

British Foreign Office Minister Hugo Swire MP has responded to letters from Burma Campaign UK supporters about Burma's political reforms. This briefing is our response to the British government response.

In November 2014, Aung San Suu Kyi said that for the past two years, Burma's reform process had stalled. President Obama said that there had been backtracking of reforms. The British government, however, carried on promoting trade as if nothing was wrong, and when asked in Parliament, Ministers refused to accept that Burma's reform process was stalled. Despite the stalling of reforms, increasing numbers of political prisoners and many ongoing human rights violations, the British government is in denial about the reality in Burma.

In response, Burma Campaign UK asked supporters to email the British Prime Minister David Cameron, calling on him to stop being an ostrich on Burma. He can't just stick his head in the sand and keep pretending reforms are going in the right direction. We called on him to admit reforms have stalled, to drop trade promotion as the British government's top priority, and return to putting human rights first. The action is on our website is here:
<https://action.burmacampaign.org.uk/david-cameron-stop-being-ostrich-burma>

On 8th January 2015, the British government published a response to these letters and emails. The response was from Hugo Swire MP, the Foreign Office Minister responsible for Burma, not from the Prime Minister. The response is published here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hugo-swire-responds-to-letters-on-burmas-political-reforms>.

Burma Campaign UK would like to thank everyone who emailed the Prime Minister. As the Foreign Office response says, the Prime Minister received a large number of emails. You certainly got their attention, which is a vital first step in any campaign.

You also got them to admit that the situation in Rakhine State, where there is severe repression of the Rohingya, is worsening. This is the first time since the aftermath of the violence in 2012 that the British government has publicly accepted the situation is getting worse. In recent years they have been playing down serious human rights abuses in Burma.

Sadly though, the rest of the letter is very disappointing. As has become so common in statements by the British government in the past two years, the letter talks up positives, plays down or ignores negatives, and is deliberately misleading in order to cover up their lack of action on key issues.

Most importantly, in relation to the key issue that you emailed the Prime Minister about, the letter does not accept that reforms have stalled, and does not accept that any change of approach might be needed. They avoid giving a direct answer either way. They appear too embarrassed about their own policy of believing in President Thein Sein to openly admit it.

Here is our point by point response to the letter. A suggested draft letter to reply to the British government is at the end of this briefing.

“The Prime Minister has received a large number of e-mails recently from members of the public expressing concern about the current situation in Burma. As Minister responsible for our relations with Burma, I would like to take this opportunity to explain what the British Government is doing to address these concerns and to encourage further reform.”

Although the email was addressed to the Prime Minister, the response is from Hugo Swire MP, a Minister whose main interest is in promoting trade, not human rights. The Prime Minister himself has barely spoken on Burma since taking a trade delegation to the country in 2012, while trade sanctions were still in place. The main exceptions were when he met Aung San Suu Kyi, and later President Thein Sein, when he offered to provide training to the Burmese army.

“Much of the recent correspondence suggests that reforms in Burma have stalled and in some areas have reversed. We are by no means complacent, and recognise the reservations expressed by Aung San Suu Kyi and others. Indeed, we regularly discuss these concerns with her and we are working closely with her in many areas.”

This paragraph sums up one of the main problems with the current British government approach. They acknowledge there are some problems (without being specific about those problems or human rights abuses), they say they talk about them, and that is that.

Talking about problems is not enough. They keep talking, things either don't change, or even get worse, and despite this, over and over again, year after year, the British government still just keeps saying how they have discussed or raised these problems. Despite this approach clearly failing, they are continuing with this failed approach.

This paragraph also avoids answering the main point of the correspondence. Does the government accept that reforms have stalled? They do not accept reforms have stalled, but avoid specifically admitting this. They are still in denial, and appear too embarrassed about their own policy of believing in President Thein Sein to openly admit it.

“In particular, we are aware of the ongoing human rights abuses in the country, and continue our active lobbying of the government on the breadth of these abuses. We have raised the appalling and worsening situation in Rakhine State and will continue to urge the government to respect the human rights of the Rohingya.”

Here the British government is effectively admitting its approach is not working. They said, as usual, that they have raised the situation, but also admit the situation is worsening. The fact that they accept the situation is worsening is welcome. However, as their current softly-softly approach is, as they effectively admit, failing, why are they not considering a new approach?

“We have also raised with the government the recent intimidation, detention and sentencing of reporters and political activists.”

Here again is an example of the failure of the approach of just 'raising' an issue with the Burmese government and then doing nothing more when this doesn't work. In the past year, Burma went from having 30 political prisoners, to around 160, with another 200 awaiting trial. It has also gone from having no journalists in jail, to having around ten people from the media in jail.

The letter also avoids using any figures about the number of political prisoners and how they have increased. This is because, whilst focussing on trade promotion, highlighting these statistics is very embarrassing for them. In Parliament, Hugo Swire has repeatedly avoided directly talking about how the number of political prisoners first doubled last year, and is now five times as high as it was a year ago.

“We are deeply concerned about ongoing conflict in ethnic areas and associated human rights abuses, not least sexual violence (I have written separately about this).”

Thanks to pressure from Burma Campaign UK supporters, the Foreign Office did finally include Burma in the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, but has gone to great lengths to avoid directly addressing the continued impunity the Burmese Army enjoys for its use of rape and sexual violence, particularly against ethnic minority women and children. The British government has refused to support proposals for an international investigation into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese Army.

The British government has failed to provide specific financial support to help with counselling, medical and other support for survivors of sexual violence by the Burmese Army, and also failed to provide financial support to the women’s organisations which document rape and sexual violence by the Burmese Army, and advocate for action to end these abuses.

The British government is even providing training for the Burmese Army, despite this army not being under democratic control, and being responsible for multiple ongoing violations of international law in the past year, including war crimes and crimes against humanity.

“We continue to lobby for unhindered humanitarian access across Burma.”

The Burmese government is committing a war crime by restricting humanitarian assistance to tens of thousands of internally displaced people in Kachin and Shan States who have fled attacks by the Burmese Army since 2011. Not only has the British government not taken any action internationally to stop this war crime and hold the government to account for this crime, they even avoid admitting that this obstruction of humanitarian access violates international law, and meets the definition of a war crime.

In Rakhine State there are also severe government restrictions on aid to around 140,000 ethnic

Rohingya who fled attacks in 2012. These restrictions are causing deaths and immense suffering. The British government has failed to support calls for UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to personally take the lead in negotiating humanitarian access in Rakhine State.

These two crises alone, let alone the general restriction on aid across the country, justify urgent and high level efforts to pressure the Burmese government to end these restrictions, rather than just being one talking point among many when British government officials meet the Burmese government.

“However, we must also acknowledge the significant progress made since 2011. There remains a long way to go, but let us not forget that as recently as 2010, Burma was still a military dictatorship.”

Burma may not be under direct military rule, but it is also not a democracy. It is a military-backed authoritarian regime. The government is made up almost entirely of members of the previous military dictatorship, who have taken off their uniforms.

“As Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, has said, “far-reaching reforms have dramatically transformed the political, economic, social and human rights landscape”.”

This quote comes from a statement the Rapporteur made whilst in Burma on 26th July 2014. The first line in the next paragraph of that statement concerns exactly what the campaign email to the Prime Minister was referring to, and what the response letter avoids answering. The Special Rapporteur went on to say:

“Yet, there are worrying signs of possible backtracking, which if unchecked could undermine Myanmar’s efforts to become a responsible member of the international community that respects and protects human rights.”

The selective use of one quote is another example of how Hugo Swire talks up the positives and plays down the negatives in Burma. He doesn’t address

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the core issue the British government was asked about in the campaign emails they received, namely, whether or not they agree that reforms in Burma are stalled and that there is backtracking. Instead, he selects one positive sentence.

Also in the same statement from the Rapporteur, she described a climate of fear and intimidation, how arrests of activists continue, the jailing of journalists, land grabbing and confiscations, and many other human rights violations.

You can read the full statement here:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14909&LangID=E> and see for yourself just how different the tone and content is compared to how the British government describes the situation in Burma.

Following this visit, the Special Rapporteur published a highly critical report assessing the human rights situation in Burma, with many recommendations for action that should be taken to improve the situation. The response of the Burmese government was not to take action on these recommendations, but instead to demand that she effectively be sacked, by ending the role of the Special Rapporteur.

You can see the full report here:

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/545/25/PDF/N1454525.pdf?OpenElement>

“The government has improved the scope for freedom of expression.”

Compared to the situation before 2011, this is partially true, but it seriously misrepresents the reality of the situation in Burma today and is another example of the selective use of information to present a positive picture, whilst avoiding talking about serious ongoing human rights abuses.

Improvements that were being made in freedom of expression in 2011 and 2012 have gone into reverse. As the Special Rapporteur states in the same July 2014 statement that the British

government quoted from:

“The opening up of democratic space for people to exercise their rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to freedom of assembly and association is widely acknowledged as one significant achievement in Myanmar’s continuing reform process. Yet, in recent months many of my interlocutors have seen the shrinking of that space for civil society and the media.”

A week after Hugo Swire published this letter claiming there are improvements in freedom of expression, the Special Rapporteur made another statement on freedom of expression:

“In the area of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, positive gains risk being lost. Indeed, the possible signs of backtracking I noted in my first report have gained momentum in this area.”

Journalists are being thrown into jail again, and one was shot dead by the Burmese Army. Intimidation of media has increased, and some ethnic media have been closed down. A senior member of the National League for Democracy is on trial for criticising religious extremism. Hundreds of people are being jailed for peaceful protests.

Why doesn’t Hugo Swire talk about this in his letter? He talks up improvements in freedom of expression even though he knows progress has gone into reverse. He is cynically and deliberately trying to mislead people on this issue.

“Many hundreds of political prisoners have been released.”

When it comes to talking about releases, Hugo Swire is happy to use the phrase ‘political prisoners’, and to state numbers. As we saw earlier on in the letter, when it comes to talking about the huge increase in those being thrown into jail, he doesn’t use the phrase political prisoners, and doesn’t talk about numbers.

“The government and ethnic groups are working towards a nationwide ceasefire.”

This is true, but no mention is made of the hundreds of occasions when the Burmese Army has broken

ceasefires, including violating ceasefires in Karen State in order to seize land linked with development projects which will enrich the government. Nor how the Burmese Army also broke a longstanding ceasefire in Kachin State.

In addition, the reason that ceasefire negotiations have dragged on for years longer than planned is due in large part to the inflexibility of the Burmese government and Burmese Army in insisting ethnic armed groups agree to the military-drafted undemocratic 2008 Constitution.

“In 2014, 376 child soldiers were released from service.”

The release of these child soldiers from service is of course welcome. However, the Burmese government broke its agreement with the United Nations to stop recruiting child soldiers and release all child soldiers by the end of 2013.

The fact that they still had 376 child soldiers who could be released in 2014 is evidence that they had violated the agreement with the UN.

Comments on this issue from the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma stand in marked contrast to those by Hugo Swire. A week after this letter was published she stated:

“I am also concerned at reports of continued high levels of underage soldiers serving in the Tatmadaw.”

Instead of stating that the Burmese government broke its agreement with the UN and still has child soldiers, the British government selectively used the statistics of the releases to try to present a positive story of what is actually a negative story.

“In June, Burma endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.”

The British government made high-level and consistent efforts to persuade the Burmese government to sign the declaration, and deserves credit for doing so. It demonstrates that when the right kind of pressure is applied, it can work.

However, in another example of selective use of information, Hugo Swire makes no reference to the fact that after signing the declaration, the Burmese government has not taken a single step to actually implement the agreement. It signed in name only.

“In December, Burma acceded to the Biological Weapons Convention.”

Again, the letter selectively highlights one positive, without mentioning several relevant negatives.

Although Burma acceded to this one treaty, it is defying repeated calls from the United Nations and civil society to accede to many human rights treaties, and has broken its promise to allow the United Nations to open a country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

“For the first time, we have seen jurisdiction on cases involving military officers being handed over to civilian courts to help bring justice for survivors of sexual violence. These steps represent an improvement upon the past situation.”

Here yet again, one possible positive development, where a soldier accused of rape was tried by a civilian court, has been highlighted, and no mention at all is made to the fact that in hundreds more cases there is still impunity for Burmese Army soldiers committing rape, that reported cases of rape and sexual violence have increased since the reform process began, and that Burma has not taken any steps to implement the declaration to end sexual violence.

On 16th January 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma stated:

“I remain particularly concerned at the failure of measures to ensure accountability of military officials, including sexual and gender based violence in conflict zones.”

“We also have to be realistic about the pace of change. Burma is undertaking a complex transition: from an authoritarian military regime to democratic government”

There is no evidence at all to substantiate the assertion here that Burma is undertaking a transition to a democratic government. All the evidence points in the opposite direction. The new Constitution, which was the first step in the reform process, is not democratic and does not guarantee human rights.

The behaviour of the government and Army also provides evidence that Burma is not in a transition to democracy. This evidence ranges from how the government stepped up human rights violations in some areas, including against the Kachin and Rohingya for example, and also how reforms that had been made began to be reversed once sanctions had been lifted and aid and trade was flowing.

“from a centrally directed to a market oriented economy;”

Business people, civil society and academics are questioning whether the Burmese government is actually committed to a genuine market economy. A great many promised reforms, laws and other measures have not been delivered by the government. The failure to deliver on economic reforms has not received the same attention as the backtracking of political reforms, but the pattern is the same. Business cronies continue to dominate the Burmese economy, and there are fears the country will turn into a Russian style economy dominated by oligarchs with close connections to the government or military.

“and from decades of conflict to peace in the border areas.”

As discussed earlier, there is still not peace and the responsibility for that lies with the government of Burma. The sentence is also revealing as it talks only about peace, not about any kind of long-term political solution to address the root causes of the conflict. People on the ground in ethnic states tell us they have the impression that the British government and other governments are only interested in a ceasefire so they can say ‘problem solved’ and access the rich natural resources in ethnic states, rather than pressuring the Burmese government to agree to a genuine political dialogue.

“This process was never going to be quick or easy.”

Here the Minister is trying to make excuses for the government of Burma, attributing problems to the complex situation, not their behaviour or intentions.

The complexity of the situation does not force the Burmese government to pass a new law which it uses to arrest and jail hundreds of political prisoners. The complexity of the situation does not force them to ignore their soldiers raping ethnic women and children. The complexity of the situation did not force them to block humanitarian aid to internally displaced people in Kachin State, or to place severe restrictions on aid to 140,000 Rohingya in camps in Rakhine State. Yes, any genuine transition will be complex and difficult, but the countless ongoing human rights violations and failure to deliver on many key reforms cannot be attributed to complexity.

“In this context, our continued engagement and support for the people of Burma is more vital than ever.”

Support from the British government is more vital than ever, but people in Burma have asked Burma Campaign UK ‘what happened to the British government, they used to support us, now they support the government’.

“In light of this, we are providing practical support. Our aid in Rakhine state supports shelter, water sanitation and hygiene programmes, nutrition and protection activities, as well as non-food items for over 114,000 people from both Rakhine and Rohingya communities.”

This aid is of course very welcome, but the British government is not taking action to address the root causes of why these people need this aid. They are not placing anything close to sufficient pressure on the government for what they admit is a worsening situation. They have failed to support proposals that Ban Ki-moon personally take the lead in negotiating humanitarian access in Rakhine State. They refuse to support an international investigation into the

violations which led to these people being displaced, and the government policies which prevent them from leaving the camps. Nor is pressure placed on the government of Burma to fund the aid itself. The government still spends far more on the military than any other area.

The British government want credit for helping to address the symptoms while taking no action to address the root causes of why aid is needed.

“We also provide humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by the violence in Kachin and Northern Shan States.” “This aid is providing food security, sanitation and health to accepted humanitarian standards, as well as to strengthening IDP communities’ capacity to manage health hazards and risks.”

Again, this aid is welcome and saves lives, but again, the Burmese government places severe restrictions on aid to many of these camps. This qualifies as a war crime, but the British government won’t even talk about this, let alone take action on it.

“At the same time, we are working with government, parliament, business, civil society and international organisations to help build an economy which generates strong, sustainable and balanced growth that builds prosperity and reduces poverty in Burma. We have supported Burma’s successful application to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

We are also working to ensure international standards are adopted and enforced around a whole host of related issues, including responsible business, conflict-sensitive economic governance, environmental and social impact assessments, corporate and social responsibility, corporate governance and transparency. We continue to share, with Burma’s public and private sectors, the UK’s experience of developing our own Action Plan to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.”

The context of the British government’s 2013 announcement of support for responsible investment initiatives in Burma, when they were facing severe criticism for prematurely supporting the lifting of EU sanctions despite none of the human rights benchmarks for lifting the sanctions having been met, is just one of many reasons to doubt the sincerity of the British government’s genuine commitment to responsible investment in Burma.

The announcement of support was made by Hugo Swire at a meeting at the Foreign Office just days before sanctions were lifted, a decision the Daily Telegraph described as ‘deeply embarrassing’. The traditional format for these types of meetings is a briefing by the Minister and Foreign Office officials, followed by questions and answers. At this meeting Hugo Swire arrived late, made a short speech announcing the funding, and left without taking any questions. He was the first Foreign Office Minister responsible for Burma to leave without taking questions. The Foreign Office then issued a media release about the funding, which falsely claimed that the Minister had had frank discussions with Burma Campaign UK. There had been no discussion with the Minister at all. The media release was trying to give a false impression that Burma Campaign UK supported the initiative. We asked the Foreign Office to remove this false claim from the media release, and circulate a correction to the same media lists they sent the original release to, but they did not.

When Burma Campaign UK later asked Foreign Office officials how the money would be spent exactly, they did not know. The whole initiative seemed to be a rushed public relations effort rather than a thought through approach to ensure responsible investment.

Further evidence of the British government using responsible investment initiatives as public relations cover for trade promotion efforts include the failure of the British government to support reporting requirements on companies investing in Burma, as the US imposed, and their publication of a 16 page document promoting investment in Burma’s oil and gas sector. This was published the day after Hugo Swire published his letter responding to the campaign emails.

It makes just one passing mention of human rights, and none of democracy. Oil revenue would go directly to the military-backed government, which still spends far more on the military than on health and education combined. The industry is not labour intensive, so would not provide significant numbers of jobs, compared, for example, to agriculture, where up to three-quarters of the population earn their living.

The British government prioritised this sector because it has the potential to make big profits for British companies, not because it will provide jobs and alleviate poverty for ordinary people.

“Vital to all of our efforts is an engagement with the Burmese military. Many of the letters we have received express unease about this, but I believe it is absolutely necessary if we are to see sustained and long-term reform. The military has a long history in Burma and will undoubtedly remain an important institution in the years ahead. The focus of our defence engagement is to encourage their adherence to the core principles of democratic accountability, international law and human rights. Aung San Suu Kyi and others have actively encouraged this engagement.”

Engagement with the Burmese Army to promote human rights is widely supported, including by Burma Campaign UK. However, Hugo Swire avoids admitting that his government has gone way beyond simple engagement, and is actually training the Burmese Army. They have admitted that training includes professionalisation of the Burmese Army. This is at the same time as the army is committing multiple violations of international law, including rape of women and children, bombing civilian villages, and recently killing a journalist.

A full briefing on problems relating to this training is published by Burma Campaign UK here: http://burmacampaign.org.uk/burma_briefing/training-war-criminals-british-training-of-the-burmese-army/

“The reforms that we all want to see in Burma will not be quick or easy. As President Obama said during his visit in November, “change is hard and it doesn’t always move in a straight line”.”

Here again, Hugo Swire is making excuses for the military-backed government. Of course change isn’t easy, but no-one is forcing them to increase the number of political prisoners five-fold, to rape ethnic women, to jail journalists, and attempt to drive ethnic Rohingya out of the country.

“Our efforts to promote human rights, democratisation and a lasting peace process will take time - but 2015 will clearly [be] a crucial year. The elections will be a landmark in Burma’s transition and it is important for its political and economic future that they are credible and inclusive, and that they represent the will of the people. The legacy of a government which initiated reforms and then presided over such elections would be historic. In the run-up to the elections the UK will encourage all of Burma’s main political actors to build a regular dialogue to manage this process.”

Under the current Constitution, and current election laws, it is impossible for the elections to be free and fair, for them to be credible and inclusive, and for a truly democratically elected government to take power after these elections. Regardless of how people vote, the subsequent government will not represent the will of the people. The British government is fully aware of this.

Aung San Suu Kyi remains barred from becoming President, the military still have 25 percent of seats reserved in Parliament, and the head of the military chooses key ministers in the Burmese government. Above Parliament and the government is a National Defence and Security Council, which is dominated by military and ex-military members, and is more powerful than the Parliament, President and government. And the military still have the ability to constitutionally take power on vague national security grounds.

Highly restrictive election laws are also in place that would be considered unacceptable in any genuine democracy.

In Summary

This letter sums up the current approach of the British government. They now admit there are problems, whilst avoiding going into details about those problems. For example, Hugo Swire always avoids talking about how many political prisoners there are.

They then say that they have raised these issues with the government, as if that is enough. Talking about problems is not enough. They keep talking, things either don't change, or even get worse, and despite this, over and over again, year after year, the British government still just keeps saying how they have discussed or raised these problems. Despite this approach clearly failing, they are continuing with this failed approach.

The British government refutes the assertion by Burma Campaign UK that they have dropped human rights as their top priority in Burma, and now prioritise trade. However, current policy is clearly failing to deliver improvements in human rights in the areas the British government says it has raised with the Burmese government. Yet the British government refuses to consider alternative courses of action. This approach does not make sense if they genuinely are committed to prioritising human rights. It only makes sense if they have other priorities, such as trade and investment opportunities.

Further evidence that this is their priority is the way that the response from Hugo Swire consistently talks up positives, ignores or plays down negatives, and deliberately and repeatedly attempts to mislead the reader into believing that the situation in Burma is better than it actually is. The only explanation for this is that they know these facts are embarrassing for his government, which has so wholeheartedly endorsed President Thein Sein and his claims of reforms, and which now devotes so much effort to promoting business with Burma.

The fact that Hugo Swire cannot even bring himself to agree with Aung San Suu Kyi, President Obama, and the UN Special Rapporteur that reforms are stalled, backtracking or backsliding, shows just how much in denial of reality the British government still is. The rose-tinted glasses are still welded on.

If you took the campaign action and received this letter, there is a draft on page 10 that you can use to reply to Hugo Swire MP.

You can either copy this draft, or send an email to the Foreign Office at:
<https://action.burmacampaign.org.uk/response-hugo-swire-mp>

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Hugo Swire MP
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King Charles Street, London SW1 2AH

Dear Hugo Swire MP

Thank you for your response to my email to Prime Minister David Cameron regarding the stalled reform process in Burma.

I am disappointed that your letter did not address the substance of my email, namely whether or not the British government accepts that the reform process in Burma has stalled, and that there is backtracking.

For clarification, I would be grateful if you could provide a specific response on this issue.

Do you agree, or disagree, with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi that Burma's reform process has been stalled for two years now?

Do you agree or disagree with President Obama that there has been backtracking in Burma's reform process?

You state that you have raised issues relating to the Rohingya with the government of Burma, but also state that the situation is worsening. Given that your current efforts have clearly failed to have any impact whatsoever, why are you not considering alternative courses of action?

Do you support proposals that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon should personally take the lead in negotiating humanitarian access in Rakhine State?

Why do you oppose an independent international investigation into human rights violations against the Rohingya in Burma?

You make a passing mention of the detention of activists, but avoid using the term political prisoners, and avoid mentioning the number of political prisoners, and that there has been a fivefold increase in political prisoners in the past year. By doing this, you encourage the Burmese government to believe it can imprison political activists with impunity. Will you issue a public statement condemning the Burmese government for jailing peaceful activists, specifically talking about the number of activists in jail and how significant the increase has been?

No-one believes any reform process in Burma would be easy, but you appear to be a leading member of the dwindling number of people who genuinely believe in this reform process. You are looking at the situation through rose-tinted glasses. The longer you delay admitting the fundamental flaws in the current reform process, and that it is not a transition to democracy, the more time you give the military-backed government to continue its policies of repression and to violate international law, and the more harshly history will judge you for going along with this sham process for the sake of a few trade deals.

I look forward to your response to the specific questions I have asked.

Yours sincerely

More briefings are available here:
www.burmacampaign.org.uk/burma-briefing

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