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The Right Honourable The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

6th February 2014

Dear Lord Chancellor,

I write to highlight the situation of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, currently incarcerated in HMP Woodhill. We are concerned for his wellbeing following reports of physical violence against him by other prisoners while in the holding bay following a legal visit. I ask if his situation may be reviewed given the physical threat against him, heightened because of his high profile and former affiliations to the English Defence League (EDL).

Having facilitated Stephen's departure from the EDL in 2013, we continued to provide support and training for him, address his grievances, and tackle the ideology and narrative of extremism up to the point of his sentencing. We did this in the interests of community cohesion as we recognised his importance to the EDL, believe Britain is safer without the group, and identify that a peaceful, human-rights based civil society approach is the best way to counter extremism of all kinds. However, we recognise that the process with Stephen, with the EDL, and with extremism in general is yet to be completed.

Given the short time frame between Stephen's departure from the EDL and his incarceration for an unrelated criminal offence, he is still associated with his former views and affiliated to the group he used to lead in the public consciousness. For this reason, he is particularly vulnerable to physical violence from fellow prisoners. Likewise, we feel that he is ideologically vulnerable as his perceived grievances against the state and against his attackers could increase. Moreover, should the physical violence against him escalate and he were murdered, we fear a nationwide sectarian and violent response from his supporters.

We believe that all prisoners are owed a duty of care, which, in Stephen's case, may not be sufficiently upheld if he continues to be treated in the current way. Moreover, we think that leaving an extremist organisation should not go unsupported and think that HMP Woodhill should make provision in Stephen's case not to do more harm than good as part of its general rehabilitative responsibilities. Finally, it is in the public interest and in the interest of national social cohesion that Stephen's rehabilitation and move away from the EDL is allowed to continue throughout his incarceration and beyond.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact my office on 0207 182 7280.

Yours sincerely,

Maajid Nawaz
Chairman & Co-Founder