

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

1<sup>st</sup> March 2021

*New Content*

**RE: WESTERN SAHARA (EDM 1268)**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of Western Sahara, specifically regarding Early Day Motion (EDM) 1268; your comments upon which I have read with interest.

Notwithstanding the fact that as a Government Minister I am unable to sign EDMs, in any event, I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system, and I think it is much more effective to raise concerns directly with Ministers, both verbally, and in writing, rather than signing EDMs.

The UK regards the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. That said, as a member of the UN Security Council, the UK regularly discusses Western Sahara with Morocco and others, and fully supports UN-led efforts to reach a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

The UK's position on Western Sahara is consistent and long-standing. It is unaffected by recent developments, be it the normalisation of relations between Israel and Morocco, or the decision by now Former President Trump in December 2020 to recognise Western Sahara as part of Morocco – which is purely a matter for the US.

Support for human rights and human rights defenders is a priority around the world, including in Morocco, and I know that the UK Government raises human rights issues with the Moroccan Government accordingly.

Finally, the Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust export control regimes anywhere in the world. All export licence applications are rigorously assessed on a case-by-case basis against the *Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria*, based on the most up-to-date information and analysis available. No export licenses are issued where there is a clear risk that the goods might be used for internal repression, or in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

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**