



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon**  
Minister of State for South Asia and  
the Commonwealth  
Prime Minister's Special  
Representative on Preventing Sexual  
Violence in Conflict

King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH  
**Tel: 0207 008 5000**

**Email:**  
**[fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk)**

**[www.gov.uk/fcdo](http://www.gov.uk/fcdo)**

Bim Afolami MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

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23 March 2021

*Dear Bim,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 February to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about the farming protests in India. I am replying as the Minister of State for South Asia and the Minister responsible for Human Rights.

We recognise the interest in the Indian Government's agricultural reform program, and we respect India's democratic process, which includes the ability to debate and peacefully protest.

On 12 January, the Supreme Court suspended implementation of the reforms and designated an expert committee to scrutinise the detail of the laws. We understand that the committee has completed its consultations with concerned parties and will give a final report to the Supreme Court at the end of March.

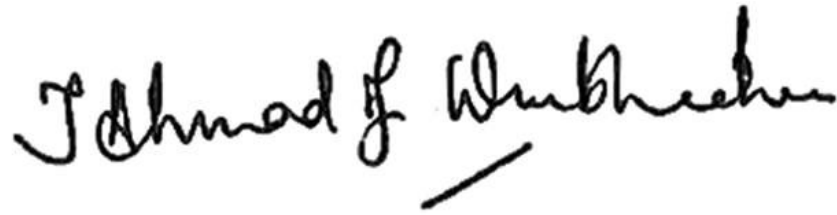
We recognise the interest in the Indian Government's agricultural reform program, and we respect India's democratic process, which includes the ability to debate and peacefully protest.

The right to peaceful protest is vital in any democracy. Governments, however, must have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. We of course encourage all countries to ensure that their domestic laws are applied in line with international human rights standards. Any allegation of human rights violations should be addressed appropriately.

The Foreign Secretary discussed the farmers' protests with his counterpart, Minister of Exterior Affairs Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, during his visit to India in December, whilst making clear that agricultural reform is an internal matter for India. I also discussed the farmers' protests with the High Commissioner of India on 10 March and with three Indian Government Ministers on 15 March during my visit to India.

The UK Government will continue to follow the protests closely, while recognising that the agricultural reforms are a matter for India.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON**  
Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth  
Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict