

OPEN LETTER

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 6:00AM MONDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2018

The Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister of New Zealand
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
via email: jacinda.ardern@parliament.govt.nz

cc: The Right Honourable Winston Peters
Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister
w.peters@ministers.govt.nz

26 November 2018

Dear Prime Minister,

As New Zealand academics, researchers and human rights advocates, we have been shocked and disturbed by the reports of intimidation and harassment suffered by Professor Anne-Marie Brady of Canterbury University. According to news reports, she has been repeatedly burgled and her car tampered with, starting from December 2017. Reports have suggested that these events are related to her high-profile academic work on overseas influence campaigns by the government of the People's Republic of China.

Attempts to intimidate and harass one academic in New Zealand have implications for the freedoms of all the others - and indeed, for the freedoms of all who live here, including migrant communities and tangata whenua. Freedom of expression and academic freedom are taken for granted in New Zealand, as givens upon which our social and political norms are based. Threats to these freedoms should not be taken lightly. In these uncertain times, these are principles to hold to, and are not to be traded away.

We note that universities in New Zealand are legally obliged to act as “critic and conscience of society” (Education Act, 1989). For that obligation to be fulfilled, academics must be able to work without fear. As such, we echo the recent calls by Professors of Chinese history and literature Geremie Barmé and John Minford for the New Zealand authorities to take the threats against Professor Brady more seriously, in consideration of their implications for all New Zealanders.

We reject any attempt to blame or scapegoat whole ethnic communities in New Zealand for threats to academic freedoms, and urge the government to be transparent in the outcome of any investigation in order to help prevent this.

We also urge Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to make a clear statement in defence of academic freedom in New Zealand in light of the Brady case, and to be very clear that any intimidation and threats aimed at silencing academic voices in this country will not be tolerated.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Blackett, Executive Director, Amnesty International New Zealand

Anne-Marie Brook, Co-founder, Human Rights Measurement Initiative (Motu
Economic and Public Policy Research)

New Zealand Alternative

Dr Julienne Molineaux, Auckland University of Technology

Dr Kate Nicholls, School of Social Sciences and Public Policy, Auckland University of
Technology

Associate Professor Jane Verbitsky, School of Social Sciences and Public Policy,
Auckland University of Technology

Dr Cristina Parra, School of Social Sciences and Public Policy, Auckland University of
Technology

Dr Antje Deckert, School of Social Sciences and Public Policy, Auckland University of
Technology

Dr Carol Neill, School of Social Sciences and Public Policy, Auckland University of
Technology

Dr Kirsten Hanna, School of Social Sciences and Public Policy, Auckland University of Technology

Dr David Hall, Senior Researcher, The Policy Observatory, Auckland University of Technology

Professor of Law Kate Diesfeld, Auckland University of Technology

Associate Professor Ineke Crezee, School of Language and Culture, Auckland University of Technology

Dr Pat Strauss, School of Language and Culture, Auckland University of Technology

Associate Professor Nicola Gaston, Department of Physics, University of Auckland

Kate Hannah, Research Fellow, University of Auckland/PhD Candidate, Science and Society Centre, VUW

Dr Matheson Russell, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Auckland

Dr Barbara Grant, Associate Professor, Higher Education, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland

Dr Lindsey Te Ata o Tu MacDonald, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Canterbury

Professor Jack Heinemann, School of Biological Sciences, University of Canterbury

Dr Jarrod Gilbert, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Canterbury

Robert Patman, Professor of International Relations, Department of Politics, University of Otago

Professor Jack Vowles, Professor of Comparative Politics, Victoria University of Wellington

Professor Tahu Kukutai, University of Waikato

Dr Reuben Steff, School of Social Studies, University of Waikato

Nicky Hager, Author

Dr Paul G Buchanan, IGIS Reference Group member, 36th Parallel

Dr Christopher Fung, Director Native American and Indigenous Studies, and Senior Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Massachusetts Boston

Tze Ming Mok, PhD Candidate, Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science