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The Rt Hon Theresa May
10 Downing Street,
City of Westminster,
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21st November 2018

Dear Prime Minister,

Once again we find ourselves writing to you in protest at stated British government policy with regard to Brexit, freedom of movement and your treatment of our EU27 friends and colleagues living in the UK.

In January 2017 in your 'litmus test' speech at Lancaster House you said:

*"We want to guarantee the rights of EU citizens who are already living in Britain, and the rights of British nationals in other member states, as early as we can. The same rules and laws will apply on the day after Brexit as they did before."*ⁱ

In September 2017 in your speech in Florence you told EU27 citizens in the UK:

*"We want you to stay; we value you; and we thank you for your contribution to our national life – and it has been, and remains, one of my first goals in this negotiation to ensure that you can carry on living your lives as before. I am clear that the guarantee I am giving on your rights is real."*ⁱⁱ

Over the past two and a half years we have tried – time and time again – to highlight the importance of free movement for British citizens living in the EU27. We have pointed out how maintaining our free movement across the EU is the only way you could deliver on your promises above to us and EU27 citizens living in the UK. We have told you how crucial free movement is for us to continue living our daily lives and earning a living, and how for many British citizens it is an essential, not a nice to have. We have raised this in our discussions with DExEU ministers, civil servants, MPs and British consular officials in our host states. We have also tried to raise this with you in person but you have not seen fit to respond positively to any of our requests to meet with you.

We now know that you never had any serious intention of protecting our free movement rights because your overriding objective in going ahead with Brexit is to end them. The Withdrawal Agreement contains no provisions on continuing free movement and you have negotiated away a fundamental right on which tens of thousands of lives are based and dependent. You have done this against the interests of the UK – economic and otherwise - and against the wishes of the majority of the UK population who, when the reciprocal nature of EU free movement is explained to them, support the concept.ⁱⁱⁱ ^{iv} And then you pretend - in a promotional video to sell the agreement - that you have negotiated the end of free movement for EU27 citizens into the UK whilst retaining visa free access to the EU for British citizens.^v As you well know, British citizens will lose free movement too and need a visa to study, live or work in the EU27 but they won't realise that from your government propaganda.

Not only have we lost our free movement rights, we have also been saddled with settled status in the majority of the EU27 Member States. Over the last three months we have been asking our host states for information on their plans for the implementation of settled status or worse, how we will be treated in the event of a no deal. The consistent response we have

received is, “*We are waiting to see how your government treats our citizens after March.*” This comment has been repeated in capital after capital over the last few weeks. We are in limbo and will continue to be so, all because the EU27 simply do not trust you to respect the rights of their citizens after March 2019.

This distrust that the EU27 were already feeling was made infinitely worse by your speech to the CBI on 19 November 2018 in which you referred to their citizens, our EU27 counterparts, as “queue jumpers.”^{vi} You tried to set up a nasty “them and us” comparison with non-EU citizens and you cynically refused to recognise that EU free movement is not the same concept as immigration and is a two way street: the same rights that enable a Spanish surgeon to work in Surrey allow a Scottish surgeon to work in Salamanca. That Spanish surgeon contributes to the UK, as does the Italian carer who looks after the British patient discharged into a care home after her stay in hospital, as does the Scottish doctor working in Spain. But you didn’t mention reciprocity or the fundamental differences between free movement and immigration or the role you yourself have so actively and enthusiastically played in preventing Indian software programmers from working in the UK or joining their British spouses and families after marriage. You have, from the outset of your premiership, stressed the importance of reciprocity in relation to citizens’ rights. You must know that your gratuitous denigration of EU27 citizens, designed to appease the wing of your party causing you difficulty at the present time, is dangerously provocative to the governments of the countries in which we live and in whose hands our treatment lies. They will respond in kind.

That comment and that speech were disgraceful. They dishonour your position and should never have been made by any British Prime Minister, let alone one charged with protecting the interests and safety of five million EU27 and British citizens living in each other’s countries, in complex and highly sensitive international treaty negotiations that are yet to be concluded.

You owe every single EU27 citizen living in the UK an immediate apology. We won’t be holding our breath that you’ll give them one. But on top of that, it is time for the xenophobia, the hostile environment and the attacks to stop.

We look forward to receiving your reply at your earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Jane Golding
Co-Chair, British in Europe

Fiona Godfrey
Co-Chair, British in Europe

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-florence-speech-a-new-era-of-cooperation-and-partnership-between-the-uk-and-the-eu>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://whatukthinks.org/eu/questions/do-you-think-it-is-a-good-or-bad-thing-for-eu-citizens-to-have-the-right-to-live-and-work-in-other-eu-countries/>

^{iv} <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/11/16/opportunity-or-threat-how-europeans-view-freedom-of-movement/>

^v https://twitter.com/theresa_may/status/1063854452707401728

^{vi} <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-to-cbi-19-november-2018>