

20 April 2006

Our reference: 27554

The Right Reverend Peter B Price
The Bishop of Bath and Wells
The Palace
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I am writing with reference to your letter of 23 January and your subsequent letter of 30 March, both to Jack Straw, in which you mentioned an individual or individuals featured on the Channel 4 "Real War on Terror" programmes. In his reply to you of 20 April, Mr Straw mentioned that we did not hold a tape of the programme in question but would ask Channel 4 for a copy.

My officials have now viewed the programme and clarified that it referred to the cases of Bisher al-Rawi and Jamil el-Banna, who were detained in The Gambia, and Benyam Mohammed al-Habashi, who was detained in Pakistan.

Mr Straw referred to Bisher al-Rawi and Jamil el-Banna in his last reply. To reiterate, it would be inappropriate to comment in detail on issues relating to these individuals while their case remains the subject of legal proceedings. But in relation to allegations about the circumstances of their

detention, I can confirm that the UK did not request the detention of either of the men in The Gambia and did not play any role in their transfer to Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.

On the subject of Benyam Mohammed al-Habashi, as Mr Straw explained to the Foreign Affairs Committee in December 2005, Mr al-Habashi was interviewed once by a member of the UK Security Service while he was in detention in Karachi in 2002. The Security Service had no role in his capture or in his transfer from Pakistan.

The programme reported Mr al-Habashi's allegations that he had experienced torture. In response to this I would reiterate that the UK Government unreservedly condemns the use of torture as a matter of fundamental principle. We work hard with our international partners to eradicate this abhorrent practice. We abide by our commitments under international law, including the UN Convention Against Torture and the European Convention on Human Rights, and we expect all other countries to comply with their international obligations. We are active in pressing them to deliver on these human rights commitments.

MARGARET BECKETT