



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

October 2018

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about human rights defenders.

Human rights defenders are at the forefront of work to promote and protect human rights and democracy, often at great personal risk to themselves. In many places they are persecuted, imprisoned, attacked or even killed because of their work.

In the light of increasing levels of intimidation and persecution of human rights defenders in many parts of the world, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has worked with several civil society organisations to update its internal guidance on working with human rights defenders. This updated guidance was issued to all Embassies and High Commissions in December 2017 and tasks the FCO's network of Embassies and High Commissions to find practical ways to support human rights defenders. I am assured that this guidance is kept under constant review.

I know that the Government is concerned about the case of Azza Soliman specifically. Lord Ahmad, the Minister for Human Rights, has been clear that the UK continues to raise its human rights concerns privately with the Egyptian authorities and also in public, including at the UN. The decreasing space for civil society to operate in Egypt is extremely worrying.

The Government supports the work of Human Rights Defenders globally and that the FCO works with and supports a wide range of organisations committed to helping human rights defenders either through emergency assistance or by building their capacity to protect themselves.

Support is provided to human rights defenders through the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy, most of which is allocated for implementation of projects by human rights defenders and civil society organisations. The FCO also highlights repression of human rights defenders in its Annual Human Rights Report.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris".

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**