

CMS 97449/mk

Giles Clarke  
Chairman  
English and Wales Cricket Board  
Lord's Cricket Ground  
London  
England  
NW8 8QZ

25 June 2008

Dear Giles,

I write to set out the Government's views on the proposed bilateral tour of the Zimbabwean cricket team to England in 2009.

You will be aware of our grave concerns about the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe. In these circumstances, the Government has concluded that it would not be right to allow the proposed tour by the Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) team in 2009 to take place.

The Government has been monitoring the situation in Zimbabwe closely. I hope you will appreciate that we have delayed intervening in this matter and allowed time for the situation to improve. However, the deteriorating situation around the failed and illegitimate elections in Zimbabwe, and the imminence of the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) Annual Conference in Dubai, means that the point of decision on this matter has now been reached.

The Zimbabwean Government has ceased to observe the principle of the rule of law: it has terrorised its own citizens, including the ruthless and violent suppression of legitimate political opposition.

The UK Government will always work with the international community to uphold fundamental freedoms and human rights. Accordingly, the UK Government has responded with a measured approach which seeks to isolate Zimbabwe internationally and bring pressure to bear on supranational institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union to take yet firmer action against the despotic regime, whilst ensuring that its humanitarian life-saving mission to Zimbabwean citizens continues.

The UK Government considers that it would be contrary to this general approach for the English cricket team to participate in bilateral fixtures with Zimbabwe. The close ties of the Zimbabwe Cricket team to the Mugabe regime have also had a bearing on our decision.

I can assure you that this is not a decision we have taken lightly. The Government strongly defends the autonomy of our sports' governing bodies. We also support the autonomous management of international sporting competitions by international sports federations and independent representation of British sporting interests on such federations by our national governing bodies. This decision on Zimbabwe does not alter that general position, but is made in response to the exceptional circumstances in this case. It would never be our wish to penalise domestic supporters, and nor would we wish to place players particularly in the uncomfortable position of having to take difficult individual judgements on these matters.

The Government has previously called on the ICC to reconsider its rules to allow teams to forfeit tours to countries, such as Zimbabwe, where serious human rights abuses are occurring. Unfortunately the ICC has declined to do so. Therefore, the Government has decided to make clear that it is prepared to prevent the bilateral tour in 2009 and will take all necessary steps to prevent players from Zimbabwe from participating in that tour.

The Government welcomes reports that the issue of Zimbabwe's involvement in world cricket is on the agenda at the ICC Annual conference which is taking place next week in Dubai. We hope that this letter will help ECB play a full part in these discussions, and lead to a positive outcome particularly in relation to the important event, ICC's World Twenty20 Tournament, due to be staged in England in 2009.

I trust that this letter sets out clearly the position of Her Majesty's Government. It is not a letter I take any pleasure in sending, nor one that I would wish to repeat. However, in these exceptional circumstances, I hope the reasons for it will be understood in the wider cricketing world.

*Yours sincerely,  
Andy Burnham*

**ANDY BURNHAM**