



THE
IRAQ
INQUIRY

Address: 35 Great Smith Street,
London SW1P 3BQ

Website: www.iraqinquiry.org.uk

Email: secretariat@iraqinquiry.org.uk

Committee: Sir John Chilcot (Chairman)
Sir Lawrence Freedman
Sir Martin Gilbert
Sir Roderic Lyne
Baroness Usha Prashar

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

15 July 2013

Dear Prime Minister

IRAQ INQUIRY: UPDATE ON PROGRESS

I thought it would be helpful to write to you about the Inquiry's progress since my letter to you of 13 July last year and your response of 16 July.

In my letter last year I set out the exceptional nature of the Inquiry's task, the outline of the scope of the report, and the steps which would be required before we would be in a position to submit the final report to you.

A great deal has been done since then and we have made very considerable progress in writing our report. The Inquiry has recently begun a dialogue with Sir Jeremy Heywood on material the Inquiry wishes to include in its report to reflect its analysis of discussions in Cabinet and Cabinet Committees and their significance, including in support of the lessons the Inquiry intends to identify.

We have also begun a dialogue about the references the Inquiry wishes to make to the content of Mr Blair's Notes to President Bush, and to the records of discussions between Mr Blair and Mr Brown and Presidents Bush and Obama.

My letter of July 2012 also stated that the Inquiry had informed the former Cabinet Secretary in October 2011 that it would not be able to begin the "Maxwellisation" process (whereby any individual that the Inquiry intended to criticise would be informed of the Inquiry's views and offered the opportunity to make representations), until all the relevant sections of the draft report had been prepared. We expected to be in a position to begin that process by the middle of this year.

The Inquiry intends to write to the relevant individuals at the end of this month informing them that the Committee has concluded that there are areas in which some aspect of the part they played means the Inquiry is likely to make a criticism.

The Inquiry recognises the seriousness with which any criticism of an individual is likely to be regarded by that individual and it is determined to adopt an approach which is balanced, considered and fair.

The first letters to individuals at the end of this month will, therefore, inform them that the Inquiry intends the process of Maxwellisation to be a confidential one. The Inquiry will not comment on either the number of or identity of the individuals it intends to criticise. It will expect a similar duty of confidentiality from those individuals, and will be seeking an undertaking to that effect.

The Inquiry has also concluded that it should as far as practicable issue all the second letters setting out the provisional criticisms at the same time, and give individuals a reasonable time to respond. It will therefore be asking the recipients to let the Inquiry know if there are any reasons why they would not be in a position to respond to a letter from the Inquiry, to be sent at the end of October.

That timetable also gives individuals the time to decide whether they are likely to want support from the Government or others; and for the arrangements for that support to be put in place.

The timetable for sending the second letters to individuals will depend on the satisfactory completion of discussions between the Inquiry and the Government on disclosure of material from the thousands of documents the Inquiry wishes to include in its report or publish alongside it. That process is time consuming for both the Inquiry and the government and the Inquiry is grateful for the considerable progress that has been made over the last year.

The Inquiry will, of course, need carefully to consider any responses to the points of criticism before finalising its report.

My colleagues and I remain determined to submit at the earliest opportunity a report which reflects the magnitude of the issues we have been examining and the importance of the lessons we believe need to be learnt.

As the House of Commons will be rising for the Recess on 18 July, I would like to put a copy of this letter on the Inquiry's website on Wednesday morning.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Sir Jeremy Heywood.

Yours sincerely,
John Chilcot

SIR JOHN CHILCOT