

David Cameron
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

OPEN LETTER OF SUPPORT

Dear Mr Cameron,

Governmental intimidation of Human Rights Lawyer: An unprecedented intervention by the Prime Minister

Resulting from the work of human rights lawyers there has been an increase of hostile press coverage of human rights litigation which is portrayed as having an agenda to undermine the British Armed Forces. Particular animosity is directed towards Phil Shiner and his Iraq work.

This animosity follows the Secretary of State for Defence's comments that Phil was exploiting the British legal system in a shameful attempt to attack and falsely impugn the Armed Forces. Furthermore, David Cameron has personally intervened by authorising a dossier to be drawn up and sent to the Solicitor's Regulatory Authority (SRA). This is an extraordinary and unprecedented decision which we did not expect from our own government.

We are concerned that Ministerial comments are designed to create a negative atmosphere and as a result place lawyers such as Phil Shiner in danger. Further comments made by Ministers fit into a clear narrative that seeks to scrap the Human Rights Act and undermine human rights litigation.

We pledge our support to any lawyer vindicating the rule of law in the name of truth, justice and accountability. We condemn attacks on Phil Shiner and anyone else whose legal work is focused on ensuring state accountability.

Lawyers will not be discouraged and neither will Phil Shiner who works to the highest professional standards to secure justice for his clients who make allegations of ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and unlawful killings against the British government.

We want David Cameron to:

1. Stop attempting to intervene with the SRA's investigations of Public Interest Lawyers (PIL) and influence their findings
2. Stop attempting to intimidate and shame lawyers in a bid to deter them from their work contrary to principle 16(a) of the UN Basic Principles on the role of Lawyers

3. Stop attempting to apply administrative and economic sanctions to deter lawyers from their work contrary to principle 16(c) of the UN Basic Principles on the role of Lawyers
4. Stop equating lawyers with their clients contrary to principle 18 of the UN Basic Principles on the role of Lawyers
5. Stop attempting to undermine human rights litigation
6. Issue an apology, signed by Michael Fallon, for breaching principles 16 and 18 of the UN Principles on the Role of Lawyers and for using Parliament as a platform to undermine and endanger Phil Shiner
7. Provide PIL with the opportunity to respond to the allegation that they have behaved improperly

Signed by:

Michael Mansfield – Barrister and President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Russell Fraser – Chair of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Professor Bill Bowing – Barrister and honorary Vice-President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Geoffrey Bindman QC – Barrister and honorary Vice-President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Gareth Peirce – Solicitor and honorary Vice-President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Rebecca Harvey – Lawyer, Treasurer of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Liz Davies - Barrister and honorary Vice-President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Estella Schmidt – Campaign Against Criminalising Communities & honorary Vice President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

John Hendy QC – Barrister and honorary Vice-President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Louise Christian – Lawyer and honorary Vice-President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Frances Webber – Former barrister and honorary Vice-President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Catrin Lewis – Barrister, former Chair and now honorary Vice President of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers.