

Kit Lawrence
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19th June 2014

Dear Kit,

Thank you for writing to Yes Scotland regarding Amnesty International's Referendum Rights campaign. We very much welcome Amnesty's engagement with the referendum on September 18 and the focus on human rights in Scotland and around the world that organisation has sought to bring to the debate. As you will know, Yes Scotland was established to campaign for a Yes vote in that referendum, and will cease to exist after the referendum – and so decisions on Scotland's approach to human rights will be for future governments elected by the people of Scotland to decide.

That said, I think I can say that a vast majority of Yes supporters would firmly support each of the principles that you have raised and share the ambition to build a fairer and more globally responsible Scotland. I believe these goals are much more attainable with a Yes vote.

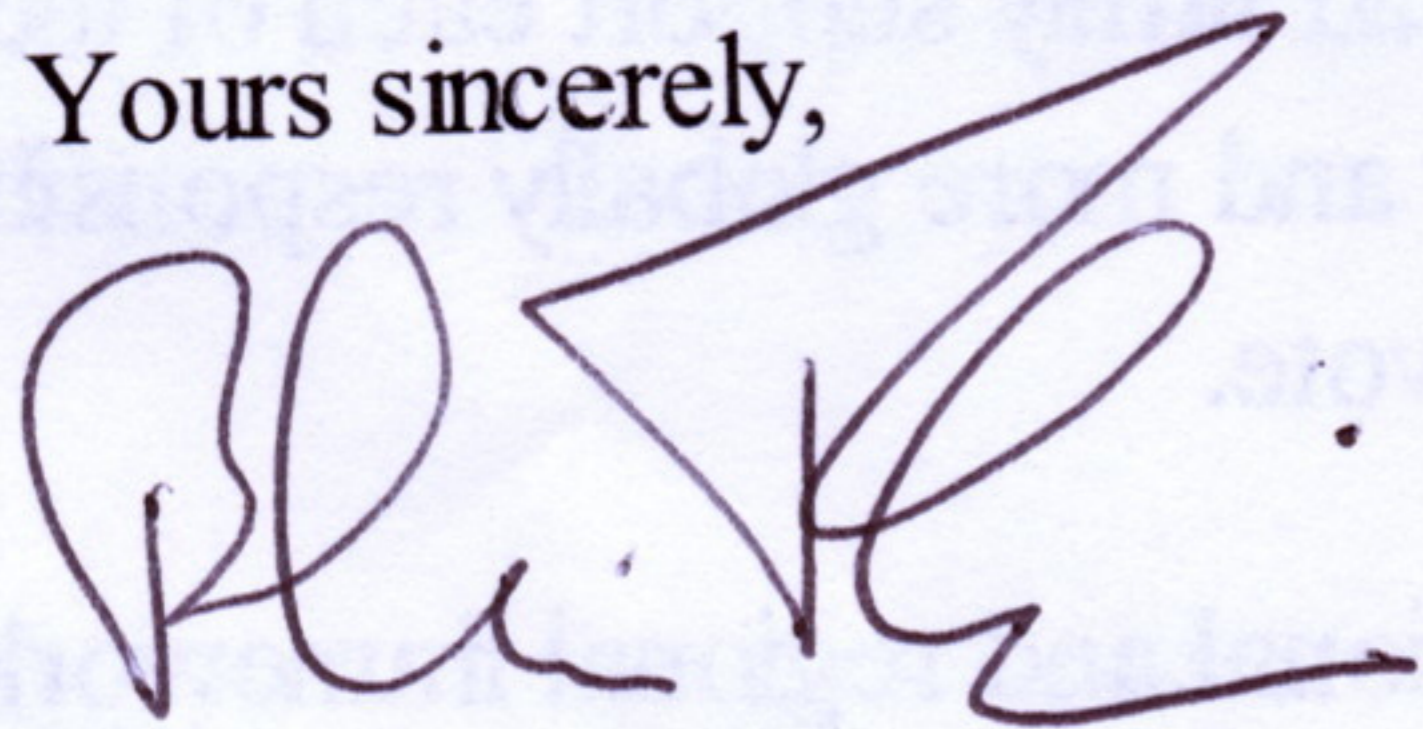
With regards to "a commitment to being bound by an international and regional framework of human rights", the Yes vision for Scotland includes a national written constitution, articulating the rights, entitlements and responsibilities of our people, in accordance with international human rights framework. After independence in March 2016, a constitutional convention will be established to draft our constitution, and the Scottish Government has already published for consultation a draft interim constitution which would be in place until the permanent document's ratification. The Scottish Government's draft interim constitution enshrines international human rights norms and (at Section 26) makes explicitly clear that Scots law is subject to the European Convention of Human Rights. We would encourage everybody in Scotland to engage with the consultation and make their views known.

Secondly, a Yes vote provides a unique opportunity to realise Amnesty's call for the prioritisation of basic rights such as adequate standard of living and housing. We believe that these rights are best safeguarded with a Yes vote in September, which will allow Scotland to set its own priorities and make its own choices – choosing a better path than a Westminster system which has failed so many. Policies such as the Bedroom Tax and other austerity measures implemented by the Westminster Government threaten the rights and wellbeing of our people, and are forecast by the Child Poverty Action Group to push an additional 100,000 children in Scotland into poverty by 2020. We believe that independence offers the best chance for Scotland to create a fairer society, with the full economic tools to alleviate poverty and inequality and raise living standards. An independent Scotland's written constitution could also enshrine the right to a home and education, as suggested by the current Scottish Government.

Thirdly, the opportunity of having our own voice on the international stage also offers by far the best opportunity for Scotland to play a strong role in the international pursuit of human rights recognition. The policies pursued by future Scottish Governments are of course a matter for them, and it is for the people to decide between political parties at general elections after independence – however, we would hope and be confident that future Scottish Governments would seek to promote human rights as one of the key tenets of foreign policy. Independence will allow Scotland to fully and directly engage with the international community for the first time, meaning we will have more powers to promote human rights on the world stage. Equally, the international community will gain in Scotland another voice and vote to encourage human rights recognition around world. Finally, only with the full economic powers following a Yes vote will a Scottish Government be in a meaningful position to implement the principle that our economic power should also be used to advance human rights both at home and abroad.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you again for getting in touch and for raising these important issues.

Yours sincerely,



Blair Jenkins

Chief Executive