



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Kirsty Brimelow QC
Chair, Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC)
153-154 Doughty Street
London WC1N 2LS

22 September 2014

Dear Kirsty Brimelow QC

Thank you for your letter of 14 August to the Foreign Secretary regarding the detention and trial of Al Jazeera journalists in Egypt. I have been asked to reply as desk officer in the Human Rights and Democracy Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

I share your concerns, and those of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC), on this issue. As you may be aware, the former Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon William Hague MP, made a statement on 23 June in which he said he was appalled by the verdicts and urged the Egyptian government to demonstrate its commitment to freedom of expression by reviewing this case as a matter of urgency.

On the same day, the Egyptian Ambassador was summoned to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Political Director, Sir Simon Gass, told the Egyptian Ambassador that the British Government was deeply concerned by the verdicts, along with the procedural shortcomings seen during the trials.

Tobias Ellwood, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, raised this issue with senior figures in the Egyptian Government during his visit to Cairo on 25 August 2014.

The UK Government believes that a free and robust press is the bedrock of democracy. We will continue to raise this issue with the Egyptian authorities.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Willis

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Human Rights and Democracy Department