Your name

Full address

**Your MP’s name**

**MP address**

Date

Dear [MP name]

I write as a constituent to raise my concerns over the National Security Bill as currently presented and making its way through parliament. While the UK government states the bill is necessary to protect national security interests, several clauses extend beyond this scope and pose a significant threat to journalists and their ability to hold government to account, through reporting.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has expressed grave concern over disproportionate prison sentences for action classed as offences under proposed legislation. Journalists who obtain or disclose ‘protected information’ including to expose wrongdoing, are viewed no differently to spies and face life imprisonment if convicted. This sentence will undoubtedly have a chilling effect on journalists and journalism, acting as a curb on reporters and photographers carrying out vital work, including researching corruption or misconduct that would rightly reveal government errors.

Broad definitions in the bill also mean that journalists may feel forced to avoid reporting on issues where national security would not be threatened, but it remains possible they could be committing an offence.

The NUJ has called for narrow, clarified definitions to be included in the bill to ensure national security interests are protected without media freedom threatened. Together with a coalition of other press freedom organisations, the NUJ is stressing the need for a statutory public interest defence to ensure journalists are afforded necessary protections when providing the public with information they have every right to know.

MPs from across the House expressed shock and disappointment that so little time was allocated for scrutiny of the National Security Bill in the Commons, and as a journalist myself, I have significant concerns about the Bill as it currently stands, especially the lack of any public interest defence. I am particularly concerned that an amendment tabled by Kevan Jones MP with cross party support was not selected for debate.

I would therefore urge you to encourage your colleagues in the Lords to table similar amendments to rectify this situation, and to support any such amendments including others highlighted by the NUJ when the Bill returns to the Commons.

As drafted, anyone entering, inspecting, or taking photographs of prohibited places could face imprisonment or an unlimited fine. Such restrictions would result in the blanket criminalisation of journalists and the wider public if they are deemed to have committed an offence.

I recognise that protecting the safety interests of the UK is of the utmost importance but hope you will agree this should not take place under conditions which threaten the free press that underpins our democracy.

The NUJ’s evidence to the National Security Bill committee, alongside coalition members, outlines concerns and includes further detail on recommendations.

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/national-security-bill-committee-submission-pdf.html>

Yours sincerely,

[your name]