



# Foreign & Commonwealth Office

21 October 2015

## **Burma: Philip Blackwood**

Thank you for your email about Mr Philip Blackwood, a dual New Zealand-British national imprisoned in Burma.

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, through its Embassy in Burma, is leading on providing assistance to Mr Blackwood, as he travelled to Burma on a New Zealand passport. They have consular access to Mr Blackwood and are also leading on contact with his immediate family, who are based in New Zealand.

However, we have taken a very close interest in the case. It is untrue to say we have done nothing: our Ambassador in Burma has raised it directly with the President's office. On 19 October FCO Minister Hugo Swire met a relative of Mr Blackwood's to discuss the case.

It is of course critical that we continue to coordinate any action with the New Zealand authorities, who are discussing case handling directly with Mr Blackwood. We have been in regular contact with them in country, and also at Ministerial level between Minister Swire and the New Zealand Minister for Foreign Affairs. In consultation with the New Zealand authorities, we remain ready to provide further support to Mr Blackwood. However, we also need to remain conscious that Mr Blackwood's appeal process is ongoing.

More broadly, it is misleading and unhelpful for the Burma Campaign to suggest that we do not raise difficult issues with the Burmese government. Human rights, including political prisoners, remain an absolutely central part of our engagement. Minister Swire set out our concerns very clearly on a range of human rights issues during his visit in July, and again at the UN in September – both directly with the Foreign Minister, and in the UN Secretary General's Partnership Group on Burma.

Consular Assistance Department  
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