



Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

The Rt Hon. Lord Cameron
Secretary of State for Foreign,
Commonwealth, and Development
Affairs

Sir Robert Buckland KC MP

By email only

14th December 2023

Dear David,

Many congratulations on your return to Government. I look forward to working with you in those areas where your Department's remit coincides with that of my Committee.

To that end, you may be aware that my Committee has been in correspondence with the Government since 2020 regarding compensation for the UK victims of Qaddafi-sponsored IRA attacks. As you will know, during the 1980s and 1990s the Qaddafi regime in Libya supplied arms and ammunition to the IRA to enable it to carry out numerous deadly attacks in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. These ranged from individual murders to large-scale attacks, such as the bombing at Enniskillen on Remembrance Sunday in 1987. These attacks killed and maimed many people and have caused long-term emotional trauma and financial hardship for their families.

My predecessor, Simon Hoare MP, wrote to your predecessors on 2 September 2020, 28 April 2021, 21 May 2021, and 2 December 2021; to the Prime Minister on 19 January 2021; and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 2 July 2021, suggesting several pragmatic solutions for securing compensation for victims and their families. Unfortunately, this Government and its predecessors found themselves unable to progress with any potential solutions.

In that regard, I therefore wish to reiterate the solution previously proposed by the Committee, namely that part of the £5 million that is collected in tax revenue from Libyan assets held in the UK be ringfenced for compensation. These funds could be ringfenced as a standalone fund or put towards the Troubles Pension Fund. This solution would not violate the UK's UN obligations.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has previously responded to the Committee on this point by noting that funds collected in relation to the frozen assets go directly into the Consolidated Fund, which is spent on public services in general. However, your predecessors have never provided a reason as to why funds could not be ring-fenced in this case.



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I echo my predecessor's statement that economic and political stability in Libya, being an outcome for which there is neither certainty nor a clear timeline, should not be considered a precursor to victims receiving compensation. If tax revenues are consistently drawn from frozen assets, there does not appear to be any convincing reason why compensation for UK victims should not.

It should be noted also that, as part of a political agreement with Libya reached in 2008, the US Government secured compensation of \$1.5bn from Libya. This led to the passing of the Libyan Claims Resolution Act 2008, and the creation of a compensation system which has paid out millions of dollars to hundreds of victims, in some individual cases up to \$10 million in compensation, through the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. The French and German Governments were also able to secure significant compensation from the Libyan state, albeit from a now defunct fund established by Qaddafi's son, Saif

On 29th November 2023, your ministerial colleague David Rutley MP told the House that the Government has 'sympathy' for UK victims of Qaddafi-sponsored terrorism. Seeing no reason to doubt this sentiment, one might therefore expect to see meaningful and swift action to compensate and support these victims.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this issue. I look forward to your response and hearing what the FCDO plans to do to support UK victims of Qaddafi-sponsored terrorism.

Yours ever,

Robert Buckland

Sir Robert Buckland KC MP
Chair, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee