

22 September 2017

Our reference: MIN/112597/2017

Steve Baker MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Dear Steve,

Thank you for your letter of 7 September to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents about Burma. I am replying as Minister for Asia and the Pacific.

The UK is concerned about the situation in northern Rakhine. As a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council the UK has now raised Burma twice with the Council. On 13 September we secured agreement for a statement expressing concern about reports of excessive violence during the security operations and calling for immediate steps to end the violence in Rakhine and ensure full access for humanitarian relief.

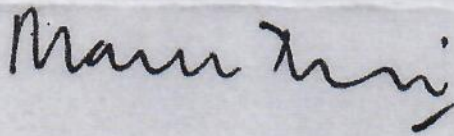
On 18 September the Foreign Secretary and other Foreign Ministers met in New York with senior Burmese representatives to urge Burma to heed the Security Council's call. I reiterated this message in a meeting with Burma's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs on 20 September. The British Government has decided to suspend all education courses currently provided to members of the Burmese military.

The Foreign Secretary has spoken twice with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi to raise our concerns about the continuing violence: the need for any allegations of human rights abuses to be investigated; and for humanitarian access to be granted to affected communities. Any judgment on whether crimes under international law have occurred is a matter for judicial decision, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. We continue to urge the Government of Burma, and in particular the military, to cooperate with the UN Fact Finding Mission and its mandate.

The UK recognises that implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission's recommendations is only a beginning to longer term resolution of the problems in Rakhine that face all the communities there. Implementation will be very hard so long as the violence continues. Aung San Suu Kyi has appointed a ministerial committee to oversee implementation and we have offered our support to improve living conditions and citizenship for all communities, particularly those who face severe discrimination such as the Rohingya.

The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors to the humanitarian crisis. The International Development Secretary announced on 14 September that the UK is providing an additional £25million to meet the urgent needs in both countries of those affected by the violence in Rakhine State, Burma. This is in addition to £5 million announced on 8 September in the immediate aftermath and £5.9 million already programmed in Bangladesh before the latest escalation. The majority of this funding will be spent in Bangladesh and will allow us to scale up the critical life-saving assistance that we are already providing. Given the scale of the humanitarian assistance required, we continue to urge the Burmese authorities and the military in particular to allow greater access urgently.

As Minister for Asia and the Pacific I will continue to raise the UK's concerns on this issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Field', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Mark Field MP
Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific