



# LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

JULY  
2009

## ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

### *Ethnic Groups*

**1 July 2009 Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has made to the government of Burma on the military offensive against the Karen ethnic group; and if he will make a statement; [282491] (2) what discussions he has had at the United Nations on the Burmese offensive against the Karen ethnic group. [282492]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** We are deeply concerned about the situation in Karen State and reports of renewed fighting between the Karen National Union and the Democratic Karen Buddhist army, who are supported by the Burmese army. Attacks carried out by the Burmese army and their Karen client organisations on civilians in Karen State have been particularly intense over the past two years. We hope to highlight our concerns in a UN Security Council discussion on the protection of civilians in armed conflict on 26 June 2009.

We have repeatedly called for a halt to such offensives and have urged both the military regime and the Karen National Union to intensify their efforts to find a peaceful settlement that will bring about a permanent end to the conflict. Most recently at meetings between our ambassador and Burmese Ministers on 18 and 19 June 2009. In response to the recent upsurge in violence and reports of large numbers of civilians fleeing over the Thai border, the Czech presidency of the EU, with our strong support, issued a statement on 11 June 2009 calling for an end to the hostilities. It expressed particular concern about the humanitarian impact of the ongoing conflict. We fully support this call and our embassy in Rangoon continues to monitor the situation closely.

**7 July 2009 Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations his Department has made to the Thai government on the repatriation of Karen civilians to Burma; and if he will make a statement. [283947]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Our ambassador in Bangkok most recently raised the issue of refugees on the Thailand-Burma border with the Permanent Secretary of Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 1 July 2009. Our embassy staff have also been in contact with the Thai Ministry of the Interior, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on the border, about the welfare and living conditions of those recently arrived from eastern Burma, and the humanitarian assistance they are receiving. This assistance, provided by the Royal Thai Government, UNHCR and NGOs, includes food, plastic sheeting for shelter, blankets, bed-nets and medical care.

### *Thailand and Burma*

**1 July 2009 Mr. Keith Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with the government of Thailand on the welfare and living conditions of people who have left eastern Burma owing to the renewed military operation in that region; and if he will make a statement. [282837]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** Staff based in the British embassy in Bangkok have been in contact with the Thai Ministry of the Interior, and with non-governmental organisations working on the Thailand-Burma border, about the welfare and living conditions of recently arrived refugees from eastern Burma.

Humanitarian assistance for the refugees is being provided by the Thai authorities, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and non-governmental organisations. This assistance includes food, plastic sheeting for shelter, blankets, bed-nets and medical care. Planning is under way to prepare a new site in Thailand to accommodate the refugees.

The Department for International Development plans to provide about £7.4 million over the next three years to support Burmese refugees in Thailand and internally displaced people inside Burma.

**1 July 2009 Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what his most recent assessment is of the humanitarian situation on the Thai-Burmese border. [282501]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** Latest estimates from the Government of Thailand, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) suggest that about 3,200 refugees have recently entered Thailand to escape fighting in eastern Burma.

Immediate humanitarian assistance for the refugees is being provided by the Thai authorities, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and non-governmental organisations. This assistance includes food, plastic sheeting for shelter, blankets, bed-nets and medical care. Planning is underway to prepare a new site in Thailand to accommodate the refugees.

The Department for International Development plans to provide about £7.4 million over the next three years to support Burmese refugees in Thailand and internally displaced people inside Burma.

### ***Aung San Suu Kyi***

**6 July 2009 Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the government of Burma on the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi. [284305]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis** [holding answer 3 July 2009]: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has expressed UK's deep concern over the arrest and trial of Aung San Suu Kyi, commenting that it shows the Burmese regime is intent on finding any pretext to extend her unlawful detention. He released a statement on the morning of her arrest on 14 May 2009 condemning the actions of the regime. On receiving news of her arrest, our embassy in Rangoon also immediately registered its concern with the Burmese authorities. Our ambassador contacted them again on 18 May 2009 and the following days to seek access to her trial.

Former Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister Bill Rammell raised the arrest and trial of Aung San Suu Kyi, the detention of over 2,100 political prisoners and the implications for a genuine transition to democracy in Burma with EU and Asian partners at the EU-Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit and Asia-Europe Meeting in the region at the end of May. He spoke directly to Burmese Ministers to express the UK's outrage at their actions.

Most recently, the Prime Minister issued a statement on Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday, 19 June 2009, reiterating his call for her release. Our embassy in Rangoon transmitted a message from the Government to the Burmese Ministry of Foreign Affairs early on 1 July 2009 expressing our continued concern about Aung San Suu Kyi's trial and urging the regime to co-operate with the UN General Secretary upon his visit.

**9 July 2009 Mr. Gregory Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold discussions with the UN Secretary-General on his recent visit to Burma, with particular reference to the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi. [285504]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Both my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary discuss Burma regularly with the UN Secretary-General. The Prime Minister most recently spoke to Ban Ki-Moon on 21 June 2009, prior to his visit to Burma and they may speak again at the G8 summit. The Foreign Secretary is seeking to identify an early opportunity to speak to the UN Secretary-General about the visit, and the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi.

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### ***International Assistance***

**7 July 2009 Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions his Department has had with aid agencies on securing Burmese visas for their workers; and if he will make a statement. [283949]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Department for International Development and Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials are in regular contact with aid agencies working in Burma, during which issues relating to Burmese visas are discussed. We will continue to monitor the situation. The Burmese regime are aware of our concerns that unfettered access should be allowed to continue for humanitarian agencies operating in Burma.

### ***UK Sanctions on Burma***

**9 July 2009 Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his Department will next review UK economic sanctions against Burma; and if he will make a statement. [285344]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The UK pursues sanctions against the Burmese regime as part of a wider EU Common Position. Sanctions are renewed annually in April, but the EU has repeatedly made clear its readiness to review, amend or reinforce existing sanctions on the basis of developments on the ground. On 19 June 2009, EU leaders made clear that the EU would respond to a failure to release Aung San Suu Kyi with additional targeted measures.

## **EARLY DAY MOTIONS**

**EDM 1490**

**AUNG SAN SUU KYI**

14.05.2009

Clwyd, Ann

Signed by 74 MPs

That this House deplores the decision of Burma's regime to move the democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, to Insein prison to face charges relating to an incident involving a US citizen who broke into her compound last week; is dismayed by her unlawful detention under house arrest for 13 of the 19 years since the military junta refused to recognise the 1990 landslide victory of her party, the National League for Democracy; is concerned that this incident could give the military junta a convenient reason to extend her unlawful detention, which was meant to end shortly; is concerned about reports of a deterioration in Ms Suu Kyi's health; calls on the international community to do more to secure the release of political prisoners in Burma and to disregard the results of next year's elections if they are not free and fair; and applauds the European Union for extending its sanctions against the regime, including an arms embargo, a travel ban on Burma's leaders and a freezing of their assets in Europe.

**EDM 1452**

**POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BURMA**

07.05.2009

Stunell, Andrew

Signed by 120 MPs

That this House welcomes the Free Burma's Political Prisoners Now campaign being organised by former political prisoners from Burma; congratulates the organisers on securing 250,000 signatures in support of the campaign; notes that more than 2,100 political prisoners languish in Burma's gaols, having committed no crime other than to want freedom and democracy, or to deliver aid to victims of Cyclone Nargis; expresses deep concern that political prisoners are deliberately being denied medical treatment; supports the call for UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to make it his personal priority to secure the release of all of Burma's political prisoners; and calls on the Government to do all it can to assist the UN Secretary General in this objective.

**EDM 1336:**

23.04.2009

Bottomley, Peter

Signed by 77 MPs

**HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA**

**EDM 670:**

03.02.2009

Carmichael, Alistair

Signed by 50 MPs

**THAILAND'S TREATMENT OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES**

**EDM 671:**

03.02.2009

Carmichael, Alistair

Signed by 120 MPs

**CLOSURE OF CHURCHES IN RANGOON**

**EDM 343:**

17.02.2009

Battle, John

Signed by 176 MPs

**UNITED NATIONS AND POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BURMA**

To view the whole list of EDMs, please see the below link

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/Search.aspx>

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www.burmacampaign.org.uk tel: 020 7324 4710 fax: +44 20 7324 4717**



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