

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission
INQUIRY INTO HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR/BURMA
CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Summary

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission will hold a new inquiry on the human rights crisis in Myanmar/Burma. The Commission announces a Call for Evidence, with submissions to be submitted in writing by 17.00 on Friday 6 October.

The following document details our Call for Evidence, the scope, terms of reference, methodology and details on how to submit evidence to the inquiry.

Introduction

On 1 February, 2021 the democratically-elected civilian-led government of Myanmar/Burma, led by Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD), was overthrown in a military coup led by the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The coup ended a decade of fragile political reform and opening, and returned the country to military dictatorship and brutal repression.

In the two-and-a-half years since the coup, Myanmar/Burma has been plunged into an escalating civil war and a desperate human rights and humanitarian crisis. Since the coup:

- At least 23,747 people have been arrested and at least 15,408 political prisoners remain in jail;
- At least 70,000 homes have been scorched;
- At least 1.5 million people displaced;
- At least 3,747 individuals have been killed;
- The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that the military regime is perpetrating a campaign of airstrikes against civilians in ethnic states and “sexual violence, mass killings, extra-judicial executions, beheadings, dismemberments and mutilations”.

In his most recent report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, has warned the UN Human Rights Council that Myanmar is in “deadly freefall” into “even deeper violence and heartbreak”, with the military regime engaging in a “systematic denial” of humanitarian aid to its people. Perhaps most significantly, he called on the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the International Criminal Court, saying that “the path out of this crisis must be anchored in accountability for the grave human rights violations and other violations of international law that are occurring”. Any political solution for Myanmar’s “protracted emergency”, he said, “must include accountability”.

Methodology

The inquiry will involve the following:

- An invitation for written submissions, which is the purpose of this Call for Evidence;
- A review by the Commission of all written evidence received, primarily (though not exclusively) from human rights NGOs, civil society, dissidents, lawyers, human rights defenders, journalists, academics and other experts;
- One 90-minute oral hearing/evidence sessions, with 4 witnesses, to be held in Parliament (with the scope to hold further evidence sessions if required);
- Possible reference to secondary source material;
- Publication of a report focusing on the major themes and recommendations which the evidence directs.

Scope of the inquiry

The inquiry will be wide-ranging in scope, within the Commission's mandate to focus on human rights and foreign policy, and the Commission invites written submissions of evidence to include (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Arbitrary detention and the imprisonment of political prisoners;
- Torture and mistreatment;
- The crackdown on dissent, political parties, civil society, NGOs, media, Internet freedom, freedom of expression, assembly and association;
- Sexual violence in conflict, gender-based violence and discrimination and women's rights;
- Violations of freedom of religion or belief;
- Displacement;
- Atrocity crimes – war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide;
- Air strikes by the Myanmar military, the Tatmadaw;
- Denial of and restrictions on humanitarian assistance;
- The impact so far of Western sanctions and what more could be done;
- The influence of China, India and Russia;
- The effectiveness of ASEAN and what more could be done in the region;
- The role and impact of humanitarian aid and how it can be channelled without going through the military regime.

How to submit written evidence

Please submit written evidence in either Microsoft Word or PDF to benedictrogerscphrc@gmail.com no later than **17.00 hours UK time on Friday 6 October**.

Please keep submissions as concise as possible (ideally no more than 5-10 pages), with an executive summary and key recommendations. If citing online sources and referencing other reports or articles, please include hyperlinks to these for our reference.

About the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission was established in 2005 by The Rt Hon Liam Fox MP, as Shadow Foreign Secretary at the time, and developed by his successor, The Rt Hon Lord Hague of Richmond. Tim Loughton MP was appointed as the Commission's sixth Chairman in 2022, following his predecessors Fiona Bruce MP, The Rt Hon Sir Robert Buckland MP, The Rt Hon Sir Tony Baldry, The Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP and Sir Gary Streeter MP. The Commission's focus is on international human rights and serves to highlight human rights situations and causes around the world, and make recommendations for foreign policy.