

(Address)

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (MP's name)

House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir

As your constituent resident at \_\_\_\_\_, I am writing to you to seek your assistance in achieving true equal treatment for all Gurkhas. I myself am a Gurkha and I served in the Brigade for \_\_\_\_\_ years.

Although the British public has united unanimously behind the Gurkhas in their campaign for equality of treatment with fellow British soldiers, one area of concern still remains - the fact that all Gurkhas do not receive a fair and equal pension. Gurkhas who retired from the Army prior to 1997 receive a pension settlement between as little as 1/6<sup>th</sup> or 1/8<sup>th</sup> of that of the UK soldiers they served alongside. For example, the average Gurkha pension received today for those who retired prior to 1997 is around £172 from a rank below a Corporal and £351 for a Lieutenant per month. This clearly demonstrates that a much lower value is still placed on the Gurkhas' service.

The MOD's arguments to justify this inferior Gurkha pension is solely based on the apparent expectation for Gurkhas to retire in Nepal. This argument is unjust and flawed. First, equating the value of our service to our country of origin rather than the service we have undertaken is proof of the low value which is placed on our loyalty and service in HM Forces. All soldiers, including Gurkhas, who have served in the UN receive a UN rate pension which is applicable worldwide, regardless of the economic status of their native country. It is simply equal treatment for equal service rendered, and there is no reason why this is not the case for Gurkhas in the British Army as well.

Second, the MOD claims they cannot change our pension due to the Tripartite Agreement. However, the agreement is a non-binding, framework of co-operation between the UK, India and Nepal which was signed in 1947. As it is not a treaty, any of the signatories can suggest an amendment to it at any time. Almost all of its terms have, in fact, now been revised, including the recent entitlement for Gurkhas to settle in the UK. If the MOD really chose to adhere to the agreement in full they would need to ensure an equal pension for Gurkhas either way as it clearly states that "In all matters of promotion, welfare and other facilities the Gurkha troops should be treated on the same footing as the other units in the parent army so that the stigma of mercenary troops may for all time be wiped out." In short, as all welfare provisions need to be provided on an equal footing, pensions should be included in this. Moreover, there are queries over whether the MOD has actually honoured the stipulation as set out in the Tripartite Agreement of implementing the changes by the Indian Pay Commission every ten years.

Finally, The MOD argues that as the Gurkhas were based in Hong Kong until 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997, an inferior pension is justified. However, ever since 1962, there have always been Gurkhas stationed in the UK. A Gurkha battalion, accompanied by their families, was stationed in Tidworth in the UK in 1962, when they were pulled out to reinforce the British Forces in the Borneo emergency. They did however return to the UK in 1970 and since then there has always been a Gurkha Battalion in the UK. Disregarding these facts, the crucial issue is service to the Crown; the value of which should not be determined purely by dates.

As my constituency MP, I hope that you will be able to act on my behalf to ensure that all Gurkhas receive an equal and fair pension moving forwards. I am therefore writing to ask you to contact the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Defence Minister, John Hutton; to pass on these concerns and to ask that he ensures that the Gurkhas are treated as equals by the British government in the future.

We are not demanding the backdating of any pension payments, nor any further retrospective grants such as receiving a terminal gratuity payment equal to that which British counterparts have received. The Gurkhas are simply asking that all Gurkhas, regardless of when they served, receive an equal and fair pension from this point onwards.

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

### **Still not equal treatment for all Gurkhas**

One area of concern still remains in relation to the equal treatment of Gurkhas – the right to receive an equal pension. As a result, we are demanding that all Gurkhas, whether they served before or after 1997, should receive a fair and equal pension. The MOD's arguments to justify this inferior Gurkha pension are inconsistent because:

1. The MOD refuse to take into account that ever since 1962, there have always been Gurkhas stationed in the UK. A Gurkha battalion was stationed in Tidworth in the UK in 1962. Although they were pulled out later, they did return to the UK in 1970 and since then there has always been a Gurkha Battalion in the UK.

2. Since 1947, the Tripartite Agreement has been revisited many times and almost all of its terms have now been revised. Yet, the MOD insists on hiding behind one section of this outdated agreement (Pay and Pensions) in order to deny Gurkhas the right to enjoy an equal pension to their British counterparts. It is important to note that this is not a binding treaty, but rather it established a framework of co-operation between the UK, India and Nepal in relation to the Gurkhas. As a signatory to this agreement the UK could at any point suggest to further revise it.

If the MOD really chose to adhere to the agreement in full they would need to ensure an equal pension for Gurkhas either way as it clearly states that, "In all matters of promotion, welfare and other facilities the Gurkha troops should be treated on the same footing as the other units in the parent army so that the stigma of mercenary troops may for all time be wiped out". In short, as all welfare provisions need to be provided on an equal footing, pensions should be included in this.

### **An equal pension will save public expenditure**

Alongside the government's announcement that all Gurkhas are eligible to settle in the UK, it was also clarified that they will be entitled to benefits, including entitlement to pension credit, in order to secure a decent income. Whereas this was a great step forwards, it has also further disillusioned many in believing that residing in the UK is the only option in order to receive an equal pension by topping it up with the benefits available.

If Gurkhas were granted an equal pension in Nepal or elsewhere based on their service and not on where they were born, the pressure on retired Gurkha soldiers to come to the UK might be less. Interestingly, there are those who have served in the UN who receive a UN rate of pension which is applicable worldwide and not based on the economic status of a soldier's native country. It is simply equal treatment for equal service rendered and that should also be the case for Gurkhas.

**What can you do?** The BGWS has begun meeting with Parliamentarians to raise the issue of the Gurkhas' unequal and unfair pension. But we cannot achieve this alone. Your views are vital to inform the MOD's decision to review their position. We sincerely hope that you will take the time to set out why the current pension is not fair and not equal.

**1. Contact your local MP** Please write to your local MP outlining your concerns about the continued unequal treatment of Gurkhas. As part of this, please ask them to raise these concerns in Parliament. If you are unsure who your MP is, this information is available at: <http://www.upmystreet.com/commons> or by calling 020 7219 4272. All MPs can be reached at: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

We have provided a template letter below for you to send to your MP. If possible, use personal anecdotes and details as this will bring the issue to life and give it a personal context which is more emotionally powerful.

**2. Follow-up** To ensure we maintain a co-ordinated approach and are aware of any new information, we would be grateful if you could send us copies of any replies you may receive. Please send any copies to us at BGWS, 119 Wren Way, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 8TA, UK or [hulaksewa@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hulaksewa@yahoo.co.uk)