The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development,

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office,

King Charles St,

London

SW1A 2AH

DATE

Dear First Minister/Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, Europe and External Affairs/ Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development/YOUR LOCAL MP/MSP

**Abuse of the Right to Peaceful Protest on Farmers in India**

Over the last several months, millions of farmers have been peacefully protesting in response to three new Indian laws brought forward by the Indian Government. These protests have led farmers from across India to reach New Delhi. The protests, both in New Delhi and states across India, have been met with violent action from police. We are asking you to stand in solidarity with us and give us your support in ensuring that these human rights violations are acknowledged and that the farmers’ right to peacefully protest is upheld.

**Background**

In September 2020, the Indian Government passed three new laws aimed at framing practices in India. The new laws will result in the following;

1. Opening the agricultural sector up to private companies. Currently, the agricultural sector is governed by the state under a Grain Market system, where the state set a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops so that farmers are guaranteed a minimum level of income in exchange for their crops.

1. The privatisation of the agricultural market will mean that the MSP guaranteed by the state could be revoked, if demand for state buyers falls and selling of crops to private companies increases.
2. The Indian Government have given no legal guarantees that the MSP will remain for these farmers to avoid their exploitation by the private companies.

The introduction of these new laws could lead to huge exploitation of farmers across India[[1]](#footnote-1). The private corporations would be able to buy the crops from Indian farmers at a lower competitive price, as they would no longer be constrained by the minimum selling price set by the Indian Government. 41.49% of the workforce in India are employed in the agricultural sector. Therefore revoking the MSP can be compared to the abolition of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which provides financial support to farmers in EU member states. CAP payments are an important part of farm incomes in the UK: the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) estimated that payments represented 55% of farm incomes in 2014.[[2]](#footnote-2) The same principle applies with regards to the MSP in India. Thus, farmers from all four corners of India have travelled hundreds of miles to the Indian Capital to protest these laws, asking the Indian Government to repeal the new laws or at the very least enshrine the MSP in legislation.

**The Right to Peacefully Protest**

Despite the challenges of a global pandemic and freezing temperatures, farmers have now been protesting for over two months. Many of them are elderly men and women. With no other income other than the selling of their crops, they are literally putting their lives on the line to fight for their livelihoods. Women have been instrumental in the protests alongside others demanding that their voices are heard. However, the protests have been met with ruthless violence at the hands of the Indian Government. The use of water cannons, tear gas and the deployment of paramilitary policemen against the peaceful protestors can only be described as an intimidation tactic by the Indian Government aimed at deterring people from protesting. Images of the use of batons by paramilitary police on older people who are leading these protests, mainly Sikhs, only highlights the abuse further.

The right to peacefully protest is at the cornerstone of any democracy. Where the State acts to curtail such a right, this must be met with condemnation from the international community. As the world’s largest democracy, India must be held accountable to uphold the right to peacefully protest. As a global human rights upholder, the UK must condemn the violence administered by the Indian Government on the framers who are peacefully protesting to save not only their livelihoods, but the generations to follow.

Since the introduction of the laws, millions of Sikhs across the globe have joined the farmers’ efforts in solidarity. Led by Farmers unions across India including workers, farmers and allies, with 250 million participants, this is now the largest protest in human history. This issue is very close to the hearts of many Sikhs in Scotland and across the UK, as many have farming backgrounds and/or have family members who are farmers in India.

In solidarity and support, we ask you to:

1. Raise this topic at First Ministers Questions and ask the Scottish Government to support the Indian’s Farmer’s right to peaceful protest. [IF SENDING TO YOUR LOCAL MSP/CABINET SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUION, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS]
2. [IF SENDING TO YOUR MP] Raise this topic at Prime Minister’s Questions and ask the UK Government to support the Indian’s Farmer’s right to peaceful protest.
3. Write to the Indian Consulate of the UK, condemning the treatment of the Indian farmers protesting across India by the Indian Government.
4. Write to the UK Government Foreign and Commonwealth Office to ask for an update on their response to this issue.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

YOUR NAME

1. <https://www.euronews.com/2020/11/27/angry-farmers-in-india-protest-over-controversial-new-laws> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/common-agricultural-policy> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)