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Committee: Sir John Chilcot (Chairman)
Sir Lawrence Freedman
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The Right Honourable Gordon Brown
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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21 January 2010

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 19 January, which was delivered to the Inquiry's offices yesterday. Following our hearings yesterday and today, I have had the opportunity to discuss the letter with my colleagues on the Inquiry.

As you know, I announced on 17 December that the Committee is determined that it wishes to remain firmly outside Party politics; and that the Inquiry should not be used as a political platform for political advantage by any Party. The Committee had, therefore, concluded that Ministers currently serving in Government roles with significant responsibilities for Iraq policy in the period covered by the Inquiry should not be invited to give evidence until after the General Election. The Committee remains concerned about that mounting risk.

But as a matter of fairness, the Committee has concluded that it should offer, if you wish to take it up, the opportunity for you, David Miliband and Douglas Alexander, to attend hearings before the General Election.

The Committee had planned to conclude hearings on Monday 8 February. It will not be possible to hold additional hearings before that date. We would also need to give you and the Committee sufficient time to prepare. That would mean, if you take up the offer, holding hearings at the end of February or early March; and fixing the dates over the next few days. If, of course, in the meantime a General Election is called, we would need to postpone the hearing, as we have always made clear.

I should be grateful if you would let me know whether that is how you wish to proceed.

As your letter to me is now in the public domain, I shall be publishing this letter at 10.00 am tomorrow morning when the next hearing session begins.

Yours sincerely
Mr. Tins

SIR JOHN CHILCOT