



Ministry  
of Justice

**Legal Services Policy**

Zone 4.41  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

T 020 3334 3555

F 020 3334 3669

E [general.queries@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:general.queries@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.justice.gov.uk/moj](http://www.justice.gov.uk/moj)

Maria SLAZAK  
Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe  
Rue Joseph II,  
40-1000 Bruxelles,  
Belgium

Our ref: 021321

17 April 2015

**CONCERNS REGARDING DEATH THREATS AGAINST  
MR PHIL SHINER, A LAWYER**

Dear Ms SLAZAK

Thank you for your letter dated 12 March 2015 addressed to the Rt. Hon Chris Grayling, Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor, on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE). Your letter has been passed to the Legal Services Policy team at the Ministry of Justice as we are responsible for the policy on legal services. I have been asked to reply.

You have raised concerns regarding Mr Phil Shiner, a human rights lawyer. I understand that the CCBE previously wrote to the Justice Secretary on 2 July 2014 expressing concerns about the situation of human rights defenders, and raising specific concerns about the number of death threats made to Mr Shiner and his family as a result of his activities as a lawyer in human rights cases. You ask that the Government investigate the reported incidents of harassment against Mr Shiner and bring judicial proceedings against those responsible.

I should explain that Human Rights Defenders are protected by the same criminal laws that apply to everyone else. I do acknowledge that the issues raised have caused Mr Shiner and his family considerable distress. However, if an individual is seeking criminal sanctions against alleged acts of harassment then it would be a matter for the police and courts to investigate. It would not be appropriate for Ministers, or their officials, to intervene in nor comment on individual cases. I am therefore unable to intervene in or comment on Mr Shiner's specific case. I would therefore suggest that Mr Shiner consider referring these issues to the police.

I am sorry I cannot be of more help but I do hope that the information provided is useful.

Yours sincerely,

**Jenny Pickrell**  
**Head of Lead Services Policy**