
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Lin Homer
Chief Executive
UK Border Agency
1st Floor – Seacole Building
Room 40
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

6 April 2009

Dear Ms Homer

STATISTICS ON DEPORTATION OF FOREIGN NATIONAL PRISONERS

Thank you for your letter dated 16 March 2009, in reply to my letter to the Minister of State for Borders and Immigration, Phil Woolas MP, dated 23 January 2009.

As I indicated in my letter, the Statistics Authority recognises that the statistics on the removal of foreign national prisoners contained in a news release published on 26 December were based on provisional management information collected by the UK Border Agency, were subject to revision, and were not designated as National Statistics. However, these are not sufficient grounds to exclude an estimate of this kind from the coverage of official statistics releases, particularly where the topic is of wide public interest which your reply to me acknowledges that these data are. The Code of Practice not only requires official statistics releases to be published in an orderly manner, but also that they should contain information on their strengths and weaknesses.

The news release observed that “5,000 foreign prisoners (had been) removed this year” and the UK Border Agency had exceeded the 5,000 target. The Authority takes the view that readers of the press release could reasonably have concluded that this was an official statistics release. The recent Home Office statistical bulletin *Control of Immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary – United Kingdom: fourth quarter 2008*, published on 24 February 2009, set out a provisional figure of 5,395 foreign national prisoner removals in 2008, confirming the position set out in the December news release.

I would welcome an assurance that these figures will continue to be released only as part of an official statistical release, compliant with the Code of Practice.

Yours sincerely



Sir Michael Scholar KCB