



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

Your reference: GT34236
Our reference: MC2020/07380

Gareth Thomas MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

11 May 2020

Dear Gareth,

Thank you for your letter of 15 April on behalf of your constituent, Mr Mohammad Al-Mail, on the topic of human rights and the UK's departure from the European Union. I am replying as the Minister of State responsible for Human Rights.

Protecting and promoting universal human rights is and will remain a core part of our international diplomacy. Our departure from the European Union does not change this. It is the right thing to do, legally and morally. It is also the rational thing to do; human rights violations and abuses, and the absence of the rule of law, lead to unstable, less prosperous societies.

The UK operates one of the world's most comprehensive export control regimes, and we will not issue any export licence when there is a clear risk of a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The UK regularly raises the importance of IHL with Saudi Arabia, including at senior levels. Equally, no aspect of our relationship with Saudi Arabia prevents us from speaking frankly about human rights. We will continue to encourage all states to uphold international human rights obligations.

The UK shares your constituent's view that we should hold to account those accused of the most serious crimes of international concern. As a signatory to the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the International Criminal Court, we believe the Court can play an influential role in entrenching the rule of law, acting as a deterrent to atrocities, placing a spotlight on individual responsibility, and supporting victims.

The standards of conduct required of United Kingdom Armed Forces are, and have always been, in accordance with relevant international law, and the domestic

criminal law that applies to United Kingdom forces at all times. We take seriously allegations of unlawful conduct by personnel who fail to uphold the high standards expected. The UK upholds its obligations under domestic and international law, including those under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

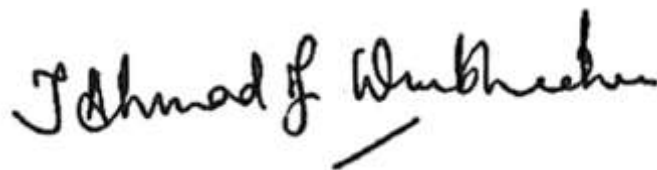
The UK is committed to membership of the Council of Europe and its principle convention, the ECHR. We will continue to work actively across the multilateral system with bodies such as the UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE. These organisations are deeply important to the UK. We recognise and appreciate the valuable role they play in advancing work on human rights, democracy, security and the rule of law across Europe and beyond.

Your constituent also raises the case of Mr. Assange, which is before the independent courts in the UK. An independent judiciary is one of the cornerstones of our constitution and our democracy. It would not be right to comment further.

On your constituent's point about immigration and asylum, the UK has a long and proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations. Immigration detention is used only sparingly and for the shortest period necessary; published Home Office statistics show that in the year ending June 2019 72% of individuals were detained for no longer than 28 days and 94% for no longer than four months.

To the final point on climate change: tackling and responding to climate change is a priority for this government. Although postponed from 2020, the UK – with Italy – is in discussions with partners to preside over a rescheduled COP26 UN climate conference in 2021. The UK is committed to bringing countries and partners together to successfully deliver on the Paris Agreement to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The UK will continue to work tirelessly to deliver the ambition needed to tackle the climate crisis, build resilience and lower emissions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON
Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth
Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict