

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

16<sup>th</sup> April 2021

*Dear Coniferent,*

**RE: MYANMAR (EDM 1545)**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the recent military coup and continuing unrest in Myanmar (formerly Burma), with specific reference to associated Early Day Motion (EDM) 1545; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

Notwithstanding the fact that as a Government Minister I am unable to sign EDMs, in any event, I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system, and I think it is much more effective to raise concerns directly with Ministers, both verbally, and in writing, rather than signing EDMs.

The November 2020 elections, albeit far from perfect, were nevertheless a significant milestone on Myanmar's path from military dictatorship to democracy. The seizing of power by the military in early February and the subsequent and ongoing violent crackdown on protesters is a grave development.

I join the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and the wider international community in condemnation of these events, and in calling for the military to hand back power to the democratically elected government; release those arbitrarily detained; protect the rights and freedoms of the people of Myanmar, including their right to peaceful protest; ensure unobstructed humanitarian access; and, most of all, to stop killing its own people.

In addition to decisive unilateral action, the UK has led a strong, coordinated international response to the coup. This includes securing joint statements of the Foreign Ministers of the G7, of which the UK is currently President, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February; and convening two urgent meetings of the UN Security Council (UNSC) resulting in a statement on the 4<sup>th</sup> February and a Presidential Statement on the 10<sup>th</sup> March. On the 12<sup>th</sup> February, the UK also co-led a Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), securing a resolution, agreed by consensus, condemning the coup; on the 24<sup>th</sup> March, the UK secured another UNHRC resolution, again agreed by consensus, which condemned the military's actions and enhanced evidence collection on human rights violations.



It is essential that we see an end to the coup and a swift and peaceful restoration of democracy in Myanmar. I am assured that the UK is doing all it can to facilitate this outcome.

I am assured that the British Embassy in Yangon has been regularly updating their advice since the onset of the military coup. British nationals in Myanmar are advised to exercise caution, stay at home if possible and continue to check the travel advice. The military have suspended international flights until the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 and closed all land borders. This means options are limited for those wishing to return to the UK at this time. However, the airport is open and some 'relief' flights are available for those seeking to leave Myanmar. Any British national wanting to return to the UK, or in need of any urgent consular assistance, should contact the British Embassy, whose phone lines are open 24 hours a day. All information and contact details can be found on the gov.uk website via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/myanmar>.

Additionally, I welcome the imposition of sanctions, announced on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February, against nine senior members of the military regime in Myanmar in response to gross violations of human rights, including the right to life, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and the right not to be subject to arbitrary arrest or detention. These new sanctions, effective immediately, are in addition to the sanctions against sixteen individuals from Myanmar already listed, bringing the total number of designations in Myanmar to twenty-five. They will stop those individuals from travelling to the UK, and will prevent businesses and institutions from dealing with their funds or economic resources in this country.

I also welcome the imposition of further sanctions on the 25<sup>th</sup> March and the 1<sup>st</sup> April against Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd and the Myanmar Economic Corporation; both key economic interests of Myanmar's military and complicit in human rights violations.

The UK is one of the largest humanitarian donors in Myanmar - one of the top ten countries in which UK aid will be concentrated in 2021. This will provide life-saving assistance to almost half a million conflict affected and displaced people in Myanmar.

I am glad that, following an urgent review of the UK's development activities in Myanmar following the recent coup, new safeguards are now in place to prevent UK aid from indirectly supporting the military regime. Support for government led reforms has been axed and planned programmes will close. I am reassured, however, that the UK is working on further measures to ensure that aid can still – and only – reach the most vulnerable people in Myanmar.

In conjunction with sanctions, I welcome that the UK will be temporarily suspending all promotion of trade with Myanmar while we work with British businesses and civil society to reshape our approach to trade. The Department for International Trade (DIT) is leading on work to ensure that UK companies in Myanmar are not trading with military-owned businesses, while, I am assured, protecting the important role that trade plays in poverty reduction and economic development. The Government is clear that UK businesses should not be supporting the military or their businesses.





As I have said, the UK has led a strong and coordinated international response to the coup in Myanmar, and secured a UNSC Presidential Statement on the 10<sup>th</sup> March condemning violence against peaceful protestors. I am told the UK pushed for stronger language on some issues. Nevertheless it is welcome that China, Russia and the rest of the UNSC were able to agree a strong statement referencing democracy and human rights and condemning violence. The UK will continue to work to bring about unified international action. Naturally, the diplomatic stance of other nations does not diminish the strong unilateral action by the UK in response to the coup so far.

I welcome that the Foreign Secretary has announced extra funding to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), established by the UNHRC to collect and preserve evidence of serious human rights violations in Myanmar, which can then be used in future criminal proceedings. The increase brings the UK's commitment to the IIMM to around £500,000.

Finally, I condemn the way in which the Myanmar military have barred their Ambassador to the UK, Kyaw Zwar Minn, from entering the Embassy in London. I pay tribute to the way in which he has stood up for the people of Myanmar against the military regime. I welcome the Foreign Secretary's assurance that, in light of the bullying behaviour towards him, Mr Minn will be supported to live safely in the UK whilst he decides upon his long-term future.

I shall, of course, continue my discussions with ministerial colleagues on this issue and follow developments closely.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*  
*Tom*

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**  
**CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**