

[Letter to an opposition MP]

[your address]

[date]

[Mr/Ms xx] MP
Member for xx
[address]

Dear [Mr/Ms xx],

Re.: The Opposition's position on the situation in Ukraine

I am writing as your constituent, requesting that you urge your colleagues and the Opposition at large condemn the escalating abuse of human rights in Ukraine.

In November last year, demonstrators protesting against the Ukrainian government's decision to discontinue preparations for signing an Association Agreement with the European Union were violently attacked by riot police. These actions gave rise to two months of almost entirely peaceful protest by hundreds of thousands of people in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. The protests soon went beyond EU issues to become expressions of a rejection by the people of Ukraine of the escalating authoritarianism and corruption of their government.

On 16 January this year the Ukrainian parliament passed laws drastically curtailing freedom of speech and association. The legislation makes almost any expression of protest against the authorities illegal and punishable by long prison sentences. The introduction of these laws has sparked the violence of recent days that has resulted in the deaths and injury of many protesters.

The Australian government has so far issued one public statement of its position concerning the Ukrainian situation (in mid-December) and has, more recently, communicated its concerns to the Embassy of Ukraine in Australia.

The seriousness of the situation calls for a much firmer action on the government's part. The Opposition should urge the Australian government immediately to release protesters arrested for exercising their right to voice their opinion. The Opposition should call on Government to introduce personal sanctions against members of the regime in Ukraine, restricting their right to travel to Australia and their ability to undertake business activity or access any investments they may have in this country.

Yours sincerely,

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