

21 August 2017

The Rt. Hon Boris Johnson MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AH

Dear Boris

Human rights and academic freedom in Turkey

On behalf of the University and College Union's 100,000 members, I am writing to express our concerns about the persistent violation of human rights and academic freedom in Turkey.

Since the failed coup attempt in July 2016, the Turkish government has used the ongoing state of emergency to suppress its critics and undermine civil liberties and the rule of law. Human rights defenders, including trade unionists and Amnesty International activists, opposition MPs and independent journalists have all come under particular attack from the government.

As a trade union we are very concerned about the dismissal of over 100,000, public sector workers, in most cases without evidence of wrongdoing. These figures include almost 6500 academics and university administrative staff, including nearly 400 signatories of the so-called Peace Petition. Those dismissed by emergency decree are barred from other forms of university employment and many have had their passports cancelled, effectively preventing them from seeking work outside the country. In addition, fifteen private universities have been shut down and hundreds of academics and students detained.

The UK government has vigorously condemned the undemocratic coup attempt in July 2016. However, we are dismayed that you have done very little to condemn the arbitrary detentions, mass dismissals and travel bans and the erosion of democracy, civil liberties and academic freedom that have occurred since the failed coup attempt. Given the continuing human rights violations in Turkey, including the government's ongoing military offensive against the Kurdish population in south eastern Turkey, we are very concerned about the UK government's new arms deal with the Erdogan government. We call on you to

revisit this deal and agree to suspend arms sales to Turkey until international human rights standards are upheld.

Finally, I call on the UK government to push for the restoration of democratic freedoms in Turkey, including the reinstatement of dismissed academics, teachers and public sector workers, the release of arrested university teachers, journalists, politicians and human rights defenders and an end to the state of emergency.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Hunt', with a horizontal line underneath.

Sally Hunt
General Secretary