

**Jackie Doyle-Price**  
**Speech on Gurkha Inquiry Findings**

In respect of this inquiry, we wanted to settle the questions ahead of the 200 year anniversary of Gurkha service in the British army. We in Britain have a great deal of affection and respect for our Gurkha friends and it is important that we as Members of Parliament ensure that the British Government is doing right by our Gurkha friends.

In respect of this inquiry, we have reviewed the evidence and made a number of recommendations that we believe that the Government should put right. We have not been able to address all the grievances put to us, but we will continue the dialogue on these issues.

At the heart of our report is our desire to ensure that Britain treats the Gurkha veterans fairly and with dignity.

Our priority in this report has been to tackle the issue of the 7,000 Gurkha veterans with no pension, who are reliant on pensions from the Gurkha welfare trust. Some of these are veterans of the Second World War, most are however veterans who are without pension because they failed to serve the 15 years which would qualify them for a Gurkha pension. We believe some were unfairly dismissed, some were made redundant, some were medically discharged. We would like to see an appeal process to establish a formal entitlement to a pension.

There are over 20,000 Gurkha veterans currently in receipt of Gurkha pensions. This is the main focus of the Gurkha campaign for equality and action is still being taken in the Courts. At the heart of the unfairness is the equalisation of Gurkha terms and conditions with the British Army in 2006, backdated to 1997. This was a very arbitrary date and has left Gurkha veterans feeling that they have been discriminated against. And to be honest, they have been treated quite unfairly. At the very least the Committee expects the British Government to consider the rates of pension in comparison with those of Indian veterans to establish whether the current rates of Gurkha pension are fair. I look forward to maintaining my discussions with the Gurkha community to see whether we can progress this issue further.

We have made a specific number of recommendations where we think there is clear evidence that the Gurkhas have been treated poorly and that we want the Government to make good.

Firstly, in respect of National Insurance. Gurkhas were left outside the National Insurance scheme until it was found that this was in breach of the Human Rights Act in 2005 and NI was backdated to 1997. It should be noted that had Gurkhas been allowed to build up NI credits before, they would have of course been building up an entitlement to a pension which would have been exportable to Nepal

We were advised that Gurkhas were issued with a dummy National Insurance number, and whilst no deductions were made, this was misleading. We are therefore asking the Government to consider whether all Gurkhas have received their full entitlement to NI credits and whether those issued with dummy numbers should be given backdated credits.

Secondly, we found that Gurkhas serving in Brunei were not liable to pay income tax, but an amount equivalent to income tax was deducted so that pay was consistent with those serving in the UK. We believe this was quite wrong and that these should be refunded.

Thirdly, we found that the Brigade of Gurkhas had a policy that no Gurkha could marry a non Nepalese. We believe that this was illegal under the Race Relations Act 1981 and that those soldiers who were forced to leave the army were unfairly dismissed and deserve redress.

Fourthly, we are concerned about some of the consequences of the right to settlement in the UK for Gurkha veterans. Given the clear pension differences and the access to welfare here in the UK, there is a clear financial incentive for veterans and widows to move here, often leaving their families behind. We are concerned for the welfare of elderly migrants, although we should remember that the majority of Gurkha migrants are in work and are well integrated and much loved in their local communities. We have also asked the Home Office should look with sympathy on those cases of adult children who might have entered the country before they were 18 had the law changed sooner.

We also believe that the Government should do more to ensure that Gurkha veterans have access to good healthcare in Nepal. This is currently provided by the Gurkha Welfare Trust at a charge. Given that the LIBOR money has been earmarked to fund military charities, we are asking that the Government should increase its contribution to the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT) to cover the cost of free healthcare.

Finally, there has been much discussion about the value and size of the International Aid budget. We believe that Nepal should continue to be a significant beneficiary of our Aid budget. We are the country with the longest standing diplomatic relationship with it for one thing, but more importantly, we have taken its best men to serve in our army. We therefore have a moral obligation to do our best for Nepal.”