

Intervention of Canada - HRC19

Interactive Dialogue – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma)

March 12, 2012

Canada thanks the Special Rapporteur for his most recent report and once again commends him for his important work.

Canada was pleased that the Special Rapporteur was able to make another country visit last month. Our Foreign Minister John Baird has just returned from his own visit, which included meetings with both government and opposition officials.

We encourage the Burmese authorities to continue the reforms that have begun, and to continue cooperating fully with the Special Rapporteur. This of course means continuing to facilitate these country visits.

Burma is blessed with great people, great resources and great geography; it is a country that has immense potential.

Sustained action is required to uphold and protect democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law for all Burmese people, including ethnic and religious minorities.

Canada welcomed the release of several hundred political prisoners in January. However, a significant number remain in detention, and we continue to call for their prompt and unconditional release.

QUESTION: What is your latest assessment of the conditions of detention of the remaining prisoners of conscience?

Canada, and the world, will be paying close attention to upcoming Parliamentary by-elections, scheduled for April 1st. It is essential that these elections be conducted in a free and fair manner and that credible reports of any irregularities be fully investigated and accounted for.

QUESTION: Do you have any specific recommendations related to the conduct of the upcoming by-elections?

We note that the Special Rapporteur has flagged some serious ongoing concerns, including issues related to the conformity of laws with international human rights standards, the unclear role of the new National Human Rights Commission, the ongoing need for judicial independence and reform, and ongoing conflict – with attendant human rights abuses – in certain ethnic areas.

We urge the Burmese authorities to devote serious attention to the Special Rapporteur's recommendations in these and other areas, as well as continuing to implement recommendations made during last year's Universal Periodic Review.

QUESTION: What are your plans for the timing and focus of your next visit?