

10 July 2020

His Excellency Datuk Mohamad Sadik Kethergany
High Commissioner
Malaysian High Commission
45-46 Belgrave Square
LONDON
SW1X 8QT

And by copy to The Rt Hon Dominic Raab,
Secretary of State
The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Your Excellency,

I am writing on behalf of the Association for International Broadcasting, the global trade association for cross-border media, in connection with the response of the Malaysian authorities to the edition of Al Jazeera's 101 East documentary series entitled "Locked up in Malaysia's lockdown".

Following the transmission of this programme on 3 July, Malaysian police have taken steps to investigate the broadcaster and six of its staff for alleged "sedition, defamation and violation of" the country's Communications and Multimedia Act.

This Association - of which Al Jazeera is a Member - is highly concerned that the police investigation is underway at a time when Al Jazeera staff in Malaysia are being targeted with online abuse in what appears to be a coordinated campaign. We are further concerned that the personal details of Al Jazeera staff have been disclosed on social media platforms, causing grave threats to their safety in addition to the possibility of additional harassment and intimidation.

The AIB urges the Malaysian government and its police to immediately stop the unwarranted investigations into the documentary which covers a subject of legitimate public interest.

The allegations that have been made, and which form the basis for the investigations, are without merit. They are particularly concerning given the significant progress that has been made in the area of media freedom in Malaysia in the past year.

At the Global Media Freedom Conference held in London one year ago, the then UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt hosted the Malaysian Minister of Communications and Multimedia, HE Mr Gobind Singh Deo. The Foreign Secretary noted the immense and rapid changes that had occurred in respect of media freedom in Malaysia. He said: "In a world where media freedom is being constrained, there are some amazing examples of countries that have gone in exactly the opposite direction and taken the courageous decision to free up their media, and one of those is Malaysia. So, we are absolutely delighted to welcome Govind here."

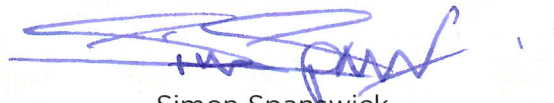
This Association urges the Malaysian government to ensure that the ideals represented by your Minister's presence at the important London conference are not impaired by the vexatious

investigations against journalists operating within and from the country. We also urge the Malaysian government to uphold its responsibility to protect journalists working in Malaysia under UN resolution 74/157 adopted on 18 December 2019. This states that Member States should do their “utmost to prevent violence, threats and attacks targeting journalists and media workers”.

It is also important to note that Kuala Lumpur is one of Al Jazeera’s three major broadcasting hubs, along with Washington DC and London. It is from the Kuala Lumpur bureau that Al Jazeera covers stories across the Asia region and from which it originates a significant number of award-winning programmes. This places Malaysia at the heart of international news and current affairs production, reinforcing the importance of the country as a global media hub.

On behalf of this Association, I request that you pass on our concerns to the appropriate government departments and officials in Malaysia.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Spanswick
Chief Executive