

Address

Date

Name MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear *MP*

Re "Defending Democracy in The Philippines: International Support for Parliamentarians under Threat"

In view of the recent review of the government's defence and foreign policy strategy for the next decade shifting its focus toward the Indo-Pacific region, I have concerns about human rights in the Philippines and in particular the continued detention of Senator Leila de Lima.

Several members of Amnesty International UK were privileged to be invited to the parliamentary webinar on Friday 26th February 2021 which was entitled "Defending Democracy in The Philippines: International Support for Parliamentarians under Threat".

The three speakers gave an alarming account of the many threats to parliamentarians from their different perspectives. They all described the increasing use of techniques which include "red tagging", labelling opposition as "terrorism", attempting to delist political parties eg "Gabriela: Women's Party ", systematic campaigns on social media using fabricated evidence and hearsay to discredit politicians, rape threats etc. Threats of violence are not uncommon. Senator Leila de Lima has been detained for 4 years now on fabricated evidence. One of her 3 convictions has recently been quashed.

I have particular concerns for the situation of Senator Leila de Lima. Our local Amnesty International group in Sutton Coldfield continue to campaign for her release.

Against this backdrop, we understand that our government is seeking "a new partnership" with The Philippines and this is causing me, and my local Amnesty colleagues, some alarm.

The fourth speaker from the I.P.U. confirmed that their investigations support the concerns for the safety of parliamentarians in The Philippines and that all their cases in this country are to be reviewed in March. I understand that the UNHCR have also been asked to investigate the cases of abuse of power and to consider sanctions.

Against this backdrop, I would welcome reassurances that any "new partnership" will fully consider these human rights abuses and be aware of the misuse of the term "terrorism" to discredit and prohibit opposition and free speech. Any economic relationship between our two countries must not ignore these facts.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Yours sincerely