



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
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Our reference: MIN/24634/2018

The Rt Hon George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
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30 October 2018

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 8 October to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Amnesty International's BRAVE campaign where they urge the Government to adopt a strategy to protect human rights defenders. I am replying as Minister of State with responsibility for human rights policy.

I applaud the work that Amnesty International does to support human rights defenders, including through campaigns such as "Brave". I highlighted in my speech at the Amnesty International reception for Human Rights Day in December that by speaking truth to power and helping individuals understand and exercise their rights, human rights defenders act as custodians of our freedoms and rights. The British Government shares Amnesty International's respect for human rights defenders and its determination to do what we can to support and protect them.

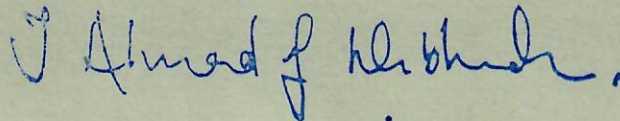
To guide our work in this area, the former Foreign Secretary issued guidelines to all Ambassadors and High Commissioners in 2017. Each Head of Mission will decide how to implement and use the Guidelines, in a manner appropriate to the local context, but the premise of the Guidelines is for our diplomats to get to know prominent human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders and support them either privately or publicly, when their rights are denied.

We also work at the multilateral level to press for strong guidelines for the treatment of human rights defenders by states. In November 2017, we worked to help forge consensus on the UN General Assembly Resolution on Human Rights Defenders. This year is the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and we will be using this occasion to demonstrate our support for human rights defenders.

Foreign and Commonwealth Officials have followed Azza Soliman's case closely, as well as the related Foreign Funding Case. In December, I highlighted Ms Soliman's case in my speech at the aforementioned Amnesty International reception for Human Rights Day. We continue to be concerned by the increasing restrictions placed on democratic space in Egypt, including arrests and convictions of political leaders,

activists and journalists. The UK wants to see better protection of human rights in Egypt. That includes implementation of the rights guaranteed by Egypt's constitution and more freedom of expression and political representation. We publicly raised these concerns on 18 September at the UN Human Rights Council. More recently, the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, the Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP raised these concerns over the human rights situation with the Egyptian Foreign Minister on 14 October.

Yours sincerely,



LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON
Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN
Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict
Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief