



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**Nigel Adams MP**  
Minister of State for Asia

King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH  
**Tel: 0207 008 5000**

**Email:**  
**[fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk)**

**[www.gov.uk/fcdo](http://www.gov.uk/fcdo)**

Tom Tugendhat MP  
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee  
Houses of Parliament  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
UK

19 November 2020

Dear Tom,

As you know, at the heart of the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is our commitment to promote the interests of British citizens.

As the Minister responsible for consular policy, I wanted to update you and the other members of the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) on our work to improve our support, including how we handle complex cases.

Last year, Dame Judith MacGregor was asked by the then Foreign Secretary to carry out a review of how we handle complex consular cases. Dame Judith is a former Head of Mission in the Diplomatic Service, but with no specific consular policy background or current link to the FCDO.

Dame Judith was asked to focus on policy rather than the detail of specific cases, although she met a number of families to discuss their cases. In particular, Dame Judith looked into the handling of complex consular cases, with particular reference to:

- a) the way in which the FCDO balances the needs of the individual and the broader bilateral relationship; and
- b) the steps taken to keep families informed of its actions to support their relatives, while protecting sensitive information.

I am writing to let you and your colleagues on the FAC know I will deposit a copy of the review and this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

For my own part, I endorse Dame Judith's key findings, in particular that:

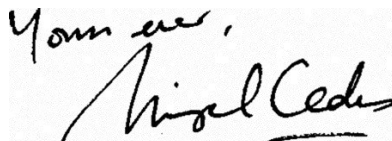
- the FCDO places the interests and the welfare of the individual at the heart of its policy and practice;
- [there is] no evidence of a systematic attempt to protect bilateral relationships at the expense of the individual, although political teams were mindful of the impact, and more importantly, the effectiveness of any course of action with host countries;
- the dedication, resilience and commitment of the consular teams handling such difficult and demanding cases, especially in working with the families, is impressive;
- successive changes have streamlined the handling of consular cases to ensure a more consistent and capable 24/7 response, but Consular Directorate are consciously challenging and seeking to improve their assistance to our citizens.

I have also accepted Dame Judith's recommendations on where we should do more on complex consular cases, in particular:

- improvements to the way the FCDO recognises and escalates sensitive consular cases.
- establishment of Task Forces for highly complex cases.
- increased briefing of Ministers about complex cases: with cases where there is a significant risk of torture, mistreatment or a failure of due process raised urgently.
- more senior oversight of the support to families in complex cases to build more trust and understanding.
- a new communication strategy to set out more openly the FCDO's consular work.
- data management improvements to ensure lessons are learnt.

Work is underway to implement the recommendations. Some will be subject to future resourcing decisions. If you would like to discuss any of the above, I would be pleased to offer an informal briefing to discuss this in more detail.

I am copying this letter to Baroness Anelay of St Johns, as Chair of the International Relations and Defence Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yours as, Nigel Adams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name "Adams".

**Nigel Adams MP**  
**Minister of State for Asia**