



OIFIG AN AIRE GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
(OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS)

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
(DUBLIN 2)

Mr. Mark Conroy
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Our Ref: POL080369

Dear Mr. Conroy,

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Micheál Martin T.D., has asked me to thank you for your recent letter, which was passed to him by An Taoiseach and to respond on his behalf.

The Government is completely opposed to the practice of extraordinary rendition. As the Programme for Government makes clear, we will ensure that all relevant legal instruments are used so that the practice of extraordinary rendition does not occur in this State in any form.


Our concerns in relation to this matter have been made clear to the highest levels of the US Government, including by An Taoiseach to President Bush, and Minister Ahern to Secretary of State Rice. The Government has received specific assurances from the US authorities that no prisoners have been transferred through Irish airports, nor would they be, without our permission. The Government is confident that under international law it is fully entitled to rely on these assurances, which are of a clear and categorical nature, relating to facts and circumstances within the full control of the US Government.

Where An Garda Síochána has suspicions about a particular aircraft, they have full powers to board and inspect that aircraft. Beyond this existing, fully adequate power, there are serious questions over the effectiveness, practicality and reasonableness of an inspection regime, such as that called for by Amnesty. The position of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on this issue was set out in the Dáil in an adjournment debate on 29 November 2007. Moreover, in cases investigated by the Gardaí to date, no evidence emerged justifying any subsequent legal action. I would note that no other EU Member State has introduced such an inspection regime. The civil aircraft which it is proposed to search under this regime are in fact chartered to different users on an ongoing basis.

In relation to the Amnesty International report to which your letter refers, it is important to be clear that Amnesty International does not contend that Shannon was used for the alleged rendition of Mr Al-Maqtari. The case raised by Amnesty relates to a particular

individual who may have been transferred in January 2004 from Baghdad to Kabul on a plane which had earlier passed through Shannon. Indeed, no evidence has ever been produced, nor any concrete allegation made, that any person has ever been subject to extraordinary rendition through Ireland.

Yours sincerely,


Sinéad Ryan
Private Secretary