



e-Parliament

25th July 2008

Dear Colleague,

At this moment, at least 80 people around the world are behind bars because they dared to express their political opinions online. I am hoping that you will take a moment to add your name to a petition by parliamentarians and others calling for their release.

The short statement below, calling for freedom of expression on the Internet, is being signed by members of Parliament and Congress on all continents, and will then be circulated for signature by journalists, citizens and groups. Once it has received a large number of signatures, it will be sent to heads of state and government -- including those who are holding the prisoners -- as well as to the UN Human Rights Council. The list of prisoners named in the statement will be updated regularly.

This *Call for e - Freedom* has been initiated by the e-Parliament, which as you may know is a new forum for democratic legislators.

For the first time in history, the internet enables us to have a truly global conversation about our common future – in our local communities, our national communities and our global community. In blogs, websites and discussion groups, people are sharing ideas, exposing corruption and building networks to solve common problems.

Yet in some parts of the world, people who express views that conflict with those of their leaders risk imprisonment, torture or death. This is not only a denial of their rights. It denies their countries the benefits of free debate, and it prevents the world from hearing their voices as our global conversation expands day by day.

We believe it is entirely appropriate for those of us who have been elected to Parliaments and Congresses to raise our voices on behalf of those who are in prison, and in support of the Internet as a global space for free expression and debate.

You can add your name simply by emailing info@e-parl.net . Alternatively please visit our website at www.e-parl.net or text +44-751-586-1589 or write to Post Box 922, 2400 Copenhagen NV, Denmark. If you can also encourage your colleagues to add their names, we would be most grateful.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Graham Watson, MEP
Member of the European Parliament
Chair, e-Parliament Democracy Network