



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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PARLIAMENTARY AMNESTY GROUP

Human Rights Violations, Myanmar

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (3.13 p.m.): I rise to support the motion that this House join Amnesty International in its campaign against human rights violations in Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi was the daughter of national leader Aung San. She has suffered a great deal in her life, from the time she lost her father right through to the present. She became politically active and led the revolt against the dictator General Ne Win and the military regime that seized power in September 1988. This military regime imposed martial law, which allows detention without charge for up to three years. Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest at that time.

In 1990 Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy actually won the polls, but the junta at the time refused to hand over power. It actually won while she was still incarcerated. She has spent a considerable time in deprivation over the years since. In 1995, after much lobbying from other parties, she was released from house arrest. For a short time she spoke to many persons around the area for the causes she was so strongly aligned to. Then again she was arrested, and her detention has been on and off for a considerable period of time.

I think the manner in which Aung San Suu Kyi has fought against the oppressors in her country should be emulated by every politician around the world. She does not denigrate her peers. She has not found it necessary to tear them down to rise up herself. Her quietness, her tenacity and her self-sacrifice are an example that can only be admired. She has not asked her people to spill blood on her behalf but to fight in peaceful protest. She does not raise herself above her people; she stands beside them to fight against the oppression they are all suffering. She has even denied herself freedom, and her family has suffered because of her incarceration. She has lost a lot, but she has the strength of her convictions and the character to stand against the oppressors until all other political prisoners have been released. It is through that dignity that she has gained the support of the majority of the people.

Aung San Suu Kyi has received a lot of awards over the years. In 1990 she received the Rafto human rights prize. In 1991, again in absentia, she was awarded the Sakharov Prize for human rights of the European parliament. She was recognised in 1991 with a Nobel Peace Prize. In 2000 Bill Clinton awarded her the highest civilian honour of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She was able to attend none of these ceremonies.

She has become an international symbol of heroic and peaceful resistance in the face of oppression. More and more governments around the world recognise her dignified fight for democracy. If they join us and we stand beside those other countries in the pursuit of freedom for prisoners of conscience then this amnesty motion will be a huge step along the way to true democracy.