



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London, SW1A 2AH

11 May 2021
Our Reference: CB/AL

Dear Dominic,

Britain's relationship with Turkey

Our relationship with Turkey, a NATO ally, is important for the UK, and despite enormous challenges Turkey had in recent decades been making great strides towards broad conformity with the laws, values and attitude to human rights of its European partners.

However, over the last decade, this progress has gone into sharp reverse under President Erdogan's leadership and we are writing to ask the Government to take a more active stance in seeking to prevent human rights violations in Turkey.

The imprisonment of journalists, the suppression of democratic political opposition and the recent wave of intimidation of human rights defenders needs to be addressed, not least in Turkey's own interests, by showing that there is a cost for doing the wrong thing.

The lifting of the parliamentary immunity of MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and his eventual imprisonment for a social media post, and the detention of Ozturk Turkdogan, co-chair of the Human Rights Association (IHD), the country's biggest human rights organisation, on charges of being part of an illegal group, are part of an growing pattern which increasingly calls into question whether Turkey actually shares our democratic values and attachment to the rule of law.

As Parliamentarians, all of us should be worried by the imprisonment of MPs, not least those who have been working for the human rights of all parts of Turkish society. The ideal of a future in which Turks and the Kurds, the religious and the secular and the rich and the poor could work together to respect the rights of others and minorities is now in danger of being destroyed by the growing oppressive domestic policies of the Turkish government. The very institution of democracy is under grave threat.

We welcome the refusal of the Government-appointed constitutional court to have the opposition HDP closed down, but hundreds of their prominent politicians are already under arrest or have been banned from politics for five years. The Kobani case and Turkey's most

recent withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention are yet more worrying signs, and Human Rights Watch reports a rise in allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment in police and military custody. We also condemn the recent killing of Turkish hostages by the PKK.

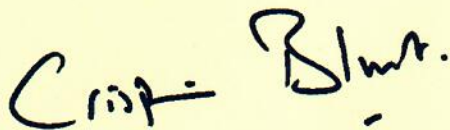
Turkey has only recently unveiled what it describes as its Human Rights Action Plan and has made attempts to heal its diplomatic relations with Greece, Egypt and Israel.

This may be a sign of hope but it is by its actions that Turkey will be judged, and the new US administration has made its position very clear. We hope the UK will now add its voice in calling out this behaviour by Turkey.

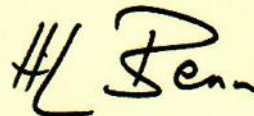
Turkey should be an indispensable ally of our country, and that is why the UK owes the people of Turkey a duty to speak up openly for a return to the path of democracy and respect for human rights and pluralism.

We request that you make an early statement to Parliament, making clear to the Turkish government that the United Kingdom's public friendship cannot be unconditional and that we will always stand up for human rights. The UK's many friends in Turkey would welcome and draw strength from such a statement of Britain's position as they work to restore a properly open society.

Yours sincerely,



Crispin Blunt MP



Hilary Benn MP

Steve Baker MP

Bob Seely MBE MP

John Baron MP

Henry Smith MP

Bob Blackman MP

Alexander Stafford MP

Rt Hon Sir Roger Gale MP

Rt Hon Sir Desmond Swayne TD MP

Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP

David Warburton MP

Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP


Paula Barker MP

Rt Hon David Mundell MP

Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Dr Dan Poulter MP

Dan Carden MP



Sarah Champion MP

Daisy Cooper MP

Dr Stella Creasy MP

Colum Eastwood MP

Marion Fellows MP

Margaret Ferrier MP

Andrew Gwynne MP

Claire Hanna MP

Neale Hanvey MP

Kim Johnson MP

Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP

Ben Lake MP

Tony Lloyd MP

Kenny MacAskill MP

Catherine McKinnell MP

Navendu Mishra MP

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John Nicolson MP

Brendan O'Hara MP

Sarah Olney MP

Kate Osamor MP

Kate Osborne MP

Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP

Virendra Sharma MP

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Andy Slaughter MP

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Chris Stephens MP

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Mohammad Yasin MP