
**From the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority
Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Mr Phil Woolas MP
Minister of State for Borders and Immigration
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

23 January 2009

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you about the Home Office's press release, issued on 26 December, outlining the latest position on the number of foreign national prisoners deported from the UK in the previous 12 months.

The Statistics Authority has discussed this issue, and considers that it would be appropriate in future for the Home Office to publish estimates of this kind in an orderly manner within the context of the relevant official statistics, and in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

We understand that the Home Office intends to publish a statistical release, relating to removals and departures of foreign nationals for 2008, on 24 February and we hope that will provide a suitable opportunity to set the provisional estimates for foreign national prisoners in context.

We recognise that the estimate in question was compiled from management information and was provisional in nature. However, those are not of themselves grounds, in our view, to exclude estimates of this kind from the coverage of official statistics releases, particularly on topics of wide public interest. The Code of Practice requires only that such estimates should be the best available, properly put together and that their strengths and weaknesses be explained at the time of publication.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Michael Scholar KCB