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13<sup>th</sup> May 2014

Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
Home Secretary  
Peel Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary,

We are writing to ask that you launch an urgent investigation into why Cambridgeshire Police called on a Twitter user at home and demanded he remove a tweet about a political party– even though he had committed no crime.

We understand from Michael Abberton that police visited him without warning at home following a complaint from a UKIP councillor over a tweet in which Mr Abberton mocked the party. We believe that the actions of the police are a direct affront to freedom of speech, and represent a worrying trend in the UK towards freedom of speech on social media in particular.

The case of Mr Abberton is particularly disturbing because of the political involvement in the complaint. Free speech is vital in a functioning democracy and must be protected at all times, but its importance is often felt most keenly at election time. We believe that the actions of the Cambridgeshire Police set a troubling precedent.

We ask that you investigate this matter immediately and further call on you clarify to police all laws relating to free speech and to elections. That the police saw fit to take this complaint any further than the police station is troubling enough but two further aspects of this case also require address. The first is that the police visited Mr Abberton – who it was clear had committed no crime – at his home, without warning. No one should have to fear a knock on their door by police for simply exercising their legitimate right to speak freely.

Secondly, we understand that the police who visited Mr Abberton asked him not to tweet about their visit. Such behaviour would not look out of place in a totalitarian regime and is a further affront to free speech and expression in a country that has often led the way in condemning such behaviour elsewhere.

These questions need answers swiftly. We call for any investigation to include clear recommendations on how such incidents will be prevented in future and look forward to hearing from you on how you plan to deal with this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Jodie Ginsberg

CEO Index on Censorship