



Speech by

Paul Hoolihan

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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PARLIAMENTARY AMNESTY GROUP: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION, PAKISTAN

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (6.38 pm): In 1946 the United Nations held its first meeting of the General Assembly. The decision then reached was that all peoples of the world should enjoy certain freedoms. Those freedoms have been accepted freely in this country. It is often with a great degree of abhorrence that we see what happens in other countries.

The member for Surfers Paradise mentioned Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. Today we show our solidarity for those people in Pakistan who are being downtrodden and denied those freedoms. Pakistan was formed after a split with India in 1947. The original Pakistani constitution did not commence and the first president was Iskandar Mirza in 1956. He lasted about two years and he tried the same thing that is now happening. He abrogated the constitution and declared martial law. Only a couple weeks later he fell foul of Ayub Khan. Ayub Khan subsequently fell foul of Yahya Khan which led us to the current group. Yahya Khan was dethroned by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1971. As many of us will recall—some might not be old enough to remember; I apologise for that—Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was, according to international standards, not a very good ruler because he took the same steps that Musharraf has done now.

Benazir Bhutto is his daughter, but Bhutto himself fell foul of Zia-ul-Huq and he was subsequently executed. We now have Pervez Musharraf who claims to be a great friend of the United Nations and a great friend of the free world, but he has imposed these restrictions on the people of Pakistan. I note that today's paper reports that Imran Khan, who has been strongly opposed to the imposition of martial law, has been arrested. He was in hiding for a couple of days but when he came out to lead a group of students he was arrested. It is noteworthy that although she has returned to Britain his wife Jemima Khan last weekend led a march in support of the Pakistani people. These are people who are probably some of the poorest on earth. The military rulers rule with an iron fist and get the benefit of all of the value in the Pakistani economy. If the truth be known, they hold their position purely and simply to get the financial benefit out of it. As indicated by the member for Surfers Paradise, this country has a political system of which we can be proud. There has never been a change of government by military action such as there has been in Pakistan. I seek the support of all members in this House to condemn what has happened in Pakistan and to yell loud and long in support of the Pakistani people so that they can return to freedom.