



THE HON STEPHEN SMITH MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Ms Julia Irwin MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

18 DEC 2009

Dear Ms Irwin

Thank you for your letter dated 19 August 2009 about a petition from the Burma Campaign Australia submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions.

The Government is gravely concerned by the Burmese regime's suppression of the democratic aspirations of the Burmese people and its lack of respect for their human rights. I have been strongly critical of the Burmese regime and the lack of political progress in Burma. Australia consistently urges the Burmese regime to engage in a genuinely inclusive process of political reform and national reconciliation, and to seek non-military solutions to Burma's ethnic conflicts.

The Government has condemned the conviction of Aung San Suu Kyi on spurious charges. Both the Prime Minister and I issued statements on 11 August 2009 expressing Australia's deep concerns about her conviction and continued house arrest. I also made a statement to the Parliament on 12 August 2009. Australia has repeatedly called for the immediate and unconditional release of the more than 2000 political prisoners in Burma. I have conveyed Australia's views on these issues directly to my Burmese counterpart, as has Australia's Ambassador in Rangoon to senior levels in the Burmese regime.

Australia maintains pressure on the Burmese regime directly through targeted financial sanctions and travel restrictions against senior regime figures, including their associates and supporters. Information on Australia's financial sanctions, including the list of 463 individuals targeted by the sanctions, can be found on the Reserve Bank of Australia's website at [www.rba.gov.au](http://www.rba.gov.au).

The Government's policy is neither to encourage nor to discourage trade with or investment in Burma. Australia maintains a ban on all defence exports to Burma and has supported the United Kingdom's call for a global arms embargo against Burma. Australia does not impose sanctions against trade with or investment in Burma. The Government believes that non-universal trade sanctions would not be effective in promoting change in Burma.

There have been a number of recent developments in relation to sanctions applying to Burma. In announcing the outcomes of its policy review on Burma, the United States foreshadowed the possibility of lifting its sanctions, should the regime take significant steps to address international concerns. In October, the regime responded positively to Aung San Suu Kyi's offer to cooperate on the withdrawal of sanctions, and permitted her meeting on 9 October with the Chargé d'Affaires of the Australian Embassy in Rangoon and UK and US Embassy representatives. Australia will maintain a policy of targeted financial sanctions as this process develops.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Smith