

[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, peaceful pro-democracy 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.

On 16 January this year, the Ukrainian parliament passed laws drastically curtailing freedom of speech and association. That legislation would have made almost any expression of protest against the authorities illegal and punishable by long prison sentences. The introduction of these laws sparked further protest and a violent crackdown by State security forces that resulted in the deaths and injury of many protesters.

After public outcry and international pressure, the regime of the President of Ukraine has now been forced to promise repeal of the anti-dissent laws and appointment of a new government. Yet, security forces remain in the streets, and killings, beatings and abductions continue.

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 Opposition has made no public comments.

To ensure further violence is curbed and that President Yanukovych at a minimum fulfils his reform commitments, the situation calls for a much firmer action on the Government's part. The Opposition should urge the Australian Government to demand the immediate release of protesters arrested for exercising their right to voice their opinion. The Opposition should call on the 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,