



Angus Robertson MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

By email

January 24th 2024

Dear Mr Robertson,

I write to welcome the recent publication of the Scottish Government's Strategy for International Relations and position paper: 'Taking a Feminist Approach to International Relations' (FAIR).

To fulfil its commitment to directly addressing human rights in external policy however, I urge you to focus on setting out clearly how the Scottish Government will consistently acknowledge and respond to human rights violations in the countries it engages with. Some of these states have deeply concerning human rights records and are environments where attacks on civic space and human rights defenders are increasing.

Ministers' commitment to respect for human rights and equality in international work and the Sustainable Development Goals is positive, as is the call on the UK Government to embed human rights in all aspects of trade policy in the 'Vision for Trade'. However, it is vital that transparency and accountability around the role of human rights considerations and due diligence in decision making processes are enhanced.

A clear framework should set out how and when Scottish ministers raise human rights concerns and individual cases, how the Scottish Government can proactively support human rights defenders working in those states, and how human rights concerns are considered when entering into bilateral agreements, such as the recent Memorandum of Understanding with the United Arab Emirates, or indeed through engagement with governments such as Rwanda or Pakistan, where international development projects are delivered. Crucially any such framework must include a reporting mechanism to allow Parliament and civil society to scrutinise decision making.

Amnesty International Scotland has consistently called on the Scottish Government to roll out support for human rights defenders in external relations policy as one means of better embedding human rights considerations. We have raised these points with successive International Development Ministers as well as government officials and would now like to see a firm commitment to action. I have included a briefing which sets out our position in more detail.

Yours,

Patrick Corrigan



Head of Nations and Regions
Amnesty International UK