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4WardEver Campaign UK

supporting campaigns for justice

Gordon Brown PM
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

7th April 2009

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Petition Against Deaths in Custody

We write with regards the above following several email correspondence to the web team that manages the Number 10 petitions service. Despite repeated requests, we have yet to receive a response to this petition some 5 months after it closed.

In addition, our most recent requests for updates dated 21st & 24th March and 3rd April have not even been responded to.

We had set up the above mentioned petition on behalf of the United Families & Friends Campaign on the 18th October 2007 year, and it subsequently closed on 18th October 2008 with over 500 signatories, many of them families that have lost loved ones in custody. We are concerned that we have not yet had a response from your office relating to this petition, and the lack of feedback as mentioned above.

We first contacted the web team on 29th November 2008 asking if they would be kind enough to give some indication of when his response will be forthcoming.

In January 2009 following a further period of no response we wrote to express that we feel very strongly that it is unsatisfactory to keep hundreds of people waiting so long for responses to this very emotive issue. We received the following response:

Apologies for the delay in responding to your particular query.

Your email is receiving our attention, and we hope to have a response to you and the other signatories as soon as possible.

By the middle of March 2009 we had still not received an update regarding when a possible response to the petition would be given. Whilst the web team did not give a clear indication of response time, one can safely assume that 5 months to generate a response is wholly unacceptable given the nature of this petition.

A high percentage of people that signed the petition are families that have been directly affected by a death (or several deaths in custody). Furthermore, they have also attended annual processions in October every year for the past 10 years, delivering a letter to Downing Street requesting a response to the ongoing issues of people dying in custody... They have never received a response!

When the Prime Ministers office launched the petition service on the Number 10 website, it was meant to bridge a gap between people and Government, and to give a means of response to issues concerning the people of this country.

The lack of response (or even updates) from the Governments office on this matter has left many people despondent and a lot less enthused about the effectiveness of this facility, and of the Governments stated commitment of responding to concerns in a timely and respectful manner.

Your own guidance states:

Step 5: Petition close

When a serious petition closes, usually provided there are 200 signatures or more, officials at Downing Street will ensure you get a response to the issues you raise. Depending on the nature of the petition, this may be from the Prime Minister, or he may ask one of his Ministers or officials to respond.

We will email the petition organiser and everyone who has signed the petition via this website giving details of the Government's response.

Many people have emailed us asking for an update on the questions the petition raised. They can only get that response from the Prime Minister, and we therefore urge you to look into this matter with some expediency.

Yours Sincerely

Tippa Naphtali
4WardEver Campaign UK
on behalf of the United Families & Friends Campaign