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Rt Hon. David Miliband MP
Secretary of State
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
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22 May 2009

Dear David,

I am writing to you as Chair of the United Nations Association of the UK (UNA-UK) to express our revulsion and deep concern at the arrest on trumped-up charges of Burma's democratic leader and Nobel Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, after many years under house arrest. Not only are the charges against her, and those who live with her, absurd, but there can be no possible justification for having kept her under house arrest while innocent of any offense under Burmese law for this long period of time. We very much welcome the protests that have been made by the government and by the EU and the US.

If, as is all too likely, the trial which is under way now leads to a new sentence depriving her of her liberty, no doubt intended to remove her from the political arena ahead of the elections under a new constitution due to take place next year, we trust that the government will react strongly and in as wide international company as can be achieved. An electoral process which provides no place for the person and party which won the last free elections in Burma can have no legitimacy. Some further targeted sanctions would seem to be fully justified, as would be another effort to engage the support of Burma's principal neighbours, India, China and the ASEAN countries.

UNA-UK continues to support the government's policy of increasing aid to NGOs working in Burma and hopes that new and imaginative ways can be found to provide help to them. It is surely essential to do all we can to alleviate the suffering and poverty of ordinary Burmese, and to demonstrate that it is not our aim to destabilise the country or to undermine its independence and territorial integrity. That rather is the effect of the policies pursued by the Burmese regime.



Lord Hannay of Chiswick
Chair, UNA-UK