



21 July, 2015

The Rt Hon. Keith Vaz
Chair, Home Affairs Committee

BY E-MAIL: homeaffcom@parliament.uk;
vazk@parliament.uk

Dear Keith,

Call for urgent Inquiry into Home Office involvement in overseas drug enforcement

We are writing on behalf of the All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG) and the All-Party Group for the Abolition of the Death Penalty to call on the Home Affairs Committee to launch an inquiry into how Home Office support for overseas drug enforcement operations is developed, implemented and scrutinized – focusing in particular on countries which apply the death penalty for drug offences. This request is further to a Parliamentary panel event we hosted in June on “*Human Rights, the Death Penalty and International Drug Control: Avenues for UK action*”.

As you may know, during the last Parliamentary term, the UK contributed more support than any other European country for anti-narcotics programmes in countries which carry the death penalty for drug offences, such as Pakistan and Iran (according to data from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime). Foreign Governments and law enforcement agencies receiving this support have overseen death sentences for, and the subsequent execution of, hundreds, and perhaps even thousands, of alleged drug carriers. In many of these countries, drug offenders are also subject to serious abuse by law enforcement organisations, and face unfair trial proceedings.

More generally, the last year has seen an alarming global resurgence in the use of the death penalty for drug offences, with a number of states either executing more people for drug related crimes, seeking to re-introduce the death penalty for drug offences, or ending death penalty moratoria.

Despite the extent of the UK’s continued assistance to overseas counter-narcotics programmes, and the way in which that is undermining the UK Government’s anti-death penalty stance and contributing to other serious and systematic human rights overseas, the Home Office has permitted very little Parliamentary or public scrutiny of these initiatives.

We also note that though the Home Affairs Select Committee, in its 2012 report “*Drugs: Breaking the Cycle*”, had recommended that the UK Government “*ensure that no British or European funding is used to support practices that could lead to capital punishment, torture, or other violations*”, it would seem the Home Office is not yet implementing this recommendation.

These programmes effectiveness and value for money should also be reviewed, including in light of the Home Office’s own conclusion in a 2014 report ‘*Drugs: International Comparators*’, that there is a “*lack of any clear correlation between the ‘toughness’ of an approach and levels of drug use*”.

Finally, though we do of course accept the need to combat drug use, we believe the UK Government should show greater leadership on the issue of human rights and drug policy – particularly through its actions, given that the Home Office is currently leading the UK’s preparations for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on “*the World Drug Problem*” in April 2016.

We look forward to hearing from you further to the above.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Clwyd', is positioned above the typed name.

Ann Clwyd MP
Chair,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivien Stern', is positioned above the typed name.

Baroness Vivien Stern
Chair,

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