mr. David Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what UK business interests his Department has ascertained are held in Burma.

Meg Munn: We do follow reports of companies activities produced by the UN, non-governmental organisations and other organisations. We monitor the level of UK corporate activities through statistics from the Office of National Statistics and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, which show that trade and investment in Burma has fallen in recent years.

Contrary to some reports, the UK is not the second largest investor in Burma . UK investment in Burma is negligible. The Office for National Statistics figures for current active UK investment are very low; indeed they have no returns suggesting any UK direct investment in Burma as of the end of 2005.

In terms of total imports of goods from Burma , the UK currently ranks second in the EU after Germany. However, the value of imports from Burma to the UK halved between 2004 and 2005. In the eight months to August 2007, UK imports of goods from Burma were £19 million and exports totalled £2 million.

General

29 October: Diane Abbott (Hackney North & Stoke Newington, Labour) : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to improve (a) access to primary education, (b) access to electricity, food and other necessities of life and (c) employment opportunities for people in Burma in the long-term; and if he will make a statement.

Shahid Malik (Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for International Development): DFID's aid to Burma increased from £2 million in 2002 to £8 million this year. A further £1 million was agreed this month in order to meet urgent humanitarian needs following the violent crack-down of recent protests. Earlier today my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development, announced that DFID's aid to Burma would double to £18 million by 2010-11. DFID's programme in Burma is focused on health, education, rural livelihoods and support for transition towards democratic change. To improve access to basic education we are currently providing £3.3 million through UNICEF and £2.7 million through Save the Children, each over three years. We are providing £4 million over four years through the United Nations Development Programme to improve food security and enable people in rural areas to increase their family incomes, and we are funding community development programmes through non-governmental organisations. We are also providing £1.8 million over three years to help meet the needs of Burmese refugees on the Thai border. Part of the additional £1 million agreed for urgent humanitarian needs in October will be used to improve access to food by poor and vulnerable people in Burma.

29 October: David Anderson : To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will take steps to increase aid for non-governmental organisations working to promote change in Burma .

Shahid Malik (Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for International Development): DFID is providing financial support to a number of Burmese community-based organisations which are working to build the foundations for a more democratic and accountable society in Burma . We are now setting up a new fund of £3 million to help Burmese organisations to promote people's participation in local level decision making, for example in forest management, agriculture, education and health services.

In addition, DFID is prepared to consider applications for funding by groups inside and outside Burma which are working on sustainable development and democratisation in Burma . Funding decisions would be based on the availability of resources, the likely impact of proposed projects, their having a clear purpose of poverty reduction, and normal criteria regarding transparency and accountability.

23 Oct 2007: Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on the situation in Burma; (2) what measures he is taking to promote freedom of speech and expression within Burma; (3) what pressure is being placed upon the Burmese Government to stop abuses of human rights.

Mr. Jim Murphy: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made a written ministerial statement on 8 October 2007, Official Report, columns 12-15WS, on the situation in Burma. We placed an updated compilation of reports on the situation in Burma on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website on 15 October.

On 2 October, the Human Rights Council (HRC) passed a resolution sponsored by the EU, with the strong support of the UK, which expressed deep concern about the situation in Burma. In our statement to the HRC, we drew attention to the regime's violations, including restrictions on the freedom of speech and association, and the suffering of Burma's ethnic communities. The UK co-sponsored the presidential statement unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council on 11 October. This was the first formal action ever taken by the Security Council on Burma. The statement called upon the Government of Burma to take all necessary measures to address the human rights that are the concern of its people.

On 15 October, the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, at which my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary represented the UK, called for a thorough and impartial investigation of the deaths of demonstrators and other continuing violations of human rights. It also called upon the Burmese regime to co-operate fully with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights

in Burma, Sergio Pinheiro. In response to the Burmese Government's failure to exercise restraint in their treatment of the demonstrators, the Council of the EU agreed to implement stronger restrictive measures against the regime. The strengthened measures include a ban on the import of metals, minerals, timber and semi-precious stones and a ban on investment in these sectors. These measures are designed to target the interests of the Generals, rather than harm the people of Burma.

Our ambassador in Rangoon has also highlighted our concerns in his meetings with the Burmese Government on an ongoing basis, most recently on 25 September.

17 Oct 2007: Mr. Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will make a statement on the humanitarian situation in Burma.

Mr. Malik: A third of Burma's population lives below the poverty line. Severe economic mismanagement has deprived Burma of the economic growth enjoyed by its south-east Asian neighbours, and investment in public services has been minimal. The brutal suppression of recent demonstrations against economic hardship has exacerbated humanitarian conditions. DFID is providing £1 million to meet urgent humanitarian needs in Burma, in addition to £8 million already planned for this year.

Human Rights

17 Oct 2007: Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to improve (a) access to primary education, (b) access to electricity, food and other necessities of life and (c) employment opportunities for people in Burma in the long-term; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Malik: DFID's aid to Burma increased from £2 million in 2002 to £8 million this year. A further £1 million was agreed this month in order to meet urgent humanitarian needs following the violent crack-down of recent protests. Earlier today my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development, announced that DFID's aid to Burma would double to £18 million by 2010-11.

DFID's programme in Burma is focused on health, education, rural livelihoods and support for transition towards democratic change. To improve access to basic education we are currently providing £3.3 million through UNICEF and £2.7 million through Save the Children, each over three years. We are providing £4 million over four years through the United Nations Development Programme to improve food security and enable people in rural areas to increase their family incomes, and we are funding community development programmes through non-governmental organisations. We are also providing £1.8 million over three years to help meet the needs of Burmese refugees on the Thai border. Part of the additional £1 million agreed for urgent humanitarian needs in October will be used to improve access to food by poor and vulnerable people in Burma.

Politics and Government

17 Oct 2007: Mr. David Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will take steps to increase aid for non-governmental organisations working to promote change in Burma.

Mr. Malik: DFID is providing financial support to a number of Burmese community-based organisations which are working to build the foundations for a more democratic and accountable society in Burma. We are now setting up a new fund of £3 million to help Burmese organisations to promote people's participation in local level decision making, for example in forest management, agriculture, education and health services.

In addition, DFID is prepared to consider applications for funding by groups inside and outside Burma which are working on sustainable development and democratisation in Burma. Funding decisions would be based on the availability of resources, the likely impact of proposed projects, their having a clear purpose of poverty reduction, and normal criteria regarding transparency and accountability.

Sanctions

25 Oct 2007: Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations his Department has made to the governments of (a) China, (b) Russia, (c) India and (d) France on their economic ties with the Burmese military government.

Meg Munn: We regularly raise our concerns about Burma with international partners, explaining why we support targeted economic measures to press the regime to change policy and highlighting the wider benefits of a democratic and stable Burma for the region. We have raised the situation with the Chinese, Russian, Indian and French governments. They are aware of our concerns regarding Burma.

23 Oct 2007: Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on a UN arms embargo against Burma; and when this subject will next be raised at the UN Security Council.

Meg Munn: In his statement of 15 October, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said we will begin discussions with our partners about proposals for a UN arms embargo. We are taking this forward at official level. No date has yet been agreed for further discussions in the UN Security Council, but we expect the Security Council to discuss Burma again when Professor Gambari, the UN Secretary-General's envoy, returns from the region. An EU arms embargo is already in place. In response to the Burmese Government's failure to exercise restraint in their treatment of the demonstrations, on 15 October EU Foreign Ministers agreed to implement stronger restrictive measures against that regime. The EU is prepared to review, amend or reinforce these measures in the light of developments on the ground.

23 Oct 2007: Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the effectiveness of the new package of EU sanctions announced in the EU Council Conclusions on Burma/Myanmar on 15 October will be (a) monitored, (b) assessed and (c) reviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jim Murphy [holding answer 22 October 2007]: The EU monitors and evaluates sanctions through its range of geographical and thematic working groups. For Burma, the relevant working group is the Committee for Asia (known as COASI). Formal legal reviews of EU sanctions are also undertaken by the Foreign Relations Counsellors Working Party (known as RELEX). We will be working closely with all our European partners to ensure that this new package of EU sanctions will be properly monitored, assessed and reviewed, including addressing any risk that goods might be diverted or re-exported to Burma. The EU is prepared to review, amend or reinforce measures in the light of developments on the ground. We are discussing a range of broader measures with our EU colleagues that target sources of revenue for the regime, but do not hurt the civilian population. We do not exclude introducing a total ban on future investment if the regime does not make concessions on dialogue. Whether the EU measures against the Burmese regime are strengthened or relaxed in future will depend on the regimes willingness to allow a real political transition to begin.

Drugs

25 Oct 2007: John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of levels of heroin production in Myanmar.

Dr. Howells: The UK does not conduct an independent assessment of levels of heroin production in Burma. We rely on the internationally accepted reporting from the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) available at: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/world_drug_report.html. According to their 2005 World Drugs Report it is estimated that 370 tons of heroin were produced in Burma in 2004. The UNODC did not provide figures for heroin production in Burma for 2005 or 2006.

25 Oct 2007: Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the impact of the increase in poppy cultivation in Burma on peace and security in the region; and if he will make a statement.

David Miliband: The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported an increase in poppy cultivation in Burma of 29 per cent. In 2007, from 21,500 hectares to 27,700 hectares. This follows

six years of decrease. Cultivation is concentrated in South Shan State, which accounts for 90 per cent. of opium grown in Burma. Most of the poppy-growing areas are outside government control. The UK has not made any assessment on the impact on peace and security in the region. However, UNODC assess that where drug-growing areas and insecurity overlap, the activity of criminal groups can add to instability by trying to control poppy farming and using drugs to fund their operations. The need for sustained alternative development programmes for the poor communities to help them turn to a legal income is therefore essential to ensure that cultivation in Burma is reduced.

Politics and Government

25 Oct 2007: Gordon Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of his meetings with the Indian Minister for External Affairs on 3 October and the Chinese Foreign Minister on 29 September on the situation in Burma.

Meg Munn: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met with Indian Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Prunab Mukherjee, on 3 October, to discuss the situation in Burma, among other issues. The External Affairs Minister agreed that a process of political reform and national reconciliation must begin in Burma to bring stability and prosperity to the country. I too raised Burma with the Indian Minister of State, Mr. E Ahamed, and I underlined the important role India could play in persuading the Burmese regime to embrace reconciliation. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also raised Burma in a telephone conversation with the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, as did my noble Friend the Minister for Africa, Asia and the UN, the right hon. Lord Malloch-Brown, during his recent visit to India. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met Chinese Foreign Minister Yang on 29 September in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly. He underlined the need to work closely with China on the issue of Burma, including giving full support to Professor Gambari's mission. China is in a unique position to help positive political change in Burma. To that end, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed Burma with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have kept in touch since with their Chinese opposite numbers by phone and by letter.

Overseas Trade

25 Oct 2007: Mr. Goodwill: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform what records his Department keeps of which UK registered companies are trading (a) with and (b) in Burma.

Mr. Thomas: We do not actively keep records of which UK registered companies are trading with, or in Burma. However, we do follow reports of companies activities produced by the UN, NGOs and other organisations. We monitor the level of UK corporate activities through statistics from the Office of National Statistics and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, which show that trade and investment in Burma has fallen in recent years.

Lynne Featherstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform what monitoring the Government undertakes of British business activities in Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Thomas: We do follow reports on business activities in Burma produced by the UN, NGOs and other organisations. We monitor the level of UK corporate activities through statistics from Office of National Statistics and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, which show that trade with and investment in Burma has fallen in recent years.

Aid

24 Oct 2007: Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide the (a) details and (b) conditions of the economic recovery package for Burma that the Prime Minister has proposed to other G7 leaders.

Mr. Jim Murphy [holding answer 22 October 2007]: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote on 16 October to the UN Secretary-General, G8 and other interested colleagues proposing a meeting on Burma in the margins of the Annual Meetings of the International Financial Institutions in Washington. He proposed discussion on how an economic recovery package might be put together for Burma if sufficient concrete and verifiable steps were to be made along the path

to reconciliation and reform. The meeting took place on 20 October chaired by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development, and attended by Ministers and senior representatives from Canada, Italy, Germany, France, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Participants held a preliminary discussion about the role that development assistance could play in the economic assistance of Burma once verifiable steps are made, and how the international community could support change. In the short to medium term this could include establishment of a multi-donor trust fund, an investment conference, support for a process of debt relief and financial and technical support for elections. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development stressed however that any package would be conditional on national reconciliation and would have to complement the efforts to that end of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Professor Gambari.

Oppression

23 Oct 2007: Gordon Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of the recent death under interrogation of a pro-democracy activist in Burma; and what representations he has made to the Burmese authorities.

Meg Munn: We are aware of reports of the death in custody of Win Shwe. We have repeatedly condemned the Burmese Government's violent suppression of the recent peaceful demonstrations and the treatment of pro-democracy activists across Burma. On 15 October, the Council of the European Union released a statement which called for a thorough and impartial investigation of the deaths of demonstrators and other human rights violations in Burma. We, and partners, are urging the Burmese authorities to admit the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma forthwith and co-operate fully with him.

Association of South East Asian Nations

23 Oct 2007: Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether a deadline has been set for reconciliation talks between the Burmese regime and opposition party politicians; and what the status is of these talks.

Mr. Jim Murphy [holding answer 22 October 2007]: The UN Secretary-General's envoy to Burma, Professor Gambari, is promoting a process of national reconciliation in Burma which should include the civil opposition, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the minority ethnic groups and the military junta. We hope that Professor Gambari will shortly return to Burma to take forward this process. No date has been set for meetings, but we want the reconciliation process to begin as soon as possible.

Asylum

22 Oct 2007: Lynne Featherstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applications from Burmese citizens were successful in each of the last five years.

Mr. Byrne: Information on asylum applications, initial decisions and appeals for nationals of Burma is shown in the tables.

Asylum applications(1) received in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and initial decisions(2) , 2002-06, nationals of Burma
Principal applicants

	Applications		Initial Decisions				Total refusals
	Total	Total decisions	Grants of asylum	Grants of ELR	Grants of HP(3)	Grants of DL(3)	
2002	80	85	25	*	n/a	n/a	55
2003	120	140	25	*	*	5	105
2004	60	95	15	n/a	—	*	80
2005	60	60	25	n/a	*	—	35
2006(4)	70	65	25	n/a	5	—	30

n/a = not applicable. (1) Figures rounded to the nearest 5 (— = 0, * = 1 or 2). Figures may not sum to the totals shown because of independent rounding. (2) Information is of initial decisions, excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions. Decision figures do not necessarily relate to applications received in the same period. (3) Humanitarian Protection and Discretionary Leave replaced Exceptional Leave to Remain from 1 April 2003. (4) Provisional figures.

Asylum appeal outcomes determined at the Immigration Appellate Authority/Asylum and Immigration Tribunal(1, 2, 3, 4,) excluding dependants, 2002-06, nationals of Burma
Principal appellants

	Total Determined	Allowed	Dismissed	Withdrawn(5)
2002	80	30	45	5
2003	115	55	55	5
2004	115	45	65	5
2005	70	40	30	5
2006(6)	40	20	15	5

(1) Figures rounded to the nearest 5 (— = 0, * = 1 or 2). Figures may not sum to the totals shown because of independent rounding. (2) The unification of the appeals system came into effect on 4 April 2005. The Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT) was created by a merger of the Immigration Appellate Authority (IAA) and the Immigration Appeals Tribunal (IAT). (3) All figures for appeals determined are cases dealt with by adjudicators/immigration judges. Determinations do not necessarily relate to appeals received within the same period. (4) Prior to 4 April 2005 based on data supplied from the Presenting Officers Unit within the Home Office. From 4 April 2005 based on information supplied by the AIT. (5) Figures include cases withdrawn by the Home Office, as well as those withdrawn by the appellant. (6) Provisional figures.

United Nations

23 Oct 2007: Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the EU plans to take to promote UN engagement with Burma; what form such engagement is likely to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jim Murphy [holding answer 22 October 2007]: EU Foreign Ministers meeting at the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 15 October condemned the brutal crack-down on demonstrators in Burma and strongly supported the actions by the UN, in particular the good offices mission of UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari. The Foreign Ministers also announced the imposition of additional measures and sanctions targeting the regime. The EU will continue to support UN engagement with Burma. The EU has regular and close contacts at all levels with the Association of South East Asian Nations and other partners through which it will underline the importance of lending full regional support to the UN and to Mr. Gambari. The EU also stands ready to review, amend or reinforce these measures, in the light of developments on the ground and the results of the good offices mission of the UN, thereby increasing Mr. Gambari's leverage with the Burmese regime. The EU will also continue to provide support for humanitarian assistance inside Burma.

Politics and Government

18 Oct 2007: Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether a further date has been set by the UN Security Council to discuss the situation in Burma following its discussions on 5 October 2007; and if he will make a statement; (2) pursuant to his statement of 15 October 2007, what further measures he expects the UN Security Council to consider taking against Burma if it does not take clear steps towards the return of democracy.

Dr. Howells: The UN Security Council remains focused on the situation in Burma. The UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari has returned to the region and will return to Burma shortly. We would expect the Security Council to review progress in the light of Professor Gambari's further visit. On 15 October my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a statement welcoming the UN Security Council's statement on Burma and making clear that the Burmese regime must end the violence, release political detainees and take clear steps towards the return of democracy. He also said that the Security Council should meet again to review progress made in Burma. If progress is insufficient, the council will need to consider further measures. We shall discuss possible further measures with our Security Council partners.

9 Oct 2007: Mr. Crabb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the National Convention and constitution drafting process in Burma.

Meg Munn: We have repeatedly called on the regime to make progress towards genuine national reconciliation by involving all political and ethnic groups in the National Convention process. Many of these groups did not participate in the National Convention and have not been consulted on the constitutional drafting process. We therefore believe the process lacks all credibility.

Arms Control

16 Oct 2007: Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made at the United Nations for a comprehensive and mandatory arms embargo on Burma.

Dr. Howells: The UN Security Council is fully focussed on the events in Burma. UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari has briefed the Security Council on the situation in the country and the UK supports his efforts to mediate a dialogue between the political actors. An EU arms embargo is already in place. We judge that at present there is insufficient support on the Security Council for a UN-wide ban.

Religious Freedom

9 Oct 2007: Mr. Crabb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion and Belief on violations of religious freedom against Christians, Muslims and Buddhists in Burma.

Meg Munn: There are severe restrictions on the freedom of all religions in Burma, including towards members of the majority Buddhist faith, particularly if they are perceived as anti-government. We condemn all instances where individuals face persecution or discrimination because of their faith or belief, wherever they happen and whatever the religion of the individual or group concerned. We have had no discussions with the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion and Belief about Burma. We regularly raise our concerns about human rights in Burma with the regime and in international forums. The UN Secretary-General discussed Burma with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 26 September and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on 28 September. On 2 October, the Human Rights Council (HRC) passed a strongly worded resolution sponsored by the EU, with the full support of the UK, which expressed deep concern about the situation in Burma. In our statement to the HRC, we drew attention to the regime's violations, including restrictions on the freedom of religion.

Armed Forces

9 Oct 2007: Mr. Crabb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what estimate the UK Government have made of the number of forcibly conscripted child soldiers in the Burma Army; and what reports he has received on the conditions in which they are held; (2) what steps he has taken to raise the issue of the forced conscription of child soldiers with the Burmese regime.

Meg Munn: We receive regular reports about forced recruitment and the use and ill treatment of child soldiers in Burma. We are unable to estimate the number of forcibly recruited soldiers. On 2 October, the Human Rights Council (HRC) passed a resolution sponsored by the EU, with the strong support of the UK, which expressed deep concern about the situation in Burma. In our statement to the HRC, we drew attention to the regime's persistent violations of human rights, including the use of child soldiers. We have repeatedly raised the issue with the Burmese regime. My right hon. Friend the then Minister for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs, Ian McCartney, raised our concerns with the Burmese Foreign Minister in Hamburg on 28 May. Our ambassador in Rangoon takes every opportunity to raise human rights with the regime, most recently when he met the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister and the Burmese Minister for Labour on 25 September.

9 Oct 2007: Mr. Crabb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the sale of military helicopters to Burma by India containing parts manufactured or designed by (a) EU and (b) UK companies.

Meg Munn: We are aware of the report published by non-governmental organisations saying that the Indian Government is planning to transfer advanced light helicopters to Burma. On 27 July, the EU Troika in New Delhi delivered a demarche on the Indian Government about the reported

transfer of the helicopters to Burma. They reminded the Indian Government of the long-standing common position on Burma, which includes an arms embargo, and the EU's deep concern about the situation there. The Indian Government reiterated that no such deal was under consideration.

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

EDM 1971: MEMBERS OF BURMESE PARLIAMENT IMPRISONED IN BURMA:
Signed by 74 MPs.

EDM 1868: AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S 62nd BIRTHDAY:
Signed by 79 MPs.

EDM 1861: BURMA AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS:
Signed by 63 MPs.

EDM 662: VETO OF DRAFT UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON BURMA:
Signed by 88 MPs.

EDM 658: RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS, DISCRIMINATION AND PERSECUTION IN BURMA:
Signed by 150 MPs.

EDM 498: TARGETED INVESTMENT SANCTIONS AGAINST BURMA'S DICTATORSHIP:
Signed by 81 MPs.

EDM 367: UN SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION ON BURMA:
Signed by 177 MPs.

DEBATES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

29 Oct 2007: The first ever full-length Government-sponsored debate on Burma was held in the House of Commons. Selected extracts are printed below; the full debate can be viewed at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm071029/debtext/71029-0008.htm#0710299000002>

The Secretary of State for International Development (Mr. Douglas Alexander): The House has long been united by a repugnance at the brutality of the Burmese regime and an admiration for the bravery of the Burmese people. This evening, I shall address three areas: I shall begin by outlining the situation on the ground in Burma in respect of the recent crackdown and the wider political and economic problems; I shall move on to how the United Kingdom is supporting international efforts to bring about change in the country; and I shall end by describing the actions that the Department for International Development is taking.

In mid-August, popular—and peaceful—protests began on the streets of Burma's cities in reaction to sharp increases in fuel prices. Monks joined ordinary citizens on the streets; the voice of the Burmese people was being heard. The response of the Burmese regime was shocking, if predictable. We do not know how many the regime killed, but the true toll is likely to be many times higher than the regime has so far admitted. Some, such as the Japanese photographer Kenji Nagai, were killed in full view of the world—many more, we fear, have died behind closed doors...

...[C]hange in Burma will not be easy. It will require courageous leadership that allows a wide range of Burmese voices to debate and forge a common future. Genuine reform includes: reconciliation between the Government and opposition groups, including the minority ethnic groups; accountable and responsible Government; respect for human rights; and effective economic management. At the heart of change must be a process of national reconciliation and dialogue. The regime's own road map cannot succeed. It does not involve the National League for Democracy or any other key political figures. It will convince neither the people of Burma nor the outside world. Real change requires the restoration of institutions: a free media, an independent judiciary, trade unions, local government and an accountable police force that protects rather than persecutes its own people. Better economic management is also vital to Burma's future, ending over-regulation, fighting corruption and encouraging investment and enterprise...

...Let me set out the United Kingdom Government's view on the way forward for Burma .

Our diplomatic strategy is to apply pressure from all possible directions. With Britain's strong encouragement, the international community has made it clear that the Burmese regime must take meaningful steps towards reform and reconciliation. Recent weeks have seen an unprecedented statement by the UN Security Council, to which I just referred; the strengthening of European Union sanctions; and visits by the UN Secretary-General's special envoy, Professor Ibrahim Gambari, to Burma and the neighbouring countries. The United Nations is the primary focus of Britain's diplomatic efforts. On 2 October the EU, strongly backed by the UK, tabled a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council strongly deploring the situation in Burma and requesting that the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Sergio Pinheiro, be given immediate access to the country. That drew almost unprecedented support, including from countries hitherto reluctant to criticise the regime publicly, and was, I am pleased to say, agreed unanimously.

On 11 October, the UN Security Council sent an even more powerful signal, when it unanimously agreed a presidential statement strongly deploring the use of violence against peaceful demonstrations, calling for the release of all political prisoners and underlining the need for the Burmese Government to establish a genuine dialogue with all concerned parties and all ethnic groups.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, East) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in addition to what the UN has already done it would be helpful if the Secretary-General himself, rather than his envoy, went to Burma and argued with the regime? Will he suggest that to the Secretary-General?

Mr. Alexander: Obviously, we keep all options under consideration in terms of the means by which the international community, and the United Nations in particular, can most effectively make clear its views to the Burmese regime. We are anticipating a further visit from Professor Gambari, the Secretary-General's envoy. I think that the appropriate approach to take forward now is to offer every support to Professor Gambari and to reflect on the outcome of his second and, I would hope, longer visit to Burma than the first visit that he was able to make since the terrible events of recent weeks. At that point, we will have the opportunity to discuss these matters with our partners in the Security Council and, indeed, with the Secretary-General. When I attended the UN General Assembly in September, I had the opportunity, along with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, to discuss our very grave concerns about the situation in Burma directly with the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. I can assure the House that he is fully seized of the importance of this matter and is keeping all options under review...

Andrew Selous (South-West Bedfordshire) (Con): Returning to the issue of China for a moment, does the Secretary of State agree that next year's Olympics in Beijing give the world community a precious opportunity to put pressure on the Chinese during the next few months? The role of China is fundamental, and the Burmese Government will listen to that country.

Mr. Alexander: Clearly, there are long-standing and historic ties, not least economic ones, between China and Burma. The hon. Gentleman is right to recognise that. I had the opportunity to visit China earlier this year in my previous ministerial capacity as Secretary of State for Transport and there is a genuine desire on the part of the Government in Beijing for China to be seen as a responsible international citizen or player ahead of what they see as the welcoming of the world to the Beijing Olympics. Therefore, every opportunity should be taken to engage in serious and sustained conversation with the Beijing Government about the best way in which we can act together, with a single voice, on the issue of Burma.

I pay tribute to the fact that in recent weeks the Chinese Government have taken a different tack, in the presidential statement secured at the Security Council, from the one they adopted as recently as January, when both China and Russia exercised a veto in relation to previous moves by the Security Council...

...The Department for International Development's assistance to Burma has increased from £2 million a year in 2002 to £9 million this financial year, including the additional £1 million that I announced earlier this month to meet urgent new needs and to help to ensure that vulnerable people do not suffer as a result of the recent grave brutality.

I can assure the House that none of this funding is spent through the Burmese central Government. All our aid in Burma is delivered through the United Nations or through non-governmental organisations. It supports basic services that make a real difference to the lives of vulnerable people. For example, more than half of Burmese children fail to complete primary school. To help keep more children in school, the Department for International Development is

supporting UNICEF's efforts to provide materials and text books to half a million children, mostly in remote areas. We are also working with Save the Children to help local communities to organise pre-schools. Life expectancy in Burma is 10 years lower than in neighbouring Thailand. The Department is also supporting efforts to fight the three main killer diseases—malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS—with the aim of saving 1 million lives a year.

Continuing conflict in eastern Burma has had a terrible impact on the civilian population. They have been subjected to human rights abuses and forced labour, and many have fled their homes. Today, at least 500,000 people are displaced in Burma, including 90,000 still living in areas racked by conflict, and 160,000 living as refugees in Thailand. The Department is providing £1.8 million over three years for food and shelter for Burmese refugees in Thailand and for emergency cross-border assistance to displaced people in Burma. We are also providing £400,000 this year to support health, education and livelihoods among communities in Burma.

DFID is also supporting Burmese organisations to build the foundations for a better society. For obvious reasons, a lot of the work that those organisations do is not overtly political, but it is important to support their efforts where we can. We are, for example, providing £500,000 over three years to improve the ability of civil society organisations to organise themselves, and setting up a new fund of £3 million to help Burmese organisations to promote people's participation in local level decision making—for example, in forest management, agriculture, education and health services.

Many hon. Members will recall that the International Development Committee reported on Burma as recently as July. The Government's response to that report was published last week, and shows clearly our agreement with most of its recommendations. I should like to share four of the key recommendations with the House: the need to increase funding for cross-border assistance; the need to improve communication and co-ordination between aid agencies and local community organisations working in Burma; the proposal to maintain a Department for International Development presence in Thailand; and the recommendation to increase the size of the Department's programme. Let me take each recommendation in turn.

I fully agree with the Select Committee's view that the humanitarian assistance provided from across the border in Thailand should complement, not compete with, the assistance provided from inside Burma. We remain deeply concerned at the condition of vulnerable people living on all Burma's borders. I certainly pay tribute to those who are holding vigils in that cause this evening. Earlier this year, DFID agreed to allow its funding to be used for the cross-border delivery of emergency assistance to displaced people inside Burma, as well as to Burmese refugees in Thailand. We have given £1.8 million over the past three years to the Thai-Burma border consortium, and we will consider carefully the needs that it identifies for the next phase of our support, from early 2008.

The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs is undertaking an assessment of the needs of displaced people in eastern Burma. DFID will use those findings to inform our future funding decisions in relation to those people. The Department will consider project proposals from groups inside or outside Burma. They must be clearly aimed at poverty reduction, and will be assessed according to normal transparency and accountability criteria.

The Select Committee made a number of recommendations on improving communication and co-ordination among the providers of humanitarian assistance in Burma, including between those working inside the country and those working from across the borders. The Department and the United Nations are both supporting contacts between organisations working with displaced people inside Burma and the agencies providing cross-border support.

We recognise the need to strengthen our staffing to deal with Burma. The Department is substantially increasing the number of staff based in Burma and has also strengthened its London-based team working on Burma. We have carefully examined the Committee's recommendation that we should maintain staff in Thailand to monitor our assistance to the border areas. Indeed, I have discussed that subject in recent hours with our head of office in Rangoon. However, our considered assessment is that this work can be carried out effectively from Rangoon and London. Increasing the number of staff in Rangoon allows greater capacity to do this, as well as to manage our programme in Burma itself. I have personally impressed upon our staff in Rangoon the importance that I attach to close monitoring of the situation on the Thai border. London-based officials also plan to visit Burma and the Thai border region regularly.

The International Development Committee recommended that we quadruple our Burma programme by 2013. Clearly, as has been reflected in this evening's debate, the situation in Burma remains fluid, so it seems appropriate at this stage to address funding during the spending review period to 2010-11. That is why I can inform the House today that we will double our aid to the Burmese people over the period of the spending review—from £9 million today to £18 million a year by 2010-11. That does not prejudge any decisions made in relation to the next spending review period...

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks) (Con): It is welcome that the House is turning its attention today to the plight of the people in Burma—a bitter injustice which has inflamed the strong feelings of hundreds of millions of people across the world and which blights the lives of millions of Burmese people...

...It is appropriate to debate this subject now, as five days ago marked 12 years to the day that Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest. Her courage and self-sacrifice never cease to inspire our deepest admiration and respect. There is perhaps no greater testament to the power of her example than the lengths to which a vicious military regime has gone to keep one woman isolated from the world and from her own people...

As we know, the Burmese have lived under military rule for 45 years. The images and information about their suffering that have reached the outside world throughout that time are truly appalling—images of poverty, stories of human rights abuses, extra-judicial killings, torture and disappearances, rape, the destruction of villages, the use of forced labour and children pressed into military service. Presumably, the facts that have reached us are the tip of the iceberg, as the regime has gone to great lengths to shield its actions from the spotlight of the world's attention. The fact that we know as much as we do is testament to the bravery of those Burmese who have spoken out against the regime, to the dedication of aid workers on the ground, and to the courage of Burmese pro-democracy activists, such as Zoya Phan, who has twice made inspirational addresses to the Conservative party conference. From her words, and those of others like her, we can say, I think without exaggeration, that the Burmese regime is one of the worst in the world.

... I want to raise three sets of issues: first, our immediate diplomatic response to the recent crises; secondly, what has been done to build an effective diplomatic coalition since then; and thirdly, the Government's strategy going forward, on which the Secretary of State said some words. On the immediate response, our first concern must be the safety of those detained during the protests and those who have been rounded up since...

... It is vital—this is why it is so good that we are debating the issue tonight—that the Burmese regime is not allowed to believe that it has weathered the storm and that the international outcry about its actions has somehow died down. Now is the time for us to step up our diplomatic efforts. We welcome—I am sure that we all do—the prompt visit to Burma by the UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari, but it is far from clear that he was able to receive any specific commitments from the Burmese leadership to engage in real talks with the opposition and to release political prisoners. The apparent concession made by the regime to allow him to meet Aung San Suu Kyi seems to have been little more than a ruse to gain some positive publicity...

... Turning now to the building of an effective diplomatic coalition, we hope that Professor Gambari, on behalf of the UN, will return to Burma soon and that when he does so he will have the full backing of the Security Council to extract commitments from the regime and to hold it to them. We agree with the hon. Member for Glasgow, East (Mr. Marshall) that the time has come for the UN Secretary-General to go himself, which my hon. Friend the shadow International Development Secretary has called for and has put to the Government. The Secretary of State said that the Government would look for a further report, but we have no doubt that, whatever the recommendations to come from Professor Gambari, the UN sending the Secretary-General himself to visit Burma and meet the main players there would accord a degree of profile and pressure that would place the military leaders in a more difficult situation. We echo that call...

... Equally important are the visits by the UN envoy and others to key regional capitals. The active support of Burma's neighbours would transform the current international censure into real, effective pressure—a point made by several Members. We welcome the fact that the 10 nations of ASEAN formally condemned the violence and expressed their "revulsion" at the methods used to suppress the protests. We also welcome Thailand's proposal to convene a four-party meeting of ASEAN, the UN, India and China to formulate a response...

... In order to be effective, international pressure on Burma needs to be supported across the

international community. That means that Burma 's neighbours and key trading partners must act. The regime in Burma will not feel under pressure until they do so. We support the Prime Minister's announcement that Britain will send Ministers to the region to talk to the ASEAN Governments, as well as to China, India, and Japan...

... In light of that, we must all welcome the fact that the Security Council was able to agree a joint statement on Burma . It was the first time that the Security Council had taken any kind of public position on Burma and it is action that is long overdue. We fully supported the Government's efforts, along with the US, to bring Burma before the Security Council earlier this year. I hope that the Government will continue their efforts to raise the issue at the Security Council and to generate Russian and Chinese support for measures relating to Burma...

Ann Clwyd: (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I urgently call for one thing to happen right now on behalf of the detainees who are at immediate risk. We should get the International Committee of the Red Cross back in so that it can visit the detainees to ensure that they are at least being fed...

Mark Hunter (Cheadle) (LD): In the light of the events of the past month and their repercussions on the number of internally displaced people and refugees, I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement tonight that he has reconsidered the Department's aid budget to Burma ; but, as had been said, even doubling it still leaves many hon. Members with considerable concern that that will prove to be insufficient for the purpose...

... Although we acknowledge that the Government have taken a lead on [the issue of sanctions] at EU level, we are concerned to ensure that existing sanctions are being implemented properly in all British dependencies and overseas territories. The Burma Campaign UK has reported that companies in Singapore have invested in Burma through their base in the British Virgin Islands and that an oil company has also invested in Burma through Bermuda. That will be a matter of great concern to the House...

... [The] UK imported £19 million-worth of goods from Burma and exported £2 million in the first eight months of 2007. We do not, however, know the identities of the companies involved because the Government refuse to disclose their names on the grounds of commercial confidentiality. Given the understandable and increasing interest of the British public in the conflict within Burma , will the Minister reconsider the Government's decision not to disclose the names of those companies that currently invest in Burma , so that they, too, can be held to account? ...

... The Government can be assured of support from the Liberal Democrats if they are serious about resolving the grave human rights abuses, if they are serious about resolving the humanitarian crisis and if they are actively engaged in helping to bring about a resolution of the crisis in Burma . For the sake of the people of that country, I very much hope that they are...

Mike Gapes (Ilford, South) (Lab/Co-op): There has been much concentration on the nature of the regime and the repressive events in Rangoon and elsewhere, but so far nobody has talked about the complexity and diversity of the country. Burma —Myanmar—is one of the most ethnically complicated and mixed countries in the world. More than 40 per cent. of the population are from ethnic minority groups and, for more than 20 years, there has been a series of sometimes violent rebellions against the brutal military regime. So far, many of those groups have not engaged in the current protests and pressure for democracy, but if there is to be political progress in Burma , it will be a question not just of restoring a democratically elected Government, but also of making sure that there is political dialogue and compromise to end long-standing, deep-seated and complicated regional and ethnic conflicts...

... The ASEAN countries, including some of Burma 's neighbours, have a responsibility, too. One of those countries is Thailand, which is host to a large number of the refugees who have fled across the border from Burma . However, Thailand purchases gas from the Yadana and Yetagan gas fields so it also provides the regime with its largest amount of foreign currency earnings. Unfortunately, the Thai Government, too, are now a military regime, so we need to recognise that it is not just a question of talking with the Chinese, democratic India or other countries; Thailand has a role and we need to consider how we might influence other countries to bring about change in Burma...

... Just as Nelson Mandela was let out of prison in South Africa to ensure a peaceful and democratic transition, so Aung San Suu Kyi should be released from house arrest and should be put in a position in which she, in discussion with her political colleagues, can act as a conduit and a force for the transformation of Burma into a pluralistic and democratic society. That is the best way forward for Burma , and that is a way to ensure an easing of the international pressure for sanctions, isolation, and targeted measures against members of the regime. If Burma does not take that way forward, Asian countries and the rest of the world will ratchet up the pressure, and

the country's underlying economic problems will not be resolved. There is a way out for Burma , if it has the courage to take it...

John Bercow (Buckingham) (Con): In the past three years, I have twice visited the Thai- Burma border and, in September this year, I returned from a week-long visit to the India- Burma border. Those visits left indelible impressions on my mind. I will never forget hearing testimony about a man who was dangled over a hot fire as part of his punishment. I will never forget speaking to a man who had been incarcerated and beaten throughout the night, and who had suffered the humiliation and agony of having his body swung repeatedly against a pillar. I will never forget hearing testimony about a man in Insein prison who was so malnourished, so ravaged, and so painfully thin that, in the words of my interlocutor, it was possible to see his intestines moving like worms.

I will never forget meeting a boy, now aged seven, who at the tender age of three was forcibly abducted by Government troops for use as bait, taken to a remote army camp, placed in a cold, stone room with a mud floor and no windows, and kept there for no fewer than eight hours without being offered food or water. I will never forget, on my first visit to the Thai- Burma border in April 2004, meeting parents who had seen their children shot dead in front of them, and meeting children who had seen their parents shot dead in front of them. I will never forget the stories of the barbaric mutilation that regularly takes place, courtesy of the Burmese army, the Tatmadaw. We are talking about eyes being gouged out, tongues being ripped out, noses being chopped off, and heads being chopped off. Above all, I will never forget the harrowing, chilling stories about heads being placed on pillars or posts in prominent parts of villages as a warning of what might lie in store for anyone who dared to rebel, or simply to presume safely to exist as a member of a minority...

...Of course, we have to ask what we can do to bring about change. Every speaker tonight has asked that question and sought to answer it. My right hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary and others correctly referred to the role of the European Union. I am sorry to say that hitherto it has been fiddling around in the undergrowth, and its position has been to opt for the lowest common denominator. It has sought sanctions in the form of action against the pineapple juice sector and a tailor's shop in Rangoon. I am delighted that as a consequence of concerted pressure, of continued publicity and of remorseless protest from the international community and millions of ordinary people, it has now gone beyond that. Worthwhile sanctions are now in place, but we need to monitor them to ensure that they are enforced. As the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mark Hunter) said, we have to be sure that they are not effectively flouted via a circuitous route through the use of third countries. We should go for a comprehensive investment ban.

Let me make one other suggestion about the European Union: why do we not suggest, and advocate as policy, a ban on the provision of insurance cover to companies that trade with the regime? It is difficult to envisage companies being willing to trade with it if they cannot get insurance cover. There is a role for the European Union, and a role for the United Nations; that has to be pre-eminent. We need a Security Council resolution of a binding character that sets out, in terms, the actions that are required of the regime and an exacting timetable within which they have to be performed. That resolution should say that Aung San Suu Kyi should be freed; that all remaining political prisoners must be released; that there should be clear, free and unimpeded access both for humanitarian aid organisations and for those undertaking professional responsibilities to assess the human rights situation on the ground; and that there must be meaningful progress in tripartite talks with the National League for Democracy—the true victors of the 1990 elections—and representatives of the ethnic national groups, failing which, intensified sanctions, particularly the imposition of a comprehensive arms embargo, will follow...

... We should embrace wholeheartedly the recommendations of the International Development Committee to quadruple aid, to facilitate greater cross-border assistance, and to back the women's organisations and trade union groups that have toiled in the vineyard for years to help the dispossessed and the disadvantaged. We should support a range of exiled organisations, which not only have practical experience and worth to contribute, but should be part of the reconfigured arrangements in a new constitutional democracy in Burma .

Gordon Banks (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Lab) I take this opportunity to urge the Royal Bank of Scotland, which has a 8.25 per cent. holding in the Bank of China, to use its position to bring about a change in attitude of Sinopec and PetroChina, and dare I say, even the Bank of China itself. It should not rest easy with the Royal Bank of Scotland shareholders that they are benefiting from the profits of Burmese repression.

John Bercow: What the hon. Gentleman has just said is absolutely right. Does he agree, however, that we simply cannot within the EU be in any way complacent about this matter? Will he concur with me that it is frankly the most damning indictment of a democratic Government, namely that of France, that Total Oil should be engaged in a \$400 million investment to prop up the sadistic thugs who rule Burma? Is it not about time that they reconsidered and stopped offering sanctimonious humbug and self-serving rhetoric about their tiny little humanitarian aid projects when they are there for the filthy lucre?

Gordon Banks: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps if we gathered some more information regarding UK trading and investments within Burma, we could apply our own individual pressures in that way as well...

... I want to talk briefly about the role of Aung San Suu Kyi. This remarkable woman has spent 12 years under house arrest as she has watched her country descend into chaos. We debate in this Parliament about whether 28 days' detention without charge is acceptable, yet this woman has been held hostage for 12 years and her only crime has been a desire to make Burma a better place in which to live. Her struggle is one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia, and indeed the world, in recent decades. She has become an important symbol in the struggle against oppression and serves as an example to others around the world. Her name, along with that of Mahatma Gandhi, will echo through time as a leading light of non-violent protest in support of human rights. I am sure that many in this House will join me in looking forward to the day when she gains her rightful place as the leader of Burma.

Dr. Julian Lewis: One organisation that has not been mentioned so far is the International Criminal Court. Given that the court was set up specifically to deal with war crimes and that it exists on a standing basis, which means that a special organisation would not need to be established, is it not possible to indict before the International Criminal Court the perpetrators of the atrocities of which we have heard so much?...

Daniel Kawczynski: In the past, our Government has promised an increase in aid if there is genuine reform. Of course, that is ridiculous, as the junta has no intention of reforming in any way. That is why I am pleased that the Secretary of State announced that regardless of reform the Government are prepared to increase aid from £8.8 million to £18 million per annum by 2010. However, international statistics show that a country in Africa that is comparable to Burma, with similar levels of poverty and population, would receive £80 million in aid. I still believe that, as other hon. Members have said, £18 million is nowhere near enough to help this country, facing the crisis that it does. I do not understand why the Minister feels that the increase to £18 million is sufficient when comparable countries in Africa receive four times that amount, and I hope that she will explain that.

I support what other hon. Members have said about the importance of supporting a UN arms embargo. That is absolutely essential...

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): From my experience, I know that, whether one is dealing with local terrorism such as we experienced in Northern Ireland or the state-sponsored terrorism on a grander scale that we see in Burma, terrorists always hope that people will cry and shout about the last atrocity and then forget it. The one message that the debate must convey at the end of the parliamentary Session is that, in the next Session and for as long as it takes, the spotlight will be placed on the iniquitous regime and that pressure, including sanctions on individual members of the junta, and the threat that, some day, internationally, justice will catch up with them, will be applied. That is important because if members of the regime believe that they can ride the pressure, they will continue to do as they have been doing. We will get reaction and movement from them only if they know that the democracies of the world are determined to ensure that they behave properly towards their citizens...

Tony Baldry (Banbury) (Con): If DFID is to give support to countries and regimes such as Burma, we need to provide some very clear signalling that it is different from offering support and financial assistance to reforming countries. In other words, we need to make it clear that we are giving assistance because Burma is a failed or failing nation and we do not want it to fail any more. It must be made clear that we are supporting only individuals or groups within such countries, making the development assistance of a different character and nature from that given to Governments of whom we approve...

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): Many hon. Members spoke about people who are classified as internally displaced. For most of us, that means refugees in the country itself. I cannot find the words to convey the sense of fury and outrage that I felt when I visited Ei Tu Hta camp and which we should all feel about the situation in the camps on the border. They should be safe havens. Often when people seek refuge in refugee camps, they do so in somewhere that is at least temporarily safe, but the camps on the border are not safe. The Burmese army is terrifyingly close, and the squalor in the camps—again, so eloquently described by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham and others who speak with authority having seen what is happening there—is truly horrific.

In that context, I am surprised and rather disappointed that the Government have not accepted in full the recommendations of the Select Committee on International Development's excellent report. Indeed, they have rejected the most important ones...

... It is interesting to note that compared with that £8.8 million, which was recently increased, Cambodia is receiving £12 million; Vietnam, a country that is storming out of poverty, is receiving £52 million from the British taxpayer; and China, which had a trade surplus last month of \$24 billion, is receiving £40 million this year and, I think, next year. We do not think that that set of priorities is correct. We very much hope that the Secretary of State will look at them again to see what further assistance can be given to the people who are living in desperate conditions in the camps and to the other programmes that are being mounted, some of them by the British embassy in Burma...

... The UN can do more... we think that the Secretary-General should make it clear that this matter is of such importance that he, too, will go there in the near future. We urge the Government to underline that point. We need a resolution requiring meaningful talks with the democracy movement and the sort of roadmap that I mentioned.

As numerous hon. Members have said tonight, we need a comprehensive and mandatory arms embargo. China, India, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine and ASEAN countries are suppliers of arms to this illegitimate regime and they should cease being so.

We greatly welcome the EU travel ban against Government Ministers and cronies that has been in place for some time, and the smart sanctions that are being devised and deployed against the junta leaders and their assets. That is an important development of sanctions policy, which we strongly support. We welcome the extension of sanctions to timber, logging, precious metals and gems. They are small areas of the economy from which the regime gains disproportionate benefit. It is right to target those areas with sanctions. They do work, as has been pointed out. Air Bagan, the internal airline—owned and run by the regime's number one crony, Tay Za—has had to suspend its operations to Singapore because its bank accounts have been closed down. The reason for that is that all banks have such strong links to the United States that the danger to their image and business of their continuing such banking arrangements is too great. That is an example of the international community working effectively to bring about sanctions that really do hit the regime...

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Meg Munn): This has been an excellent and important debate. We have rightly heard a lot of anger and passion expressed, as well as concerns from both sides of the House and hon. Members from all parties pressing for change...

... An instructive exchange took place last week at the UN General Assembly Third Committee. The special rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Sergio Pinheiro, gave an initial briefing on the recent crackdown and his assessment made for grim listening. In response, the Burmese delegation said that the country had returned to "normalcy." The truth, of course, is anything but that. Thousands remain detained in appalling conditions; despite the relaxation of the curfew, night-time arrests continue; and the show trials have begun...

...I pay tribute to the very many public campaigns, both here and abroad, that are keeping Burma high on the international agenda. A number of hon. Members have referred to them. The plight of the Burmese people has united people within the Government and across UK-based and global non-governmental organisations in an unprecedented way. It is vital that we keep up the momentum...

... I shall outline the next steps that we would envisage in a reconciliation process in Burma . The regime needs to establish a genuine process of national reconciliation, including maintaining regular contacts with Aung Sang Suu Kyi and her state-appointed interlocutor; releasing from custody key opposition figures, so that Aung San Suu Kyi can consult them; and fully opening the door to the UN Secretary-General's special envoy, Ibrahim Gambari, and allowing him to stay in the country as long as he needs to do so and, if he wants to, to establish a permanent presence there...

...any political process will need fully to involve [the] ethnic groups, which make up nearly a third of Burma 's population. Their role will be as central to reconciliation as that of the pro-democracy civil opposition. They are unlikely to embrace any political agreement that does not incorporate the demands broadly shared across all 120 separate ethnic groups: the protection of cultural identity, the equitable control of natural resources and a degree of political autonomy at state level. Ensuring that the interests of ethnic minorities are properly engaged will be vital if stability is to be maintained in a democratic Burma .

...We believe that it is imperative that all countries in the region should turn the strong rhetoric, which is welcome, into concerted action. They should speak out against the regime, not offer the generals financial or other support and end arms sales and military co-operation. It is clear that, for ASEAN in particular, to turn a blind eye to such a repressive Government in its midst and in the year of its 40th anniversary would jeopardise the whole process of democratisation and the development of the region and damage its credibility...

John Bercow: Before the Minister sits down, will she do two things? First, will she commit to press for an EU-wide ban on the provision of insurance cover? Secondly, in view of the historical significance of securing a debate on the Floor of the House, will she take this opportunity to pay tribute to Yvette Mahon, Mark Farmaner, Anna Roberts and Zoya Phan—the latter may one day be a leader of Burma —because they and their colleagues at the Burma Campaign have worked tirelessly for years to achieve even the prominence that has now been secured for the issue?

Meg Munn: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we will talk to our EU partners about all possible appropriate sanctions that will have an effect on the regime, and we will certainly consider the matter that he has raised. I am happy to pay tribute to the people he mentioned. The role of those in the NGO sector, those in society and those in the House in continuing to keep the issue high on the agenda and in the public mind cannot be underestimated. It is only continuing to keep up the pressure that will give us any hope of changing a difficult and entrenched situation.

The Prime Minister was asked the following question on 10 October:

Damian Green (Ashford) (Con): The Prime Minister recently described Burma as one of the world's darkest corners and said that human rights were universal, but his Government are still trying to deport Burmese dissidents into the hands of that dreadful regime. Will he tell the House why his moral compass has failed to identify this transparent hypocrisy?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly look at any individual cases that the hon. Gentleman brings to me, and look at them sympathetically, but there is an appeals system and that will be dealt with. May I say that I hope that there will be all-party support on Burma? This is a repressive and illegitimate regime. Aung San Suu Kyi was the elected democratic leader of Burma. The sanctions that we will step up in the European Union are necessary to tell that Burmese regime that what it is doing is completely unacceptable. I hope that the Secretary-General of the United Nations will be able to lead a United Nations team that will bring reconciliation to the people of Burma.

DEBATES IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

12 Oct 2007 : There was a debate in the house of Lords on economic sanctions, the transcript of which can be found at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200607/ldhansrd/text/71012-0001.htm>

9 October: Baroness Cox asked Her Majesty's Government:

What assessment they have made of recent developments in Burma (Myanmar).

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Malloch-Brown): My Lords, we condemn the violent manner in which the Burmese Government have dealt with recent peaceful demonstrations in Burma. The regime has again shown its contempt for human rights and democracy. We remain gravely concerned about the whereabouts and welfare of many of those detained. The UK has been working with others in the international community to put pressure on the regime to end the violence and engage in a genuine process of reconciliation.

Baroness Cox: My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for that encouragingly robust reply. I am sure that this House would endorse the comments made by his right honourable friend the Prime Minister in his statement of support for the courage of those who demonstrated peacefully and his deep concern about the SPDC's brutal response.

Will Her Majesty's Government raise as a priority the plight of some of the ethnic national groups? I was with the Chin people just over two weeks ago, and there is very grave concern about the plight of that group and that of others, such as the Karen, the Karenni, the Shan, the Kachin and the Rohingya peoples. They are trapped in closed areas and denied any access by international aid and advocacy organisations, and their situations may be even worse than that which has been reported for other people.

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, we all share with the noble Baroness the reaction to those extraordinary sights of the monks confronting armed troops in Burma, but we also recognise that the groups to which she referred have had much less visibility and publicity for their very long multi-year struggle, and we will certainly make sure that in any process of reconciliation their interests are respected and that they are involved in any negotiations.

Lord Howell of Guildford: My Lords, we are all horrified by what has been going on in Burma, by what is happening now and by what may happen. I know that the Minister has been active in talking to various international leaders. Does he agree that the position of China, for which Burma is really nothing more than a client state at the moment, is absolutely crucial in this? If it can put pressure on, there will be real pressure, and without its help we will not get far. Does he further agree that Japan has a part to play in this? Japanese investment in Burma is enormous. At the moment, it does not have strong sanctions, if any. Will he ensure that he will include Japan in the list of people to whom he is talking? So far, he has not done so.

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, the noble Lord makes a very important point. The big difference on this occasion versus the last time that there were these kinds of protests in Burma is the role of Asia. Last time, Asia generally passed by on the other side and turned a blind eye to what had happened. On this occasion, we have seen very strong statements by ASEAN, a constructive role by China in securing the ability of the UN envoy to visit, and the commitment of the new Government in Japan to work for a process of reconciliation. I add to the list the Government of India, which is also a major economic partner, and we hope that they will similarly express their support for reconciliation.

Lord Avebury: My Lords, when the Prime Minister met some of the demonstrators last Saturday, he called for a stepping up of international pressure on the regime to end violence and to make genuine moves towards restoration of democracy. Would the noble Lord consider a suggestion made by Human Rights Watch in testimony before the US Senate that banking sanctions be imposed on the regime and its leaders, which has proved effective in North Korea? The noble Lord mentioned in particular the violence against monks. Does he think that this matter can be referred via the United Nations Human Rights Council to the International Criminal Court, so that preparations can be made to prosecute the offenders who have been guilty of gross atrocities against the monk community in Burma?

Lord Malloch-Brown: My Lords, on the last point, that would require a reference by the UN Security Council as Burma is not a signatory to the ICC, I believe. All bets are off in terms of the right set of sanctions that may be required to put pressure on Burma. The noble Lord is right to draw attention to banking sanctions, which have proved enormously effective in North Korea and Sudan and should very much be on the table for discussion.

PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENTS

24 October 2007 : The Prime Minister has marked the twelfth anniversary of the house arrest of the elected leader of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi, by calling on the military regime to release its political prisoners and begin a process of national reconciliation.

Prime Minister: 'Even under the most crushing state machinery, courage rises up again and again, for fear is not the natural state of civilised man' - words of compelling power, written by a woman of extraordinary courage. Today Daw Aung San Suu Kyi marks the end of her twelfth year under house arrest. And that anniversary tells only part of the story: since she committed her life to a better future for Burma she has watched her children grow up in a faraway land, and she has survived an attack that left 80 of her supporters beaten to death. I had the privilege of meeting her husband shortly before his death, as he faced with courage both his illness and the cruel Burmese policy that prevented him from seeing his wife in his last days.

But there is another reason to remember Burma today. Over the past few weeks we have seen the Burmese people once again display the tenacious courage of which Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was writing. In the face of a brutal regime they took to their streets in their tens of thousands, marching for their freedom and their dignity. They were met with batons and bullets. We cannot know how many were killed, but we believe it is many times more than the regime has admitted. We believe that over 2000 monks and other demonstrators remain in detention, on top of the more than 1000 political detainees that the regime was already holding. The reports from eyewitnesses reaching us are horrific: monks stripped of their robes and beaten, prisoners left to die in their cells, hundreds crammed into rooms smeared with excrement and without basic sanitation, night-time interrogations, no medical care, novices as young as seven imprisoned. In the face of this horror, we must not and will not turn away.

The steps that the regime must now take are clear: end the violence; release prisoners; grant effective access to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Sergio Pinheiro and the International Committee of the Red Cross; and engagement in a UN-led process of national reconciliation that involves leaders of all Burma's political opposition and ethnic groups, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The regime now faces a sharper choice than it has ever faced. On the one hand there is growing international pressure. The UN Security Council has, for the first time ever, taken formal action on Burma by issuing a strong statement deploring the regime's actions, calling for an inclusive political process, and expressing strong support for the good offices mission of Ban Ki-Moon's Special Envoy, Ibrahim Gambari. The Council will meet again to review the results - and if progress is insufficient will have to consider adopting further measures. The European Union has strengthened its sanctions against the regime, imposing new commercial bans on sectors which provide revenue to the regime's leaders. Should there be no progress, we will make those sanctions even tougher, including through a ban on all new investment. On Friday, President Bush announced a similar increase in measures against the regime. And ASEAN have publicly expressed their revulsion at the regime's actions. Burma's neighbours clearly realise that, for the sake of the region as well as Burma's people, the regime must change course and allow genuine reconciliation and political reform.

We also need the people of Burma, inside and outside the regime, to understand clearly that if there is a genuine political transition in Burma, the international community stands ready to support the recovery of Burma with aid and other measures. Last week I wrote to G7 leaders, Prime Minister Socrates, UN Secretary General Ban, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Premier Wen Jiabao, the President of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the IMF, proposing discussion of a possible economic initiative to support recovery in Burma, to be implemented if and only if there is real, verifiable progress towards reconciliation and democracy. Over the weekend, Douglas Alexander hosted a meeting of interested countries at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington. The regime likes to portray itself as a victim of outside interference. But let's be absolutely clear: the only thing that is standing in the way of a more stable and prosperous Burma is the regime itself.

In an interview with Alan Clements, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said: "It's no use standing there wringing your hands and saying my goodness, my goodness, this is terrible. You must try to do what you can". It is a message upon which on this day - whatever you choose to call it - the whole world should be acting.

15 October 2007 : The PM issued a statement on Burma, saying that the international community "will not turn away":

We cannot forget the images on our television screens of monks and ordinary citizens in Burma protesting; nor the death and human rights abuses we know are still taking place. Last week's UN Security Council statement - the first ever formal statement on Burma - sent a powerful signal of the determination of the international community to support the Burmese people in their transition to democracy. As I have made clear, we will not turn away.

As UN Special Envoy Gambari returns to the region the Burmese regime must now take the opportunity to start a process of reconciliation with the opposition that includes Aung San Suu Kyi. They must end the violence and release political detainees. Burma must take clear steps towards the return of democracy. The Security Council should meet again to review the results. If progress is insufficient, the Council will need to consider further measures.

That is why I welcome the AVAAZ petition, addressed to the UN Security Council and signed by over 750,000 people. It sends a strong message that people all over the world will stand with the people of Burma.

Today the EU Foreign ministers will meet to reinforce international pressure. The UK will press for tough sanctions including on individuals and commodities like timber, gems and metals. We will also press for a ban on future investment linked to progress with the reconciliation talks.

Given the appalling record of the regime in turning guns on its own people, no country should want to supply it with weapons. We already have, with our EU partners, a complete arms embargo on Burma. We will review the implementation of the embargo with our partners to address any risk that arms or their components might be diverted or re-exported to Burma. We will also begin discussion with our partners about an UN arms embargo.

We will continue to work with regional powers such as China and India to support reconciliation and democracy. I am sending Ministers to the region to talk to China, India, Japan and other ASEAN countries.

And I want to be clear if this process of change begins we stand ready - as the international community - to support the recovery of Burma with aid and other support. I am writing today to the G7, Prime Minister Socrates, UN Secretary General Ban , Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Premier Wen Jiabao, the President of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the IMF, proposing an economic initiative that brings the UN, EU, China, India, ASEAN and IFIs together in support of recovery plan for Burma, conditional on progress with reconciliation and democracy.

12 October : The Prime Minister's Spokesman (PMS) began by reading out a statement to the assembled press on Burma by the Prime Minister, following the UN Security Council statement:

"I applaud the leadership and responsibility shown by all members of the UN Security Council in issuing their first ever formal statement on Burma. The statement sends a powerful signal of the collective determination of the international community to stand together with the Burmese people. It is essential that we continue to work to bring an end to this crisis. The regime in Burma must now take the opportunity to begin the process of reconciliation, overseen by the UN."

Asked if there were any practical measures being taken, the PMS replied that the next step would be the meeting of the EU Foreign Minister's on Monday, where there would a discussion on Burma and the Foreign Secretary would be pushing for a toughening of the EU sanctions regime.

Asked for any clues on which direction the Government would wish to toughen them, the PMS said general trade and overseas investment. Asked if this referred to France, the PMS replied that the Government did have support for this in Europe but there would be a discussion on this on Monday.

Asked if the Foreign Secretary would be attending the meeting, the PMS confirmed that the Foreign Secretary would be there.

6 October : Today is above all about repeating a firm message: the world has not forgotten - and will not forget - the people of Burma.

We have not forgotten their courage and dignity, taking to the streets in the face of a brutal regime. We have not forgotten the guns and batons, the arrests and murders, which met them.

We believe that there have been many more killings than the regime admit. And appalling attacks on monks like that on the night of 25 September at the Ngwekayan monastery in Rangoon, when at least 80 monks were arrested. Or the five raids in Kachin State alone, where the authorities abducted 295 monks.

And we have very grave concerns about hundreds, possibly thousands, of monks, nuns and others who have simply disappeared. There is strong evidence to suggest that hundreds are now held in three or more detention facilities in the Rangoon area - these include the Institute of Technology, the Mingladon detention facility and the old race course. I have asked my officials to continue monitoring this situation, and I encourage NGOs and other governments to do so too. The demonstrators who have made sacrifices, and the brave citizens and journalists who have risked so much to get images and information to the outside world, deserve no less. I have also sent material we have received to the UN Secretary General - it is important that he sees the scale of the violence.

The job of all those demonstrating today - campaigners, the media, politicians, members of the public - is to keep up the pressure for change.

For my part I am committed to:

- Securing tougher EU sanctions, including a ban on future investment, on top of the sanctions against individuals and their assets and measures aimed at specific commodities.
- supporting Secretary General Ban as he redoubles his personal effort - with his envoy Professor Gambari - towards a process of reconciliation and democracy. That process must have Aung San Suu Kyi playing a central role. It will have to include the leaders from opposition and minority groups. And it will need to have international legitimacy. If this process of change begins we stand ready - as the international community - to support the recovery of Burma.
- maintaining the UN Security Council's active vigilance and engagement.
- continuing to use my contacts with leaders in the region to encourage them to play their part with the Burmese leadership.

I salute and share the commitment of those who will send such a powerful message of support to the people of Burma today - and of condemnation to the regime that seeks to stifle those same Burmese voices.

STATEMENTS BY MPs

8 Oct 2007: The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Malloch-Brown):

My right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The whole country will have been deeply disturbed by recent events in Burma. The brutal suppression of peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations across the country, including beatings, killings and arbitrary detentions of monks and civilians, has been deplorable. The Government are committed to working with all international partners in the search for an inclusive political process to bring reform in Burma.

Historical background

The human rights situation in Burma has long been a cause for concern. The military has ruled Burma since 1962. In 1988, pro-democracy demonstrations were violently suppressed by the military. Multi-party elections in 1990 were overwhelmingly won by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy. However, the military regime refused to implement these results.

Aung San Suu Kyi has remained under house arrest since she and her supporters were attacked in May 2003. The 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner has spent 12 out of the past 17 years under house arrest. The military regime continues to rule by decree and controls every aspect of society. It severely restricts freedom of expression, information, assembly and movement. Members of opposition parties are subject to harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention. Before the recent demonstrations there were already some 1,100 political prisoners in Burma. Forced labour, arbitrary killings, the use of child soldiers and systematic rape, unlawful detention and displacement have all been commonplace.

The human rights situation deteriorated in 2006 with further harassment of political opposition and attacks on ethnic groups.

Recent Developments

In the middle of August popular protests began against rises in fuel prices of up to 500 per cent—a measure that had severe implications for the already impoverished Burmese people. The protests were swiftly followed by arrests of pro-democracy activists. The UK condemned the actions of the regime and called for the immediate release of those detained. I expressed the UK's solidarity with the protesters and warned the regime that it would be judged by how it responded to this peaceful movement.

In late September the demonstrations grew rapidly in size, led by large numbers of Buddhist monks. These demonstrations were peaceful and orderly. On 20 September Professor Ibrahim Gambari, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, briefed the UN Security Council in informal session, a development which I welcomed publicly, while expressing concern for the peaceful demonstrators. On 22 September demonstrators were permitted to walk past the house in which Aung San Suu Kyi is being held under house arrest. As the crisis developed, the Prime Minister and I issued a number of Statements and spoke to many of our international counterparts urging against repression and calling for reconciliation. After the Prime Minister had written to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the EU expressing concern, the EU issued a Statement on 25 September warning that it would not hesitate to impose strengthened measures against the Burmese regime if they resorted to violence; and there were further informal Security Council discussions on 26 September.

As we now know the response of the regime—which it tried, unsuccessfully, to hide from the outside world—was one of violence and brutality. The security forces turned their guns on unarmed demonstrators. We do not know for certain how many people were killed but we fear it is many more than the regime has admitted. Monks and opposition leaders have been beaten and arrested. Many remain in detention and reports suggest that they are being held in appalling conditions. Through the indiscriminate use of force, the regime has suppressed the protests and forced people off the streets.

The crisis is continuing in Burma. There are a number of urgent questions the regime must answer. They must provide precise information on those who have been killed or injured; and on those who have been detained—their identities, whereabouts and the conditions in which they are being held. The regime must immediately accede to the requests for urgent access for the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Professor Pinheiro. And they must engage with Ambassador Gambari in developing an inclusive political process for reform.

UK action since crisis began

UK action has focused on three specific areas.

First, the UK has been working actively with the international community, and with Burma's neighbours in particular, to put pressure on the regime to end the violence, release political detainees, including those arrested for peacefully expressing their views in the recent protests, ensure full respect for human rights and work towards genuine reconciliation with all the relevant political and ethnic parties in Burma. This work remains a high priority for the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, other FCO Ministers and the entire diplomatic network.

Secondly, we have been pursuing urgent action in the United Nations. The UK pressed for the Security Council discussions that took place on 20 and 26 September and most recently, in formal session, on 5 October, and we pressed for the visit by Professor Gambari, to Burma to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi and the military leaders. We look forward to a return visit by Ambassador Gambari.

The UK also pushed hard for a special session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, which, with strong UK involvement and support, passed a resolution on 2 October deploring the violent repression of peaceful demonstrators and agreeing to send the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Professor Pinheiro, on an urgent mission to Burma to report on the human rights situation.

Thirdly, with our EU partners we have been working to strengthen sanctions against the regime. This will continue over the next week in the run up to the General Affairs Council on 15 October.

Future direction

We have three clear objectives, building on the work we have already been doing. The Prime Minister re-emphasised these objectives when he met Burma activists on Saturday 6 October—the day of global action on Burma.

First, the international spotlight must be kept firmly on Burma. We will continue to highlight the appalling recent events in Burma and use our diplomatic network to keep our international partners focused on the need to address urgently the ongoing human rights abuses there. On 6 October the Prime Minister drew attention to a compilation of material by FCO officials, drawing together information on recent human rights violations in Burma from media, eyewitness and diplomatic sources. This can be found on the front page of the FCO website at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

Secondly, the regime must understand that it cannot turn the clock back to the dire situation before the recent demonstrations. We welcomed Professor Gambari's clear statement on 5 October that the status quo ante was both unacceptable and unsustainable. Recent events have demonstrated clearly that this would pose unacceptable risks to Burma's long-suffering population and to the region. At its meeting on 5 October, members of the United Nations Security Council sent a clear signal that a process of national reconciliation leading to democracy, full respect for human rights and the rule of law is the only way forward. That process must involve Aung San Suu Kyi and leaders of the democratic opposition and ethnic groups. And it will need to have international legitimacy. We continue to support urgent and active UN engagement to pursue such a process, and are pressing for an early return visit by Professor Gambari to Burma.

Thirdly, we will galvanise and mobilise international support to put pressure on the regime. In addition to further engagement by the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General, we also need all those with influence on the regime to use it to press for positive change. China and other key nations such as Thailand and India can play a crucial role. We appreciate the efforts China has already made in support of Professor Gambari's recent visit to Burma and we hope China will continue to use its influence on the regime to push for genuine dialogue with the political opposition. My recent meetings with Foreign Ministers of all three countries have provided the opportunity to explain the priority we give to this issue.

We expect the European Union General Affairs and External Relations Council to announce a package of tougher measures against Burma on 15 October. We will push for these to include a ban on future investment, on top of the sanctions against individuals and their assets and measures aimed at specific commodities. These will be designed to have the greatest impact on those whose behaviour we are trying to change—the regime and those who benefit from their policies.

Support for the people of Burma

If the Burmese regime changes course and shows it is willing genuinely to work for reconciliation, democracy and poverty reduction, an economic package involving the UN, international financial institutions and bilateral donors could be offered. This could include the establishment of a multi-donor trust fund to support health, education and other key sectors; support for debt relief; financial and technical support for democratic elections; an investment conference to attract foreign direct investment; trade measures to facilitate Burma's entry into the global trading system and support for civil society including the development of a free media as well as continued humanitarian relief. Meanwhile, in response to the Prime Minister's discussion with the activists he met on 6 October, the UK has announced an additional £1 million to meet the urgent humanitarian needs in Burma arising from this latest episode of gross misrule. This will help ensure that vulnerable people do not suffer because of the actions of the regime.

IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Council Conclusions on Burma/Myanmar

2824th GENERAL AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting

Luxembourg, 15-16 October 2007

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU strongly condemns the brutal crack-down on demonstrators in Burma/Myanmar. It recalls its earlier declarations in which it urged the Burmese authorities to exercise restraint in the face of peaceful protests. The EU regrets that these calls have gone unheeded and regrets that arrests have continued over the recent days.
2. The EU demands that the authorities immediately cease all violent repression and intimidation

and that they release all those arrested since mid-August, as well as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners.

3. The EU welcomes the UN Security Council Presidential statement of 11 October on Burma/Myanmar. The EU strongly supports the actions by the UN, in particular the good offices mission of UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari. The EU backs further active UN engagement, including by the Security Council. The EU looks forward to a new visit by the Special Envoy in the coming weeks.

4. The EU welcomes the special session of the UN Human Rights Council and the adoption by consensus of a Resolution strongly deploring the continued violent repression and urging the authorities of Burma/Myanmar to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

5. The EU also calls upon the government to disclose information about the whereabouts of those arrested since mid-August and to allow international agencies access to them. The EU also calls for a thorough and impartial investigation of the deaths of demonstrators as well as other serious and continuous violations of human rights, and for those liable to be held to account. In this regard, the EU urges the authorities to co-operate fully with UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, Sergio Pinheiro, including through the urgent facilitation of a visit by him to Burma/Myanmar.

6. In line with the Presidency statement of 25 September and in view of the seriousness of the current situation and in solidarity with the people of Burma/Myanmar, the EU deems it necessary to increase direct pressure on the regime through stronger measures as well as the following additional restrictive measures: an export ban on equipment to the sectors of logs and timber and mining of metals, minerals, precious and semi precious stones; an import ban of products of the sectors mentioned before; and an investment ban in these sectors. It will therefore adopt a package of measures that do not harm the general population but that target those responsible for the violent crack-down and the overall political stalemate in the country. The EU stands ready to review, amend or reinforce these measures, in the light of developments on the ground and the results of the Good Offices Mission of the United Nations Special Envoy to Burma/Myanmar Mr. Ibrahim Gambari. The Council requests relevant bodies to elaborate further restrictive measures, including a ban on new investments.

7. The EU confirms the continuation of its substantial humanitarian aid programmes aimed at the most vulnerable populations of Burma/Myanmar and Burmese refugees in neighbouring countries. The EU stands ready to increase this assistance, subject to further assessments of the humanitarian situation. In this context, the EU urges the government to keep channels for the delivery of assistance open and calls on the authorities to co-operate with international actors in this regard.

8. The EU welcomes the unanimous condemnation of developments and the efforts by ASEAN and neighbours of Burma/Myanmar to positively influence the Burmese authorities. As the situation requires the sustained engagement of the UN and the support of the international community and all regional actors, the EU encourages all of Burma's neighbours to maintain pressure for a credible and fully participatory reform process.

9. The EU urges the Burmese authorities to recognize that a return to the situation before the recent demonstrations is both unacceptable and unsustainable. Only a genuine process of internal reform and reconciliation with the involvement of the opposition will deliver stability, democracy and prosperity to the country. The EU supports steps towards such an inclusive process leading to democracy, full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

10. The EU again expresses its readiness to assist Burma/Myanmar in its process of transition. The EU regrets that the Burmese government has made this impossible so far. Should this situation improve, the EU stands ready to review the restrictive measures, to engage with Burma in its development and to find new areas of cooperation.

11. The EU is determined to assist the people of Burma/Myanmar further on their path to democracy, security and prosperity."

**Published by The Burma Campaign UK, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT
www.burmacampaign.org.uk tel: 020 7324 4710 fax: +44 20 7324 4717**



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