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NOTE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BUSH

I thought I should send you a short note about a couple of issues about which my human rights envoy, Ann Clwyd, is much concerned after a recent visit to Iraq. These issues will require careful handling over the coming months. You and I will need to keep a close eye on them, not least because of their impact on Iraqi - and especially Sunni - opinion.

The first is detainees - how many we hold, and the conditions in which they are held. Ann is concerned that the Iraqis are in no shape to take responsibility for large numbers of security detainees. So we need to get the numbers down to a level they can cope with as soon as possible, and certainly by the end of the year. A carefully managed process of releases could help our Sunni outreach efforts. I understand General Casey is already thinking about a possible amnesty - this must be worth pursuing.

Ann also thought that more could be done to help the families of detainees get access to, and information about, their relatives. Again, this would have political benefits.

Our people are already working together on plans to help build the capacity of the Iraq Special Tribunal. We are making some progress, but there is much still to be done. A credible IST process which delivers - and is seen to deliver - justice for the appalling crimes of the previous regime will have a major political impact, as well as being right in itself. We may need to make sure, however, that they do not rush to try the most serious cases before they are ready.

I have asked Nigel to follow up on the detail with Steve.

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