

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

6th February 2019

New Constituent,

RE: EDM 1854 - BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the election of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and associated Early Day Motion (EDM) 1854; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

With regards to EDMs in general, I prefer to raise concerns such as these with Ministers rather than signing EDMs, as I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system. I enclose a copy of an excellent article written by my colleague Chris Heaton-Harris MP, which I feel succinctly sets out those concerns. I hope that this will be of interest to you.

I recognise your concerns, but I must be clear that President-elect Bolsonaro received a mandate from the Brazilian people. It is not for the UK Government to interfere in the democratic processes of another country.

However, I can assure you that the Government is committed to tackling all forms of extremism, including extremism with a far-right influence. It will continue to raise concerns as part of our bilateral agreements with international partners and explore opportunities to work together to address the wide spectrum of risks associated with extremism. The UK Government will endeavour to work with the incoming Brazilian Administration while making these concerns clear.

The UK Government view on racism, homophobia, and misogyny is clear: it would never be acceptable. The UK is also the strongest champion of human rights on the international stage. It is right that we do not shy away from expressing that view where we disagree with other Governments, even where they are close allies.

Standing up for human rights is part of the Government's strategy for creating a more secure and prosperous world. The UK regularly funds human rights projects around the world through the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy. This year, £11.1 million of funding was allocated, supporting over 100 human rights projects, human rights defenders and civil society organisations. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office also highlights human rights abuses in its Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Chris Heaton-Harris: Why Early Day Motions are politically impotent

Writing exclusively for PoliticsHome, Conservative MP Chris Heaton-Harris describes Early Day Motions as 'politically impotent', and warns he is 'not going to waste time and money on sponsoring or signing EDMs'.

Since being elected last year, a number of my constituents have asked me to sign Early Day Motions (EDMs). I'm afraid I haven't signed any yet and don't plan on changing that in the future as I think they are pretty much politically impotent and too costly in their current form.

I'm not alone either, quite a number of the 2010 intake all independently decided to do the same thing and I would imagine that if the rules around EDMs don't change at the next election, even more MPs will join the "just say no" bandwagon.

Supposedly EDMs cost around £500 a go and we have already had 2423 tabled in this Parliament. Looking through the titles of the EDMs you'll see many a worthy political cause being lauded, people recently passed away remembered and an abundant amount of motherhood and apple pie. Yet even the most benign EDM rarely gets more than 50 signatories; indeed, many barely scrape into double figures.

I really do think that we need to change how EDMs can be sponsored before too many MPs decide to call it a day on them. Surely a sensible solution would be to say that an individual Member should not be allowed to table an EDM? We should at least try to separate the more popular ones by asking that there be at least ten MPs proposing for it to be accepted as being tabled and thus, opened up for others to sign.

Considering there are MPs out there who tend to sign a large number of EDMs (Sir Peter Bottomley and Alan Meale, please take a bow) surely setting an entry point of ten signatures is not an oppressive barrier if you really do care about a subject?

One of the main reasons (if not the main reason) why so few people sign EDMs is that in the last few years they have turned into the tool of the crap lobbyist. Sitting in a meeting room trying to work out how to justify their Client's retainer, many believe that if they can get a few signatures on an EDM he has done his or her job. Even better if you can persuade your client to run a campaign to get more MPs to sign up; more money for you to set up pointless meetings to talk about a pointless campaign to try and get more than a dozen signatures for a pointless motion that will be ignored by Government and just about everyone else too.

If you are a business, charity or NGO and your Public Affairs outfit recommends an EDM - fire them immediately! Few people take any notice of them and so they are really no more than political graffiti.

So, to my Constituents I say if you are writing to me, please don't ask me to sign an EDM. I'll happily raise subjects with Ministers, ask questions in the House or try to have a Westminster Hall debate - in other words, do things that actually count - but I'm not going to waste time and money on sponsoring or signing EDMs.