

Rt Hon Jacob Rees Mogg MP
Leader of the House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

23rd June 2020

Dear Leader of the House of Commons,

We write to you as a coalition of 62 women's rights organisations, activists and Parliamentary staff past and present to urge you against allowing MPs to debate cases of bullying and harassment.

Bullying and harassment is an issue which occurs on all sides of the political spectrum and particularly affects young women and men. In 2018, a House of Commons report revealed that 19 per cent of Westminster staff had experienced sexual harassment in a single year. 39 per cent of staff, MPs and peers had experienced bullying or harassment of some sort while on the estate.

We welcome the implementation of the Independent Expert Panel for the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) to deal with bullying, harassment and sexual harassment complaints in Parliament. The ICGS follows Dame Laura Cox's inquiry into Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons staff and "is a true achievement for all the brave women and men who spoke out to try and make Parliament a better place to work".

However, we are extremely concerned that MPs will have the ability to debate ICGS determinations as part of the new complaints process. Intimidation regularly stops women from reporting sexual harassment and the fact that cases could be discussed by MPs would exacerbate this, meaning more women will suffer in silence.

Being in the room where political decisions are made matters and we need more women in all our diversity at every level of politics. The lack of safeguards to stop bullying and sexual harassment will also push more women out of politics and deter others from seeking a career in politics and public life.

We recognise that cases can be complicated, and these complications must be examined in depth. Yet, the ICGS system as it currently stands is able to make those examinations. The process to deal with bullying and sexual harassment complaints must be entirely independent of MPs, as per Dame Laura Cox's recommendation, and we support Chris Bryant MP's amendment to ensure individual cases are taken forward without delay and debate by MPs.

Both women and men who work in politics must be able to exercise their right to take part in the decisions that affect their lives without fear of bullying, abuse and sexual harassment.

We urge you to reconsider allowing MPs to debate cases of bullying and harassment, given the serious implications that this would have.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Pankhurst, Convener, Centenary Action Group
Rachel Smethers, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Sarah Childs, Professor of Politics and Gender
Dave Penman, FDA General Secretary
Cara Sanquest, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Seyi Akiwowo, Founder and Director, Glitch
Mandu Reid, Leader, Women's Equality Party
Sam Smethers, Chief Executive, The Fawcett Society
Laura Challinor, Parliamentary Assistant
Dr Hannah Barham-Brown, Deputy Leader, Women's Equality Party
Frances Scott, Founder, 50:50 Parliament
Enya Evans, Parliamentary Assistant
Amy Leversidge, Assistant General Secretary at FDA
Vanessa Vallely OBE, Managing Director, WeAreCity
Aisha Ali Khan, campaigner and women's rights activist
Joeli Brearley, Founder of Pregnant Then Screwed
Amelia Rose Tighe, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Andrew Mitchell, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Jordan Hall, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Jenny Symmons, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Kerri Prince, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Bee Rowlatt, Mary on the Green campaign
Catherine Anderson, Chief Executive, The Jo Cox Foundation
Tabitha Morton, Deputy Leader, Women's Equality Party
Deeba Syed, Sexual Harassment Lawyer, Rights of Women
Laura Williamson, Parliamentary Assistant
Christopher Hawkins, Research Officer
Holly Brazier Tope, Parliamentary Researcher
Sarah Dobson, Parliamentary Assistant
Phoebe Finn, Parliamentary Researcher
Tara O'Reilly, Chair, Women in Westminster
Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director, UK Women's Budget Group
Ross McLaren, Parliamentary Office Manager
Anna Ryder, Parliamentary Assistant
V. Irene Cockcroft, Women's Rights Activist
Sapphire Bleach, Head of Parliamentary Office
Natasa Pantelic, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Caitlin Prowle, Parliamentary Assistant
Emma Camp, Former Parliamentary Researcher
Akeela Ahmed MBE, Founder, She Speaks We Hear
Faeza Vaid MBE, Executive Director, Muslim Women's Network UK
Catherine Fookes, Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales
Hannah Stevens, The Parliament Project
Milton Brown, Parliamentary Assistant
Jamie Ali, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Kieran Maxwell, Parliamentary Assistant
Scott Dickson, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Kieran Aldred, Parliamentary Researcher
Jade Azim, GMB Workplace Rep, Senior Parliamentary Assistant
Zarin Hainsworth, Chair UK Civil Society Women's Alliance

Dr Wendi Momen, Hon Sec, Widows Rights International
Dr Lynda Dearlove, Women at the Well
Helen Kenny, FDA National Officer, House of Commons
Jenny McCullough, former House of Commons staff
Lisette Whittaker, former House of Commons staff
Jayne Hill, Constituency Assistant
Sophie Lyddon, Parliamentary Adviser
Emily Commander, former House of Commons staff
Sophie Stowers, Parliamentary Assistant
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