



Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Sent by email

Friday 29th January 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Sikhs in Scotland Urge UK Government Intervention to Defend Human Rights

We write this letter to relay the collective concerns of the Sikh Community in Scotland.

We urge you to carry an urgent assessment of the deteriorating situation in India, following the Farmers Protest which took place in Delhi on the 26th January 2021 and the ongoing protests by farmers groups against the enactment of three new controversial farming laws in India.

We are concerned at the gross violations of human rights, harassment of elderly, women and children and denial of freedom of expression and protest. We further urge you to express our collective concerns on behalf of the Scottish & British Sikh community to the Government of India and raise the matter at the United Nations.

Despite the Supreme Court of India observing that the farmers have a fundamental right to protest and directing the Delhi Police to take a decision on the protest, which was ultimately approved by them, the Police and State Security Services are now indiscriminately detaining people, slapping charges of terrorism, sedition and anti-national conduct on hundreds of people associated with the farmers' protest.

Protesting, raising religious flags (that were also present at the official Republic Day Parade) getting into disputes with police, do not constitute terrorism or sedition as you will no doubt agree. Moreover, the vast majority of the protestors who broke away from the main protest, were carrying Indian National Flag. The Indian Government is violating UN Resolution 1456(2003) Article 6:

Resolution 1456, article 6. States must ensure that any measure taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, and should adopt such measures in accordance with international law, in particular international human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law;

The actions of protestors are neither 'terrorist', seditious nor anti national. They simply disagree with a Government policy. There are credible reports that some detained people have been tortured. The Government is now exercising extraordinary powers to disperse farmers protest and deny them the rights to freely protest, which is of considerable concern as the protestors are camped at various protest sites on Delhi's borders. Recent reports state that internet has been suspended at certain sites as well as cutting off electricity and water supply, where a large number of protestors are elderly and vulnerable.

As you have rightly commented in your previous correspondence, the farmers have been protesting peacefully for what they consider are unjust laws. The right to protest peacefully is an internationally enshrined fundamental human right.



The British Government has raised concerns around this right several times with regard to the Chinese Government's crackdowns on peaceful protests. The UK Government has also noted that the police in Hong Kong often provoke young people to react emotionally. That should not take away from the vast majority who have been protesting peacefully in Hong Kong, as you have rightly stated.

Similarly in India, the vast majority of farmers and their supporters protested peacefully on 26th January 2021 and before then. They are still protesting peacefully. There is evidence of the Government relaxing security in some places and police provoking young people. It should not be a surprise that there were a few hundred protestors who took their emotions to a greater height. This should not be an excuse to crack down on the peaceful protestors.

At this stage, our greatest concern is for the safety of families, elderly, women, young people and the human rights of all those protesting. We are very concerned that the Indian Government is using the farmers protest to violate human rights.

As citizens and residents of the United Kingdom, we ask you, as our Foreign Secretary to raise these matters urgently with the Indian Government and your counterparts and urge the Indian authorities to act with restraint and resume peaceful dialogue with the farmer groups. We also ask you to pursue this matter with appropriate authorities and forums at the United Nations. We believe that as a Government that is committed to the rule of law and human rights there is a positive obligation on the Government to continuously raise and monitor matters that concern the violation of fundamental human rights.

On behalf of Sikhs in Scotland,

Charandeep Singh
Executive Director
Sikhs in Scotland

Cc Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon Alister Jack MP