



Tweede Kamer

DER STATEN-GENERAAL

to The Right Hon. Theresa May MP
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date 14 februari 2014

Dear Home Secretary,

Reference is made to the bill that you introduced on July 3, 2013 with respect to the proposed ban on the import, export and sale of the drug Khat. I strongly support such a ban.

As you are aware the Netherlands government banned the import, export and sale of Khat as per January 5, 2013. The government acted in reaction to years of complaints by many other EU Member States that the Netherlands was used as the hub for the transport of Khat throughout Europe.

The legal import of Khat in the Netherlands resulted in the illegal export of the same substance in those Member States with large Yemeni or Somali communities. At the same time several municipalities in the Netherlands also requested a ban on Khat because they experienced the adverse effect of this drug on their Yemeni and/or Somali population. The frequent use of Khat is found by the Trimbos Institute (in its report on Khat use among Somalis in the Netherlands) to prevent its users to take part in society and adversely affect their social behaviour. In addition, the unemployment rates among its users are staggering with many not able to obtain or hold on to a job. Many of them do not have jobs or were not able to keep their jobs if they found one. Several of them restricted their daily activities to chewing Khat in a more or less permanent state of oblivion. Even though Khat is considered not to be physically addictive, it was shown that a certain form of dependence on the drug was evident. The problems for users and their communities are troublesome and greatly worried the Dutch authorities. I agree in principle with the findings of your Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs but do not agree that a ban is not necessary.



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The ban on Khat in our country prevent all airlines that fly on our major airport Schiphol and or any of the other airports in the Netherlands to carry Khat. Because Khat is to be consumed within three days of its production, this policy change had immediate effect on its distribution in the Netherlands.

However the fact that import is still legal in the United Kingdom creates a new, albeit not unexpected, problem for the Member States on the continent. The current policy of the British government unfortunately seems to have resulted in your country now being the primary source of Khat in Europe. I understand that each week airplanes land at your airports carrying illegal Khat that is intended for the continental market.

Since the introduction of the ban in the Netherlands our police and customs have stepped up their search for Khat on vessels from the United Kingdom. The following transports were intercepted by doing so since January 2013:

2013

January	700 plants and many kg's	Hoek van Holland
January	118 kg	Haarlem
February	1500 kg	Heemskerk
February	900 kg	Breda
March	650 kg	Breda
April	47 kg	Schiphol Airport
April	600 kg	Aalsmeer
June	unknown kg	Gorredijk

I am aware of media reports which state that the production and export of Khat in countries as Kenia, Sudan and Somalia assists terrorist groups like Al-Shabab to finance their terrorist activities. I have not seen any conclusive evidence to this fact, so I will continue to call it 'rumours'. Having said that, it cannot be denied that it is possible that the production and export of this substance and the proceeds thereof somehow find their way to said groups. A ban may also be helpful in this respect.

It is for all these reasons that I endorse your proposal to ban Khat in the United Kingdom and respectfully urge you to continue with your legislation. Regulation instead of a ban on the import will without any doubt continue to lead to the export and therefore illegal import of Khat on the continent. It goes without saying that international criminal organisations will benefit from this easy way of proliferation of this drug. I trust that this can never be the intention of your government nor of your Parliament.



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I would highly appreciate your reply to this letter at your earliest convenience. I will send a copy of this letter to my colleagues of the Home Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons, by doing so asking for their support and solidarity.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Ard van der Steur

Member of the Dutch House of Representatives
Deputy chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
Spokesperson for the VVD on Justice