



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-0086 (2018) | 12 April 2018

# Debate on petitions relating to Burma's Rohingya minority

Westminster Hall

Monday 16 April 2018

4:30-7:30pm

Debate opened by Helen Jones MP  
(Chair of the Petitions Committee)

Compiled by:  
Nigel Walker

Subject specialists:  
Jon Lunn  
Louisa Brooke-Holland

### Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Press Articles</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Press Releases</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>PQs</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Other Parliamentary material</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1	Debates	22
5.2	Statements	22
5.3	Early Day Motions	33
<b>6.</b>	<b>Further reading</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Map of Rakhine State</b>	<b>37</b>

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

# 1. Background

Many hoped that the November 2015 general election would be a tipping-point in Burma's 'democratic transition', which began in 2011. The new National League for Democracy (NLD) government took office in April 2016 in an atmosphere of hope – but the honeymoon has turned out to be brief. The limits of Aung San Suu Kyi's power have been exposed by her inability to control the actions of the security forces in Rakhine State, where they stand accused of committing serious human rights abuses against the Muslim Rohingya, triggering a massive flow of refugees into neighbouring Bangladesh. Her international reputation has been badly damaged. The international humanitarian response is scaling up but the monsoon season is coming soon. There have been moves by western governments to reintroduce some sanctions.

## The Rohingya crisis

The first few months in office were relatively – and deceptively – calm for the NLD. But it all began to change in October 2016, when Rohingya who had organised themselves into an armed group carried out small-scale attacks against the Burmese security forces near the border with Bangladesh in northern Rakhine State. During 2017, these forces became known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).

These attacks provoked strong counter-action by the military under army chief General Min Aung Hlaing, over which Aung San Suu Kyi has only [limited control](#). Human rights groups accused the military of further serious human rights abuses against Rohingya communities. As was the case in the past when violence escalated in Rakhine State, significant numbers of Rohingya fled into Bangladesh.

Although tensions remained high, there was a relative lull in the situation in northern Rakhine State for several months during mid-2017. But many analysts [assessed](#) that it was only a matter of time before there was another upsurge in violence – and so it proved.

On 25 August 2017 ARSA launched another round of attacks on police posts in Rakhine State, as well as one on an army base. Earlier in the month, it had warned the army to demilitarise northern Rakhine State. The army [responded](#) with massive military force, launching 'clearance operations', which rapidly escalated into systematic burnings of villages and abuses against civilians both by its own personnel and by Rakhine Buddhist vigilante groups. This triggered an unprecedented wave of displaced Rohingya, most of whom crossed the border into Bangladesh.

Senior UN and US officials have declared what has happened 'ethnic cleansing'. There have also been [claims](#) that it might amount to

genocide. Aung San Suu Kyi has [rejected](#) claims that ethnic cleansing has taken place, insisting that army operations concluded in early-September 2017.

There is growing evidence that the Burmese army did not simply respond to ARSA's renewed attacks in late-August 2017, but that it had been [preparing](#) for a brutal and disproportionate assault on Rohingya during the months beforehand – for example, by mobilising and arming local Buddhist vigilante groups. In January 2018 there were also clashes between the security forces and Buddhist Rakhine protesters opposed to improving Rohingya rights. Allegations of human rights abuses continue and the situation in Rakhine State remains highly volatile. To date, the Burmese authorities have refused to cooperate with UN human rights officials trying to conduct investigations, refusing them permission to enter the country.

On 23 November 2017 Burma and Bangladesh [agreed](#) an 'Arrangement on the Return of Displaced Myanmar Persons Sheltered in Bangladesh'. However, Rohingya refugees fear that 'resettlement' could turn out to mean *de facto* internment in military-run camps and the UN and western governments have argued that conditions are not yet conducive to voluntary repatriation. In January 2018, Bangladesh suspended the repatriation process indefinitely.

Although the scale has reduced significantly since November 2017 (about 500 people a week are reportedly crossing currently), by the end of February 2018 the total number of Rohingya refugees that had fled Rakhine State into Bangladesh since August 2017 had reached 688,000. Combined with those who were already there as a result of previous outbreaks of violence, there are now well over one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Over the last six months, considerable progress has been made in providing humanitarian assistance for the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees that are currently living in Cox's Bazaar on the Bangladeshi side of the border.

However, many challenges remain – the sheer congestion is perhaps the single biggest problem – and the monsoon rains will come soon, potentially leading to another acute phase of the humanitarian crisis, in which much good work may quickly be undone.

Bangladesh has made some land available that is safely above sea-level but it is widely agreed that it is unlikely to be enough to meet needs. There also continues to be concern about preparatory work by the Bangladeshi authorities on an island 21 miles away from the mainland, Bhasan Char, that may be used for upwards of 100,000 refugees but which international agencies have had no access to and which most impartial observers believe could be unsuitable for accommodating them.

Overall, the international response to the Rohingya crisis has stepped up since September 2017– although critics argue that it remains insufficient. On 16 March 2018, a '[Joint Response Plan](#)' for the period March-December 2018 was published which requests US\$951 million to

provide life-saving assistance to 1.3 million people, including Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar to Bangladesh and local host communities. The priority needs in the plan include food, water and sanitation, shelter, and medical care. Meanwhile, western governments have begun to reintroduce some sanctions that had previously been relaxed, including against senior military officers.

### **Other developments**

Despite the Rohingya crisis absorbing much of its time and energy, the NLD Government has sought to keep the peace process with ethnic minority armed groups moving forward through what is called the '[21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Union Peace Conference](#)'.

A 'National Ceasefire Agreement' (NCA) was signed in October 2015, just before elections in the following month, by the then military-led government under Thein Sein, but a significant number of ethnic armed groups did not put their names to it.

Two sessions of the peace conference have been held since August 2016. The next session was originally due to take place in January but is now set to take place in May. While participants have so far agreed some general principles and there were two new NCA signatories in February, few expect the conference to [quickly produce peace](#).

Economic growth in Burma has been strong since 2011 but there are growing fears that it may now begin to slow. While the Rohingya crisis may deter some foreign investment, any slowdown will also reflect structural economic weaknesses – not least, the country's poor infrastructure.

**Note: For further background, see also these library briefings:**

[Burma: January 2018 update](#)

[Bangladesh: October 2017 update](#)

## 2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

**[Myanmar Not Ready for Return of Rohingya Muslims, Says UNHCR](#)**

US News & World Report  
Serajul Quadir  
12 April 2018

**[Rohingya in camp tell Myanmar official they survived attacks](#)**

The Washington Post  
Julhas Alam  
11 April 2018

**[Suffering of the Rohingya catches up with Suu Kyi](#)**

The Times  
Richard Lloyd Parry  
11 April 2018

**[Myanmar Court Rejects Release of Journalists Investigating Rohingya Crisis](#)**

The Wall Street Journal  
Jon Emont  
11 April 2018

**[Myanmar soldiers jailed for 10 years for Rohingya killings](#)**

BBC News Online  
11 April 2018

**[Mark Zuckerberg faces questions about role Facebook plays in spreading hate speech in Burma](#)**

The Toronto Star  
Adam Taylor  
10 April 2018

**[As the monsoons approach, the Rohingya refugees are desperate for hope](#)**

The Guardian  
Lisa Singh and Andrew Broad  
6 April 2018

**[Myanmar's Rohingya stuck in Bangladesh's 'no man's land'](#)**

BBC News Online  
Anbarasan Ethirajan  
30 March 2018

**[UN appeals for support to tackle 'massive' health needs of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh](#)**

UN News  
29 March 2018

**['Prison Island' of the Rohingya: New island for refugees threatened by monsoon](#)**

Channel 4 News  
Jonathan Miller  
27 March 2018

**[U.N. chief 'shocked' by top Myanmar general's comments on Rohingya](#)**

Reuters  
27 March 2018

**[The Rohingya children trafficked for sex](#)**

BBC News Online  
20 March 2018

**[Aung San Suu Kyi asks Australia and Asean for help with Rohingya crisis](#)**

The Guardian  
Ben Doherty  
18 March 2018

**[The hellish situation of the Rohingya in Bangladesh is like nothing on earth. Aung San Suu Kyi should be ashamed](#)**

The Independent  
Pauline Latham MP  
16 March 2018

**[U.N. genocide advisor: Myanmar waged 'scorched-earth campaign' against the Rohingya](#)**

Los Angeles Times  
Associated Press  
13 March 2018

**[Foreign minister: Burmese military to blame for humanitarian crisis facing Rohingya](#)**

Sky News  
Mark Field MP, Foreign Office Minister  
14 November 2017

### 3. Press Releases

#### [UK aid is helping to protect vulnerable Rohingya people ahead of devastating floods](#)

**Department for International Development**

**20 March 2018**

The UK is stepping up its efforts to help Rohingya men, women and children living in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

This is ahead of the fast-approaching annual cyclone and monsoon season which has the potential to cause significant devastation and loss of life.

Almost a million persecuted Rohingya people, who have fled neighbouring Burma, live in the fragile and cramped camps.

The UN estimates 102,000 of them are living in areas at risk of flooding and 12,000 people are at risk from landslides.

Alongside international aid organisations International Organisation for Migration and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), the UK has helped to ensure more than 158,000 people have received reinforced shelter and sandbags to protect them from winds and flood water.

Work has also begun on the reinforcement of pathways through camps needed to deliver supplies and services.

Plans to cope with the aftermath of flooding and landslides are also being stepped up.

Water-borne diseases are common in the aftermath of a flood, and UK aid is ensuring that more than 250,000 people will continue to have access to safe drinking water throughout the rainy season.

More than 5,000 new latrines have been constructed and have been strategically placed throughout the camps and plans to move more than 6,700 latrines to safe grounds have already begun.

UK-supported cholera, measles and diphtheria vaccination campaigns have also taken place in readiness for the monsoons.

These will provide protection against some of the most common diseases in the camps, which can be more widespread during the rainy season.

So far, 391,000 children under the age of seven have been vaccinated, with a further 400,000 children due to receive the vaccinations planned by the end of March.

Healthcare workers are also being trained to prevent, identify and treat common illnesses likely during the rainy season and to manage higher caseloads.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

With the cyclone and monsoon season in Bangladesh imminent it is time to firmly focus our efforts on Cox's Bazar where nearly a million persecuted and displaced Rohingya people now live.

The Rohingya people have suffered so much already and now they are living in constant fear of the imminent floods causing utter devastation and destruction.

Our swift response can save lives. Right now UK aid is strengthening roads and pathways to ensure vital medication and food can reach the very centre of the camps. UK aid is also reinforcing shelters to protect vulnerable families at risk of flood water and landslides.

**[Penny Mordaunt statement on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis](#)**  
**Department for International Development**  
**16 March 2018**

Reacting to the release of the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

I urge the international community to continue to support the Government of Bangladesh to find the best solutions to protect Rohingya victims of ethnic cleansing who are in dire need. The UK has led the way to help alleviate suffering and meet humanitarian needs in Cox's Bazar, and will continue to be a leading donor.

The sprawling camps have provided safety for those who have fled cruel violence, but this place of refuge is becoming unsustainable with over-crowding compounding the risks of the coming monsoon and cyclone season. Rohingya families and host communities urgently require smaller and more manageable facilities for the future, and planning for the medium term.

At the same time we must remember that the origins of and solution to this crisis lie in Burma. The UK will continue to maintain international pressure on Burma to create the conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified returns overseen by the UN.

This crisis has not left the minds of the British public and I would like to thank them for their remarkable generosity in raising millions of pounds for lifesaving food, water and shelter which is making a real difference.

**Call for Safe, Voluntary, and Dignified Return of Rohingya Refugees**

**Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, Chargé d'Affaires, at the Security Council Briefing on Burma Foreign and Commonwealth Office 13 February 2018**

Thank you Mr President,

And thank you to Assistant Secretary-General Jenca and High Commissioner Grandi for your briefings.

This weekend, UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson visited Cox's Bazar, where he met some of the almost one million Rohingya refugees enduring the difficult living conditions, that you've heard about today. Visiting northern Rakhine, he saw with his own eyes the horror of what has happened.

When he met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Sunday, the Foreign Secretary said that there needed to be the right conditions created in Rakhine that make it safe for Rohingya refugees to return to their homes, free from fear, and in the knowledge that basic rights will be protected and upheld.

This Council stated last November that the Rohingya refugees must be allowed to return to their homes – safely, voluntarily, and in conditions of human dignity.

Mr President,

The UK believes that his Council has a duty to ensure those words are matched by action.

We should be clear on three things:

· We should be clear on why refugees fled Rakhine in the first place, indeed why they continue to do so; · We should be clear that the conditions in Rakhine today are not yet suitable for informed, safe, voluntary, and dignified returns; · And we should be clear what needs to be done now.

The Rohingya refugees fleeing Rakhine have suffered the most appalling violence: rape, murder, the burning of their villages.

In December, Special Representative Pramila Patten briefed us on the horrific sexual atrocities allegedly committed by the Burmese security forces.

More details emerged last week of specific atrocities committed by Burmese security forces at Gu Dar Pyin and Inn Din villages.

Even now, Rohingya still flee forced starvation and continued human rights violations.

As many of us have said, this is ethnic cleansing.

Mr President,

We welcome the Burmese government's dialogue with Bangladesh and the initial preparations it has made for returns. Much of this is in response to this Council's focus on the crisis.

But the UK believes the conditions in Rakhine do not yet allow for the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of refugees.

Now, Mr President, we must be clear on the way forward.

Last November's Presidential Statement remains the guiding frame set by the United Nations Security Council for the actions which need to be taken.

I want to highlight four in particular.

First, both Myanmar and Bangladesh must cooperate fully with the United Nations. We welcome Bangladesh's initial engagement with the UNHCR, which now needs to fully involve them in the returns process, ideally through a Tripartite Agreement. Only the UNHCR has the expertise to handle returns on this scale and give confidence to refugees. It is also essential that Myanmar allows all United Nations agencies to provide humanitarian support for all their peoples.

Second, the parties should take concrete steps to ensure that refugees will be able to return home on a voluntary basis and with access to accurate information.

Refugees should not be sent to internment camps, and Myanmar must set out how restitution of property and livelihoods will occur.

Women and girls have suffered specific sexual and gender-based violence and face specific risks. They must be represented in any decision-making process and their views given special consideration.

Dismantling the IDP camps which have existed in central Rakhine since 2012 and supporting their inhabitants in returning home would be a positive confidence-building measure.

Again we believe that the UNHCR is the only agency with the necessary expertise.

Third, Burma must ensure the safety for all communities in Rakhine. This means an immediate halt to violence and human rights violations and steps to reduce intercommunal tensions.

It also means giving refugees confidence that those who have committed crimes will be brought to justice through an open and transparent accountability process.

Instead, we have seen the arrest of two Reuters journalists who reported on those killings and the denial of access to UN-mandated human rights bodies.

The UK calls for the release of the Reuters journalists, and calls for the Burmese government's full cooperation with the UN Fact-Finding Mission, the Special Rapporteur, and OHCHR.

Fourth, Myanmar must demonstrate progress implementing the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations. These recommendations continue to provide a blueprint for a more peaceful and prosperous future for all communities in Rakhine. Crucially, they address civil and political rights, including pathways for the Rohingya to receive full Burmese citizenship, as well as addressing socio-economic development. Genuine progress on implementation would demonstrate that the Burmese government is sincere about offering Rohingya refugees a viable future to return to.

Mr President,

Before I conclude, I want to once more pay tribute to Bangladesh for hosting the Rohingya community while they fled in panic for their lives.

But while they remain, Bangladesh – supported by all of us and the international community – must protect refugees and provide for their needs. This includes getting children into schools, helping men and women earn livelihoods, providing support to victims of sexual violence. Humanitarian agencies need to deliver services and prepare camps for the monsoon season.

The UK stands with Bangladesh. We have contributed £59 million in assistance. We urge the international community to do more to support Bangladesh as they help these refugees and the communities that host them.

Mr President,

The world watched in horror as the violence in Rakhine forced the Rohingya to flee. This Council has played a vital role in shining a spotlight on the situation and in encouraging action by the authorities on the ground. We must not turn away or become distracted. We should stand ready to visit ourselves, and we must be ready to take further action.

Thank you.

**Boris Johnson meets Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh**

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
10 February 2018**

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has today (10 February) visited Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, where over a million Rohingya Muslim refugees are living in crowded and unsafe refugee camps

Over 688,000 people have fled from their homes in Burma's Rakhine State into Bangladesh since August 2017, joining around 340,000 Rohingya who had previously fled.

The Foreign Secretary toured a camp which is home to 500,000 refugees - equivalent to a city the size of Leicester.

He met Rohingya families and community leaders to learn about the persecution they have suffered, and hear first-hand about the challenges that life in the camps presents. He listened to their views, heard about their hopes for the future, and the conditions they believed needed to be put in place for any return to take place.

Mr Johnson visited a UNICEF child-friendly site where he saw the efforts being made to keep young people safe. He sat down with some children on the site to talk about their drawings. He was also briefed on gender-based violence by caseworkers.

Tomorrow (11 February) Mr Johnson will hold talks with Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss the crisis and press for the end to the suffering in Rakhine and the safe and voluntary return of the refugees.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I have seen for my own eyes the horrendous living conditions the Rohingya people are having to endure and it has only further strengthened my commitment to working with international partners to improve the lives of these people in 2018.

I pay tribute to the hospitality and compassion shown by the government of Bangladesh, who are facing an enormous challenge in providing humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya community.

While I welcome steps by both the Burmese and Bangladeshi governments towards ensuring that these people can return home, it is vital that the Rohingya refugees must be allowed to their homes in Rakhine voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, under international oversight, and when the conditions in Burma are right.

## 4. PQs

### [Burma: Rohingya](#)

05 Apr 2018 | 134600

**Asked by: Emma Hardy**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that any repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar includes (a) guarantees on the physical and legal safety of returnees and (b) UNHCR supervision.

**Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The Foreign Secretary raised the issue of refugee returns when he met Burmese State Counsellor Aung Sun Suu Kyi on 12 February. The UK has been clear Rohingya refugees must be allowed to return to their homes in Rakhine voluntarily, in safety and with dignity. The UK secured the support of the UN Security Council for these requirements in its Presidential Statement of 6 November. The UK Government shares UNHCR's assessment that conditions in Rakhine are not currently in place to enable returns in line with these standards, and has called on the Burmese authorities to allow UNHCR to play a full role in the returns process.

### [Burma: Rohingya](#)

03 Apr 2018 | HL6499

**Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Myanmar is building military bases on the ruins of Rohingya villages; and whether they have made representations about such action to the government of Myanmar.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon  
| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

I am deeply concerned by these Amnesty International reports. The Government believes them to be credible evidence of the Burmese military taking action that creates further obstacles to the return of Rohingya refugees to their homes in Rakhine. The British Ambassador raised the UK's concerns about this action in his meeting with the Burmese Minister of Social Welfare on 22 March.

### [Burma: Human Rights](#)

27 Mar 2018 | HL6282

**Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking, if any, to promote the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, published on 9 March.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon  
| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We support the work of the UN Special Rapporteur, Ms Lee. We continue to urge the Burmese authorities to cooperate with her, not least by allowing her access into Burma. As the Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field MP, made clear in his statement to the House on 15 March, we agree with many of the principal conclusions of her report, and will look for opportunities to address her recommendations where possible. The Foreign Secretary has been clear that the violence against the Rohingya is ethnic cleansing. We continue to work with our international partners on what can be done, both to assist the victims and to bring those responsible to justice. The immediate task is to support those gathering information, which may be useful for any potential future judicial process. In line with the Special Rapporteur's recommendations, the Government is considering how to support better co-ordination between organisations collecting testimony in Bangladesh, through an international or local mechanism. We continue to urge the Burmese authorities to ensure basic rights for all and stand ready to support the Government of Burma in implementing the Annan Commission's recommendations to this end.

**Topical Questions**

**27 Mar 2018 | 638 cc647-736**

**Asked by: Nick Thomas-Symonds**

This petition was handed to me by constituents, calling on the Government to do more about the plight of the Rohingya people. I know that the Foreign Secretary met Aung San Suu Kyi recently, but what further steps do the Government intend to take to try to deal with this appalling human tragedy?

**Answered by: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

I can tell the hon. Gentleman that our efforts have been directed at building an international consensus to ensure that there is a multinational, multilateral body to give the Rohingya refugees the confidence and security that they need to make a safe, dignified and voluntary return to northern Rakhine.

**Burma: International Criminal Court**

**26 Mar 2018 | HL6254**

**Asked by: Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with other members of the UN Security Council regarding support, in principle, for a referral of the situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon  
| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We will work to ensure the UN Security Council remains focused on the Rohingya crisis and will consider how best to use the various tools, including resolutions, at the Council's disposal. This involves regular discussions with all Security Council members. There is no consensus within the UN Security Council at this time to refer Burma to the International Criminal Court.

**[Bangladesh: Rohingya](#)**

**26 Mar 2018 | 133757**

**Asked by: Richard Burden**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with her Bangladeshi counterpart on the emergency relocation of Rohingya refugees living in shelters most at risk from monsoon rains and cyclones; and if she will make a statement.

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Department: Department for International Development**

Given the severe humanitarian impact that heavy rains and cyclones could have on Rohingya refugees, we have been urging the Government of Bangladesh and partners to prepare for the forthcoming heavy rains. The Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for International Development wrote to Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 20 March, calling to attention the need to reduce the density of shelters in the camps, and provide options for people to move to land that is at a lower risk of flooding.

**[Bangladesh: Rohingya](#)**

**26 Mar 2018 | 133742**

**Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to protect Rohingya women and girls from sexual violence in refugee camps in Bangladesh .

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Department: Department for International Development**

We recognise the immediate need to increase the provision of protection services in the Rohingya refugee camps. DFID is leading the way in supporting a range of organisations providing specialised help to survivors of sexual violence. We are supporting 25 women's centres, which are providing safe space, psychosocial support and activities to women and girls. We are also funding case management for over 2,000 survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

**[Burma: Rohingya](#)**

**14 Mar 2018 | HL5906**

**Asked by: Baroness Helic**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 20 February (HL5408), what assurances, if any, the Foreign Secretary received from the government of Burma that allegations of sexual violence perpetrated against Rohingya people would be investigated.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

**| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

We have pressed the government of Burma repeatedly to investigate violations by security forces, including sexual violence. The Foreign Secretary was told on his visit to Burma on 10 February that allegations will be investigated and that those found guilty will face punishment in line with Burmese law. We remain, however, concerned that Burmese investigations lack credibility. We will continue to press the Burmese authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice through credible and transparent judicial process.

**[Bangladesh: Rohingya](#)**

**14 Mar 2018 | 131864**

**Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle the diphtheria epidemic in Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Department: Department for International Development**

Following a diphtheria outbreak in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh the UK Emergency Medical Team (EMT) was deployed for six weeks from late December 2017 to early February 2018.

A 40 strong team of medical professionals, including doctors, nurses and paramedics helped more than 3,000 Rohingya. Almost 500 people were treated for diphtheria and if not for British help, many could have died. DFID also provided £2 million to vaccinate children against diphtheria.

With the outbreak now under control, UK teams have built capacity and handed over to local Bangladeshi health professionals to complete the diphtheria response.

**[Burma: Politics and Government](#)**

**07 Mar 2018 | 130316**

**Asked by: Nick Thomas-Symonds**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what further steps the Government is taking to secure a UN resolution condemning persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar and calling for the return of refugees' citizenship.

**Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK co-sponsored resolutions on Burma in both the UN General Assembly (November 2017) and UN Human Rights Council (December 2017). Both resolutions raised serious concerns about the situation in Rakhine and called for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of the displaced Rohingya. They also set out support for early implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Recommendations, including on citizenship.

The UN Security Council, in response to a UK led call, convened a further session on 13 February to discuss the Rohingya crisis. We will work to ensure the UN Security Council remains focused on the Rohingya crisis and will consider how best to use the various tools, including resolutions, at the Council's disposal.

**[Burma: Rohingya](#)**

**07 Mar 2018 | 130126**

**Asked by: Nick Thomas-Symonds**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to tackle the persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar.

**Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The Government has consistently urged the Government of Burma the risks in Rakhine since they came to power in April 2016, and urging them to address the underlying issues in Rakhine, including discrimination against the Rohingya people. The UK has supported the Rakhine Advisory Commission (RAC), established by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi to look at these underlying issues. The UK believes that full implementation of the RAC recommendations are the best opportunity to achieve a long-term and sustainable settlement in Rakhine State which includes the Rohingya.

The Foreign Secretary visited Burma on 10-11 February and spoke with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi about finding a peaceful solution to the humanitarian crisis and for the Rohingya to be able to return to Rakhine province. The Foreign Secretary continues to raise the plight of the Rohingya in his discussions with his counterparts in other countries, as well as in discussions at the EU and UN.

[Maung Maung Soe](#)

06 Mar 2018 | HL5630

**Asked by: Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to impose targeted sanctions against Major-General Maung Maung Soe in response to his role in the persecution and violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority, and other peoples, in Burma.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**

**| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The Government has been consistently clear in its condemnation of the terrible atrocities that have occurred in Rakhine State and the need to bring the perpetrators to justice. The UK has already suspended Burmese senior military visits and defence education. At the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 26 February Council conclusions were adopted on Burma. The UK was instrumental in securing agreement to begin the process of introducing targeted sanctions on individual senior military officers responsible for serious and systematic human rights violations. The UK supports the UNHRC Fact-Finding Mission to establish the facts and circumstances of the human rights violations and continues to urge the Burmese government to allow for unrestricted and unhindered access to the Mission.

[Burma: Rohingya](#)

05 Mar 2018 | HL5557

**Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support birth registration activities in relation to Rohingya children born in Bangladesh to ensure that their rights are protected while they are refugees and when, or if, they return to Myanmar.

**Answering member: Lord Bates | Department: Department for International Development**

The UK supports UNHCR which is conducting a family registration process, including advice and legal support with whatever documents individuals have managed to retain. We continue to lobby the governments of both Burma and Bangladesh to protect and respect the human rights of those who have fled northern Rakhine and to facilitate the conditions for their safe, voluntary and dignified return.

[Internally Displaced People](#)

28 Feb 2018 | 636 c810

**Asked by: Anne Main**

In Burma, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have been internally displaced and some have fled across the border. What dialogue is my right hon. Friend having with the Burmese Government about the constant persecution of the Rohingya within Burma and the fact that they are being driven out by genocide?

**Answered by: Penny Mordaunt | Department: International Development**

With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I want to share my concern that the International Development Committee has not been given access to Burma, which is disgraceful. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that I have regular discussions with all parts of Government in Bangladesh and Burma about support for these individuals. It is vital that we get the Bangladesh Government to consider the medium term and breaking down the camp at Cox's Bazar, and we are looking at our programme in both countries to ensure that displaced people are our priority.

**Burma: Rohingya****26 Feb 2018 | 128791****Asked by: Lloyd Russell-Moyle**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Rohingya refugees are repatriated to Myanmar with guarantees made to protect their (a) physical safety and (b) material and legal rights, under the supervision of UNHCR.

**Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Burma on 10-11 February, he urged State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi to work with the international community to create conditions in Rakhine which will allow Rohingya refugees to return safely, voluntarily and in dignity to their homes under the international oversight of the UNHCR.

The UN Security Council, in response to a UK-led call, convened a session on 13 February to discuss the Rohingya crisis. Our intervention made clear that the UNHCR should have a formal role in any returns process. This role would include providing an independent assessment of conditions in Rakhine, including security, allowing Rohingya refugees to make informed decisions.

**Topical Questions****20 Feb 2018 | 636 c19****Asked by: Rushanara Ali**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights described what is happening to the Rohingya people as a military campaign in which

“you cannot rule out the possibility that acts of genocide have been committed”.

Having met the victims in Bangladesh and Myanmar, the Foreign Secretary said earlier to my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) that a Security Council referral is too difficult. Will he show some leadership and work with our EU partners next week at the

Foreign Affairs Council to build support for a referral? The act of a referral will make a difference.

**Answered by: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

As I am sure the hon. Lady knows, Myanmar is not signed up to the International Criminal Court, but there must be no doubt about the gravity of what has taken place. Anybody who flies over northern Rakhine, as I did last week, will see literally hundreds of villages that have been burned or destroyed.

Some 680,000 people have been displaced. This has been ethnic cleansing on an industrial scale and it may also have been genocide. It is vital that the evidence is acquired to determine whether any future prosecution can be mounted.

**[Burma: Rohingya](#)**

**07 Feb 2018 | HL5072**

**Asked by: Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to secure the (1) civil rights, (2) personal human rights, (3) land ownership rights, and (4) security, of any Rohingya people returned to Burma under the repatriation agreement made by the government of Burma with Bangladesh.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon  
| Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK proposed and secured the 6 November UN Security Council Presidential Statement, which called on the Governments of Burma and Bangladesh to ensure the repatriation of refugees is safe, voluntary and in dignity. It also called on the Government of Burma to protect its population and promote and protect human rights, without discrimination and regardless of ethnicity or religion, including by allowing freedom of movement, equal access to basic services, and equal access to full citizenship for all individuals. The British Ambassador to Burma emphasised the importance of the implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations, which is central to progress on all of these issues, in his meeting with the Minister of the Office of the State Counsellor on 11 January.

**[Burma: Rohingya](#)**

**05 Feb 2018 | 125129**

**Asked by: Richard Burden**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the likelihood of the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission being implemented; and what steps he is taking to assist with the implementation of those recommendations.

**Answering member: Mark Field | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations is essential to create conditions for refugee returns to take place voluntarily, in safety and in dignity. The UK has welcomed the Burmese Government's establishment of Rakhine Advisory Commission Implementation Committee and an Advisory Board, but recognises that implementation will be a long-term process, and that much more progress is required. I confirmed that the UK was ready to support the Burmese government with the implementation of the report when I welcomed its publication on 25 August 2017. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this offer when he spoke to State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi on 21 October 2017. I have encouraged progress by the Rakhine Advisory Board in recent meetings with its members Dr Suriakiart Sathirathai on 3 January, and Lord Darzi on 1 February.

**[Bangladesh and Burma: International Assistance](#)**

**01 Feb 2018 | 125082**

**Asked by: Richard Burden**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the levels of humanitarian access available to organisations operating in Bangladesh and Burma.

**Answering member: Alistair Burt | Department: Department for International Development**

We are one of the largest bilateral donors to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, with a total contribution of £59 million, and we have been working with the Government of Bangladesh to facilitate the important work of NGOs. In Burma we continue to press for better humanitarian access. We are working through the Red Cross and the World Food Programme to provide some emergency assistance but we would like to do more. Many urgent needs are not being met because of government restrictions on access.

## 5. Other Parliamentary material

### 5.1 Debates

#### [Rohingya Crisis](#)

28 Nov 2017 | House of Commons | 632 cc63-87WH

#### [Burma: Rohingya](#)

26 Oct 2017 | House of Lords | 785 cc1028-1043

#### [The Rohingya and the Myanmar Government](#)

17 Oct 2017 | House of Commons | 629 cc764-812

### 5.2 Statements

#### [Rohingya Crisis: Flood and Cyclone Preparedness](#)

29 Mar 2018 | HCWS608

#### **Penny Mordaunt (Secretary of State for International**

**Development):** We have all been appalled by the terrible violence and ethnic cleansing that have taken place in Burma's Rakhine State. Nearly a million Rohingya have now fled to Bangladesh from Burma. I visited the camps where most of them are living last year and witnessed for myself the precarious conditions there.

The annual monsoon and cyclone season begins imminently, and heavy rainfall is expected over the coming months. The Rohingya refugee camps are extremely vulnerable; the latest humanitarian response plan estimates that up to 200,000 Rohingya are living in areas at risk of flooding and collapse with the rainy season. I would like to assure the House that the UK Government is doing everything it can to press for and support preparedness.

We have been struck by the magnitude of the Government of Bangladesh's generosity in providing refuge for so many people in desperate need. It has an excellent track record in disaster preparedness and protecting the vulnerable from the impacts of floods and cyclones. It is important that such preparedness is extended to Rohingya people currently hosted in Bangladesh. We are encouraging Bangladesh to take as many measures to save lives as possible: such as allocating additional land that is at lower risk of flooding and landslides, reducing density in the existing camps and having evacuation plans in place including to safe places such as cyclone shelters.

We and Bangladesh's other friends are committed to supporting them with this. UK Government Ministers and officials have been in close contact with their Government of Bangladesh counterparts on this issue. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary and I wrote jointly to Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 20 March, urging the government of Bangladesh to fully harness their expertise in this area and reaffirming our strong support.

I am proud of the role the UK is playing in response to the Rohingya crisis. The UK is a leading donor to the humanitarian effort in

Bangladesh. We have committed an additional £59m since last August, including matching £5m of public donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeal. We will remain a leading donor going forward. As part of our response we are taking a wide range of measures to improve flood and cyclone preparedness, including:

- **Water, sanitation and hygiene** - DFID is working with a range of agencies to ensure that up to 250,000 people continue to have access to safe drinking water throughout the rainy season; and that latrines are constructed, maintained and relocated if necessary. More than 5,000 new latrines are being constructed and will be strategically placed throughout the camps on safe ground, and more than 6,700 unsafe latrines will be decommissioned.
- **Health** - UK-supported cholera, measles and diphtheria vaccination campaigns will provide protection against some of the most common diseases in the camps; and healthcare workers are being trained and provided with technical support to ensure better coverage is in place ahead of the rainy season. Some 791,000 children under the age of seven will have been vaccinated by the end of March.
- **Infrastructure and access** - UN agencies, with UK support, have started mitigation works including site improvements. Given the topography and recent deforestation of the land, this will not be sufficient to guard against all landslide risk or prevent flooding everywhere in the camps. The focus is on ensuring sustained access for the delivery of aid throughout the rainy season by improving drainage, maintaining access roads, and reinforcing embankments and walkways.
- **Shelter improvements** - the UK is working with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to ensure that the most at risk households - more than 158,000 people - are provided with reinforced shelter materials and sandbags, to protect from high winds and flood water.
- **Pre-positioning of relief supplies** – DFID made use of contingency stockpiles in the early stages of this humanitarian response. DFID has successfully supported previous cyclone responses in Bangladesh using prepositioned supplies and maintains humanitarian stockpiles with ready access to Bangladesh in both India and Dubai.

Rohingya women and children are also vulnerable to gender based violence and sexual exploitation. The UK is leading the way in supporting a range of organisations providing specialised help to survivors of sexual violence in Bangladesh. This includes 19 women's centres offering a safe space, psychosocial support and activities to women and girls, 30 Child Friendly Spaces supporting children with protective services and psychological support, case management for nearly 2,200 survivors of sexual violence and 13 sexual and reproductive health clinics.

## **Burma**

**15 Mar 2018 | 637 cc1029-1044**

[Extract – only the Minister’s opening statement is included below]

**Mark Field (The Minister for Asia and the Pacific):** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to update the House on the desperate plight of Burma’s Rohingya in the week that the UN fact-finding mission on Burma has reported to the Human Rights Council with its interim findings.

The international community has repeatedly called on the Burmese authorities to allow the fact-finding mission to enter Burma. Regrettably, Burma continues to refuse access. Despite this, through interviewing Rohingya refugees in both Bangladesh and Malaysia, the interim report has revealed credible evidence of the widespread and systematic abuse, rape and murder of Rohingya people, and the destruction of their homes and villages, primarily by the Burmese military. This is not only a human tragedy; it is a humanitarian catastrophe. Since August 2017, nearly 680,000 Rohingya refugees have sought shelter in Bangladesh.

There have been some suggestions, including by the Foreign Affairs Committee, that the UK failed to see this crisis coming. With respect, I disagree with such a conclusion. Let us be clear about what has led to this current situation. The Rohingya have suffered persecution in Rakhine for decades. Such rights as they had have been progressively diminished under successive military Governments. They have been victims of systematic violence before, most recently in 2012 and in late 2016. On these more recent occasions, the Rohingya fled their homes—some to internally displaced person camps elsewhere in Rakhine, and some to other nations over land or sea. The outbreak of vicious hostility during the past six months is therefore only the latest episode in a long-lasting cycle of violence. We have been urging the Burmese civilian Government to take action to stop the situation deteriorating since they came to power two years ago. What was unprecedented and unforeseen about this most recent violence was its scale and intensity.

A recent report by the International Crisis Group has rightly noted that there is and can be no military solution alone to this crisis. The 25 August attack by Arakan Rohingya Salvation army militants on Burmese security forces, which triggered the latest phase, was clearly an unacceptable and deliberate provocation, but the Burmese military’s relentless response since then has been utterly appalling and entirely inexcusable. Its operations only last week on Burma’s border with Bangladesh were supposedly directed against another wave of ARSA militants. Whether or not that explanation is to be believed, the actual impact of the Burmese military’s actions was to terrorise thousands of Rohingya living in the area and to encourage ever more civilians to cross over into Bangladesh.

I once again commend the generosity of the Government and people of Bangladesh for opening their doors to these desperate refugees. The UK remains one of the largest bilateral aid donors to the crisis. We have committed some £59 million in the past six months to help ensure the

refugees' immediate wellbeing. This includes £5 million of matched funding for the very generous public donations by British citizens to the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal.

My right hon. Friend the International Development Secretary visited Bangladesh last November and announced the latest UK package of support, including for survivors of sexual and other violence. We anticipate that the multi-agency plan for the next phase of humanitarian support, from March to the end of the year, will be published imminently. As the International Development Secretary confirmed during her Bangladesh visit, the UK is and will remain committed to the Rohingya now and, I suspect, for many years to come. At the end of last year, the UK Government deployed British doctors, nurses and firefighters from our emergency medical teams to Bangladesh to tackle an outbreak of deadly diphtheria in the refugee camps.

In northern Rakhine—within Burma's borders—where humanitarian access remains severely restricted, the UK is providing £2 million of support via the World Food Programme and a further £1 million via the Red Cross, one of the few international organisations that has access to that part of Burma. We stand ready to do more as soon as we are permitted full access.

We continue to work tirelessly in co-operation with international partners to find a solution to this crisis, focusing international attention and pressure on the Burmese authorities and security forces. Since the final week of August, the UK has repeatedly raised the crisis as an issue for debate at the UN Security Council, most recently on 13 February. The existence of the UN fact-finding mission is in no small part due to British diplomacy, and I have engaged and will continue to engage with its members.

In November, the UK was instrumental in securing the first UN Security Council presidential statement on Burma for a decade, which delivered a very clear message that the Burmese authorities should protect all civilians within Burma, create the conditions for refugees to return and allow full humanitarian access in Rakhine state. Late last month, I was privileged to attend the EU Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, where a programme of sanctions against senior Burmese military figures was outlined. I am glad to say that this was approved unanimously, and we hope to bring this work to the attention of the UN Security Council soon.

I know that many hon. Members remain very deeply committed to helping to resolve the appalling situation faced by the Rohingya community, and I welcome that continued engagement. I visited both countries in September, and I returned to Burma in November. During those visits, I met displaced Rohingya, but also Hindu and Buddhist communities in Rakhine, and heard harrowing accounts of human rights violations and abuses. It was clear that the communities remain very deeply divided, and there is still a palpable sense of mutual fear and mistrust. At that time, I met State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, the Minister for Defence and the deputy Foreign Minister to reiterate the urgent need to take action to end the violence and allow a path for the safe return of the refugees.

During his visit to Burma last month, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, in a meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi, pressed for the necessary steps to be taken to create the conditions conducive for the return of the refugees. He flew over Rakhine, and saw for himself the scale of the destruction—the ongoing destruction—of land and property there. He also visited Bangladesh, where he met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister Ali, and visited the camps in Cox's Bazar, where he heard distressing accounts from survivors, as well as their heartfelt hopes for a better future and their desire to return safely to Burma. Our visits have reinforced our determination to help resolve this appalling crisis.

I recognise that the House remains deeply committed to ensuring that the human rights of refugees, but particularly of the Rohingya, are protected, and we welcome the House's resolution to that effect as recently as 24 January. Let me outline, if I may, some of the next steps. We believe that there are four immediate priorities. First, we must continue to address the humanitarian needs, especially the needs of victims of sexual violence, in both northern Rakhine and in Bangladesh. This includes assisting, as a matter of urgency, the humanitarian agencies working in the vicinity of Cox's Bazar to help prepare for the approaching monsoon and cyclone season, which commences in a matter of weeks. We shall continue to work with international humanitarian agencies delivering aid in Rakhine state, and to support Bangladesh in its efforts to help those fleeing the violence.

Secondly, we must continue the patient work towards achieving a safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees. We shall press for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to oversee this process and ensure full verification of any returns on both sides of the border. As the globally mandated body, we believe the UNHCR remains the best equipped and most credible agency to oversee this very difficult process.

Thirdly, we must continue international progress towards bringing to justice the perpetrators of human rights violations, including sexual violence, in Rakhine. The international community has agreed to make the case to the Burmese authorities for a credible, transparent and independent inquiry. In my view, united international pressure will be essential in achieving that aim.

The UN fact-finding mission is a first and important step in what is likely to be a long road ahead. It produced its interim report on Monday, reflecting the violent, military-led, abhorrent actions against the Rohingya and other communities in Burma. We shall continue to support the mission's important work, including urging Burma to allow it unrestricted access. We will also continue to provide support to build the capacity of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh to investigate properly and document sexual violence among Rohingya refugees.

As Canada's special envoy to Burma, Bob Rae—I saw him at the Foreign Office only a few weeks ago—said,

“those responsible for breaches of international law and crimes against humanity must be brought to justice”.

In my view, that applies to all involved: state and non-state actors, senior military personnel, and all individuals in authority. Yanghee Lee, The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma, recently stated that the conflict had the “hallmarks of genocide”.

I must tell the House, however, that the only path to prosecution for genocide or crimes against humanity is via the International Criminal Court. It is a legal process. Burma is not a party to the Rome statute, and must therefore either refer itself to the Court, or be referred by the UN Security Council. I fear that neither eventuality is likely in the short term, but that should not stop us supporting those who continue to collate and collect evidence for use in any future prosecution.

Finally, to achieve a long-term resolution to the crisis in Burma, even in these desperate circumstances, the UK should play a leading role in trying to support a democratic transition and the promotion of freedom, tolerance and diversity. To do that, we will continue to engage, and support attempts peacefully to resolve many of Burma’s internal conflicts, and to bring all parts of state apparatus under democratic, civilian control. We stand ready to lead the international community in ensuring the implementation of Kofi Annan’s report from the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. That crucial programme is designed to deliver development for the benefit of all the people of Rakhine state, including the Rohingya, and address the underlying causes of the current crisis. Above all, that includes reviewing the punitive 1982 citizenship law, and making progress on ensuring citizenship for the Rohingya, who are otherwise regarded by many as stateless. We must give them confidence that they have a future as fully-fledged citizens of Burma.

The situation in Burma serves as the clearest possible example of why our Government will continue to uphold their commitments to early warning and preventing the risk of atrocity crimes, in the context of broader conflict-prevention and peacebuilding work. It is vital that lessons from this human tragedy are used to prevent similar situations from developing in the future. I stand ready to work with Members from across the House, and with NGOs that have a real passion in this area, on getting a framework in place for the future.

The UK Government intend to remain in the vanguard of international action and to support a full range of humanitarian, political and diplomatic efforts to help resolve this appalling situation. We shall continue to press Burma to facilitate the safe, voluntary and dignified return of the Rohingya Muslims under UNHCR oversight, and also to address, properly and fully, the underlying causes of the violence. We shall not and must not lose sight of the fact that the Rohingya community have suffered for generations and will need our continued support to live the lives they choose. Neither will we fail to take account of the wider picture in Burma and the potential that sustained movement towards an open, democratic society offers to all its people. We shall push forward with persistence, focus and energy—it is our international and moral duty to do so. I commend the statement to the House.

**Bangladesh and Burma: Rohingya Crisis**  
**18 Jan 2018 | 634 cc1074-1081**

Statement on the second report of the International Development Committee, Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya Crisis (HC 504)

[Extract – only the Chair’s opening statement is included below]

**Stephen Twigg (Chair of the International Development**

**Committee):** I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker, and to the Backbench Business Committee for allowing me time, on behalf of the International Development Committee, to speak to the House today about our second report of this parliamentary Session, “Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya Crisis”.

The scale and depth of the suffering of the Rohingya has rightly given rise to substantial activity in this House. As well as inquiries by my Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee, we have had an urgent question, debates both on the Floor of the House and in Westminster Hall, and a significant number of parliamentary questions. The International Development Committee is examining DFID’s work in Bangladesh and Burma, and this report is our first output.

The dire circumstances of the Rohingya are of course ongoing. In addition to the £59 million that DFID has allocated to humanitarian aid for the Rohingya, there will doubtless be calls for further emergency relief as this crisis continues. Additionally, DFID’s budget for more conventional, longer-term development aid in Burma and Bangladesh next year will total about £170 million. We are examining that in the next stage of our inquiry.

I pay tribute to the people and the Government of Bangladesh, and to the many organisations and individuals who have been working in Cox’s Bazar and elsewhere to assist the Rohingya people. The Rohingya have been devastated by decades of marginalisation and abuse, leading to the events of the past six months, which the United Nations has rightly described as a

“textbook example of ethnic cleansing”

perpetrated by the Burmese security forces. This week we have heard deeply disturbing reports of a possible agreement between the Governments of Bangladesh and Burma to repatriate displaced Rohingya. The potential return of over 100,000 Rohingya to Burma without any clear understanding of their legal status or knowing anything about their final destination is of course of very grave concern.

Early in the conflict, the Government presented a five-point plan to help galvanise the international community into action. The plan involves the cessation of violence by the Burmese; guaranteed humanitarian access to the affected parts of Burma; repatriation, but only on a voluntary basis, with safety guaranteed; full implementation of the Annan advisory committee’s recommendations; and, crucially, full, unimpeded access for, and co-operation with, the United Nations Human Rights

Council's fact-finding mission. Our evidence is unequivocal that none of those strands of the plan are anywhere near being realised today.

Our report looked at the previous periods of displacement of the Rohingya and, indeed, other minority groups over the past two decades. In no instance was the outcome satisfactory, and the Committee has little confidence that it will be any better this time. The idea that the Rohingya could be returned to live in internment camps controlled by the Burmese military is surely completely unacceptable.

We welcome the £59 million commitment that the United Kingdom Government have made to respond to the crisis, and, in particular, the swiftness with which that was pledged. However, the Government of Bangladesh have told us that they expect the cost of effective provision of basic services for the displaced Rohingya eventually to total more than £1 billion. The Geneva conference in October secured commitments to provide about a quarter of that sum—£266 million. There is clearly still a huge funding gap, and other donors need to rise to the challenge in the way that the UK Government, to their credit, have done.

We expressed particular concern about large-scale gender-based violence committed by the Burmese military. This is not something new. Predecessor International Development Committees have reported on this, in 2006 and 2014. The Governments of the time, in their responses to those reports, agreed with the Committees' harrowing assessment about the Burmese army using rape as a weapon of war. Our own evidence heard that this situation is, if anything, worse than ever. ActionAid stated in its evidence to us:

"Girls as young as 5 years of age have been reported to have been raped by multiple uniformed actors, often in front of their relatives. There are reports of rapes being widespread, extremely violent, and accompanied by mutilation. There are reports of pregnant women being attacked and their foetuses removed from their bodies."

We were very disappointed that the Government seem reluctant to commit their full specialist sexual violence team to the region. This flies in the face of the commitment made by the former Foreign Secretary Lord Hague to give a big focus in UK policy to this issue. In conflicts where rape, sexual violence and torture are used, it is essential that official, contemporary, reliable evidence-gathering by forensic professionals occurs as quickly as possible. The Burmese Government's claim that they have investigated and that their investigation clears their armed forces of wrongdoing are, in the words of our own Government, "simply not credible".

There are also issues arising in the camps in Bangladesh. Poor lighting, the lack of privacy around toilets and washing facilities, and the absence of any security for women and girls who work outside the camps have created an environment that is fundamentally unsafe, particularly for women and girls. As we were told in evidence, women and girls are therefore more likely to be victims of trafficking, and more likely to find themselves forced into early—including childhood—marriages.

The most effective way to deal with any crisis is of course to prevent it from happening in the first place. There is nothing new about this situation with the Rohingya. Human Rights Watch has been reporting on the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya and asking for action by the international community since at least 2013. Since 2015, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's early warning project has identified the Rohingya as one of the world's vulnerable populations most at risk of genocide. The disparity between what the international community was saying about the conflict and what we were told by these civil society organisations is very stark. Its effect is that there has not been the quick, effective response from the international community that might have prevented this from happening.

In fact, our evidence suggests that in some ways the opposite has happened. The continued engagement by the United Kingdom and other countries with the Burmese authorities seems to have been interpreted by their military as tacit acceptance of their treatment of the Rohingya people. We also note that there has been considerable over-optimism about the speed and breadth of democratic reforms in Burma.

In conclusion, the Rohingya crisis provided the international community with an immediate test case for the 2016 consensus reached at both the world humanitarian summit and the New York declaration on displaced people, including refugees. It is clear that the commitments made in 2016 have been tested to destruction by this crisis. It is vital that the United Kingdom continues our commendable commitment to humanitarian aid. The five-point plan is welcome, but it would be totally unacceptable for repatriation even to be considered until we see fundamental change in Burma itself. Surely we owe it to the Rohingya refugees and to the Rohingya who still remain in Burma to continue to give the House's attention to the crisis. I thank you, Mr Speaker, and the House for giving me the opportunity to raise this issue today.

### **Violence in Rakhine State**

**14 Dec 2017 | 633 cc626-633**

Statement on the publication of the First Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Violence in Rakhine State and the UK's response.

[Extract – only the Chair's opening statement is included below]

**Tom Tugendhat (Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee)**: It is a great privilege and a huge pleasure to be able to give the first Select Committee statement in this Parliament. We are delegated by the House to investigate foreign affairs, and we are reporting back to the House on our findings.

It is worth noting that the Foreign Affairs Committee chose to publish its first report of this Parliament on the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya population of northern Rakhine, in Burma, having heard some of the most harrowing testimony from witnesses. The situation has rightly drawn the attention of Members from all parts of the House. The hon. Members for City of Durham (Dr Blackman-Woods), for Newport West

(Paul Flynn), for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi), for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma), for Wolverhampton South West (Eleanor Smith), for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan) and for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens), as well as my hon. Friends the Members for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) and for Colchester (Will Quince), have taken a very personal interest in the issue. I pay particular tribute to hon. Members who have visited Cox's Bazar and other parts of the refugee community in Bangladesh to hear directly from the victims.

Because of the testimony that the Committee received, we were able to be clear that the violence against the Rohingya is ethnic cleansing, and that it may also constitute crimes against humanity and even genocide. We are pleased that the Government's initial equivocation about the term has been clarified, and that the Minister for Asia and the Pacific, the right hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mark Field) has been very clear that the almost 650,000 people who have crossed the border into Bangladesh since August were driven out by the Burmese authorities. The displacement of that great number is a compelling sign of a desperate population, and the traumatic experiences that they have described are reminiscent of infamous atrocities elsewhere.

In the face of such abuse, we must ask what the 2005 UN resolution on the responsibility to protect, which we agreed, requires of us. The first requirement must surely be that the UK Government conduct their own legal analysis. Such analysis from a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council—and, indeed, the penholder on Burma—would help to shape international understanding of the issue and structure a global response. That is needed today more than ever.

Research by Médecins sans Frontières found that at least 9,000 Rohingya died in Myanmar—or Burma—between 25 August and 24 September. The charity states that

“in the most conservative estimations”

at least 6,700 of those deaths, including those of at least 730 children under the age of five, were caused by violence. That suggests that the operation conducted by the Burmese military was brutal enough to raise the possibility of taking a case to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. Along with such brutality, we heard reports of sexual violence being used, and we welcome the mission of Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pramila Patten, who is expected to be in Naypyidaw and Yangon this week. We should welcome, too, the actions taken by the United Nations Human Rights Council, in holding a special session to hear about the degradation and treatment of minorities in Burma, and the words of Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini: that we could be witnessing a genocide. Those build on the achievements of our own representatives in the UN to secure a very strong presidential statement last month.

Burma's response to this growing body of evidence—or, indeed, evidence of bodies—has been exceptionally poor. Setting up another commission when previous recommendations have been ignored is not good enough. The Annan commission was clear, and we call for its

recommendations to be implemented in full. That is why the Committee calls on the UK to consider sanctions on individuals connected with the military regime and particularly on the commander-in-chief, General Min Aung Hlaing. Although sanctions are an imperfect tool, it is wrong for the UK to continue engagement with Burma with no demonstration of censure; General Min Aung Hlaing's responsibility in particular cannot be ignored.

The UK, of course, bears some responsibility for seeking to turn international outrage into tangible action, and improvements on the ground should not be hamstrung by China's veto in the Security Council; they should focus on regional forums and allies to achieve results. In seeking regional co-operation, the Committee recognised, supported and welcomed the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Minister, whom I am glad to see in his place on the Treasury Bench.

The Committee noted with sadness the echoing silence of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. Although she is clearly constrained by a lack of control over the military and by strong domestic public opinion, to see a voice for freedom, democracy and the rule of law choose not to speak out in the face of such crimes does more than allow them to continue; it suggests acquiescence at some level and a failure of leadership at every level. She remains a better option than the alternatives, perhaps, and perhaps the only option for the future, but she is now deeply compromised.

Finally, Bangladesh deserves praise and material support for accommodating well over half a million new refugees this year. The British Government also deserve credit for their quick and generous provision of aid. Although return must be the ambition, we noted that that can happen only when humanitarian access is possible to Rakhine State. We are also concerned that the camps in Bangladesh should not become permanent, leaving people exposed to radicalisation and storing up problems for the future.

As the Committee noted, this crisis was sadly predictable—indeed, the Foreign Office did predict it. But the Foreign Office's own warning system did not raise enough alarm; in recent years, there was too much focus from the United Kingdom and others on supporting the democratic transition and not enough on atrocity prevention, as was set out by former Foreign Secretary Lord Hague during his term of office.

A tough and unwelcome message to the Burmese Government about the Rohingya was not delivered early enough, although I welcome the fact that the Minister did send such a message recently. He was commendably candid about the Foreign Office's need to reflect, and it must now learn lessons about atrocity prevention from the crisis, to apply not only in Burma but elsewhere.

## 5.3 Early Day Motions

### **ROHINGYA MUSLIMS**

**EDM 346 (session 2017-19)**

**9 October 2017**

**Chris Law**

That this House expresses deep concern at the ongoing widespread horrific violence against the minority Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, which has resulted in more than 500,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh since August 2017, making it the world's fastest-developing refugee emergency; notes that survivors in Bangladesh have recounted horrific stories of rape, mass murder and infanticide; further notes that the attacks on the Rohingya, at the hands of the Myanmar police and military, have been systematic and widespread, leading to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, to describe them as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing; notes that the Rohingya people have faced years of mistreatment at the hands of the Burmese Government and need urgent action; notes that most are living in refugee camps, denied citizenship, basic health care and employment; calls on Myanmar's state counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, to speak out against these shocking human rights violations and allow access into the region immediately; and urges the Government to put sustained pressure on the Myanmar Government to end the violence and to allow unhindered access for humanitarian aid to all of the Rakhine State.

### **FLIGHT OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES FROM BURMA**

**EDM 255 (session 2017-19)**

**5 September 2017**

**Ann Clywd**

That this House notes with concern the increasing number of Rohingya refugees crossing from Burma into Bangladesh, with over 100,000 having fled violence, allegedly triggered by an attack by Rohingya militants on police posts, since the end of August; is very concerned about reports from many of those who have fled describing troops and Rakhine Buddhist mobs razing their villages and attacking and killing civilians in a campaign to drive them out; notes that a million Muslim Rohingya people in Burma have faced years of mistreatment at the hands of the Burmese Government, which does not recognise them as citizens; calls on the de facto Burmese leader Aung San Sui Kyi to condemn the military campaign and allow independent observers access into the region immediately; and calls on the Government to continue urging the Burmese Government to end the violence and take robust action against hate speech, discrimination and incitement, as well as to continue assisting with the humanitarian response to displaced populations.

**PERSECUTION OF ROHINGYAS**

**EDM 240 (session 2017-19)**

**5 September 2017**

**John Grogan**

This House expresses its deep concern at recent developments in Myanmar; condemns the murderous attacks by militants against Burmese border posts but also the completely disproportionate response of the Burmese military against the Rohingyas who the UN consider are the most persecuted minority group in the world; further condemns the brutal assaults from the Burmese state and military over many years burning down Rohingya villages and carrying out multiple murders and rapes; calls on the de facto Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi as a holder of the UN Peace Prize to speak out for the human rights of the Rohingyas and to allow access for aid agencies and journalists to the affected areas; and further calls on the international community to condemn Myanmar's army chief General Min Aung Hlaing, gather evidence for possible war crimes charges against him and his generals, and to impose strong sanctions against them.

**UN INQUIRY INTO ROHINGYA CRISIS IN BURMA**

**EDM 884 (session 2016-17)**

**26 January 2017**

**Tom Brake**

That this House expresses deep concern at ongoing human rights violations being committed against the Rohingya by the Burmese Army and security forces, including rape, executions, torture, mass arrests and the burning of villages; further expresses concern that lifesaving aid is being blocked to more than 100,000 displaced Rohingya; notes that the government and military are denying human rights violations are taking place; agrees with the conclusion of the Government that the interim report of the investigation commission established by the Government of Burma is not credible; calls therefore on the Government to support a genuinely independent UN Commission of Inquiry into the totality of the situation in Rakhine State; and further requests that the Government asks the UN Secretary General to personally go to Burma to lead negotiations to allow unfettered humanitarian aid access.

## 6. Further reading

### Library Briefing Papers

#### [Burma: January 2018 update](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-7901  
9 January 2018

#### [Bangladesh: October 2017 update](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-7452  
25 October 2017

### Committee inquiries

#### [Violence in Rakhine State inquiry](#)

##### **Foreign Affairs Committee**

The Foreign Affairs Committee explored the humanitarian, political, and security situation in Burma. In a one-off session, MPs considered the international response, including some views on the UK's diplomatic response so far.

This page has the committee's final report, as well as the Government's response.

#### [DFID's work on Bangladesh, Burma and the Rohingya crisis inquiry](#)

##### **International Development Committee**

Scope of the inquiry:

1. Part 1 - the Rohingya crisis and monsoon preparedness in Cox's Bazar  
The Committee expressed grave concern in its Report about the potential return of 100,000 Rohingya to Burma without a clear understanding of their legal status, interim and/or final destination, or even whether they have volunteered for the return trip. The Report also concluded that rape and sexual violence remain weapons of war used by the Burmese military but the UK has been too slow to act.
2. Part 2 - DFID's work on Bangladesh and Burma  
Bangladesh and Burma as neighbouring countries face many similar development challenges. DFID has large aid programmes in both countries. The recent Rohingya crisis has brought the world's attention to their mutual border. DFID's 2017/18 Bangladesh bilateral country programme budget is £159 million. In Burma, DFID's budget is £94 million for 2017/18.

This page has the committee's terms of reference, reports and transcripts of evidence sessions.

## Reliefweb publications

### [ISCG Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis, Cox's Bazar](#)

Report from International Organization for Migration, Inter Sector Coordination Group  
25 March 2018

### [IOM Bangladesh: Rohingya Refugee Crisis Response - External Update, 16 - 22 March 2018](#)

Report from International Organization for Migration  
22 March 2018

### [Bangladesh: Humanitarian Situation report No.27 \(Rohingya influx\) 10 - 17 March 2018](#)

Report from UN Children's Fund  
18 March 2018

## Associated e-petitions and public petitions

E-petition [200224](#)

E-petition [200371](#)

Public petition [P002061](#)

Public petition [P002064](#)

Public petition [P002078](#)

Public petition [P002104](#)

## 7. Map of Rakhine State

[Myanmar: District Map - Rakhine State](#) (23 Oct 2017) [reliefweb]



### About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcinfo@parliament.uk](mailto:hcinfo@parliament.uk).

### Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).