

NI Group Limited
M. Mahmood
Fourth Statement
MM17
18 July 2012

**IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND
ETHICS OF THE PRESS**

**FOURTH WITNESS STATEMENT
OF
MAZHER MAHMOOD**

I, Mazher Mahmood, c/o The Sunday Times, News Group Newspapers Limited, 3 Thomas More Square, London E98 1XY, will say as follows:

1. This is my fourth witness statement to the Inquiry. My first statement was dated 14 October 2011, the second 8 December 2011, and the third 23 January 2012.

Florim Gashi

2. I refer to paragraph 22 of my third witness statement and to the specific request set out in a section 21 notice dated 3 January 2012 for documents evidencing the investigations Mr Gashi worked on for the News of the World after the investigation which led to the Beckham kidnap story and the date on which Mr Gashi last worked for the News of the World.
3. As a result of Linklaters' search for the requested documents, a record of payments made to Mr Gashi after the investigation which led to the Beckham kidnap story has been shown to me and a copy appears at **Exhibit MM17**.
4. In the column of **Exhibit MM17** entitled "LINE_ITEM_TEXT" there is a short line item description for each payment.
5. In paragraphs 15 and 16 of my third statement, I set out those stories which I recalled Mr Gashi had some involvement in following the Beckham kidnap story, although I had no records then to help prompt my recollection. I note that a number of the stories listed in **Exhibit MM17** correspond with that recollection. For example, it appears that row 2 of **Exhibit MM17** may show a payment made in connection with the UN documents story (see **Exhibit MM13**), row 9 appears to show a payment made in connection with the story about a mother who tried to sell her baby (see **Exhibit MM16**), row 10 appears to show a payment made in connection with the Qema story (see **Exhibit MM15**), and row 11

appears to show what was, to the best of my knowledge, the final payment made to Mr Gashi by the News of the World. This was for an investigation in April 2005 and which led to the publication of the story at **Exhibit MM12**, as noted in paragraph 15 of my third statement.

6. I am afraid I no longer recall the other stories listed in **Exhibit MM17** and whether or not Mr Gashi was involved with them, it is possible that payments were made to cover costs incurred by Mr Gashi in connection with stories which were never in the end published. In these circumstances, payments were sometimes assigned to the title of a published story instead.

Successful criminal prosecutions

7. In paragraph 2 of my first statement, I stated that articles that I had published in the News of the World had led to 253 successful criminal prosecutions. I am aware that an online journalist named Paddy French has submitted a statement to the Inquiry questioning this number.
8. Throughout my career, I have kept a broad running check on the number of prosecutions my work generated, but I have not kept records and clippings of each and every case going back over a more than 20 year period and nor was any proper log or record maintained by the News of the World. I should also point out that the fact that an individual had been successfully prosecuted as a result of my work will not always have been published in the News of the World and so the paper's archive does not unfortunately provide a reliable record either.
9. When I received Mr French's statement, which was provided to The Sunday Times by Mr French directly, I provided to Linklaters details of all of the prosecutions which I could recall that predated my first statement. This list exceeded 253 prosecutions, as I believed the number included in my first statement to be a conservative estimate. Linklaters have sought to independently verify the prosecutions which I understand has involved looking for press clippings confirming the fact of a conviction, or making requests of the courts / Crown Prosecution Service (the "CPS") to confirm the fact of a conviction.
10. The details I provided to Linklaters included the following cases:
 - a. Over 134 different criminal offences committed prior to the date of my first statement and carried out by 94 individuals. These have all been verified by Linklaters. I should make clear here that in keeping a broad running check on the number of prosecutions generated by my work, I would generally count separate charges on which an individual had been convicted on the same occasion as multiple convictions, if they were for what I considered different offences – for example, someone convicted of carrying a firearm who was also convicted for possession of drugs I would count separately.

- b. Over 140 illegal immigrants who I believe were deported as a result of my work, although I did not keep a record of their names. My understanding was that an illegal immigrant commits a crime by being present in this country and I saw deportation as the sanction imposed in respect of that criminal conduct which I had exposed. I now understand from Linklaters that it is unlikely that these individuals would have been the subject of criminal prosecutions per se, because whilst they commit a criminal offence by being in the UK without leave to remain, a prosecution is not required in order for them to be deported. That is not something which I was previously aware of, and I apologise for my error in including these individuals in the number of convictions originally given to the Inquiry;
 - c. 13 individuals who were barred from their professions or by their relevant sporting bodies, or dismissed by the police or prison service, in connection with allegations of criminal conduct which were exposed as a result of my work. Again, I understand from Linklaters that such actions do not amount to prosecutions or convictions and so I apologise to the Inquiry for including these individuals in my first statement. However, as with the illegal immigrants, it remains the case that my work exposed the criminal conduct of these individuals and action was taken against them as a consequence.
- 11. As well as the convictions listed in 10a above, I understand from Linklaters that in a number of the more historic cases from my original list, the courts or the CPS have no record of the convictions. In some other instances the courts or the CPS have been unwilling or unable to release the information to Linklaters, or Linklaters is still waiting for their response.
- 12. I am personally confident that my work as a journalist has led to substantially more convictions than the 94 individuals which Linklaters has been able to verify independently for the period pre-dating my first statement.
- 13. I also understand that in a small number of cases, it has been difficult to link a verified conviction to an article published by me. This is because not all of my successful prosecutions arose from articles published in the newspaper – for example, in September 2011 John Batty was convicted at Chelmsford Crown Court of sexual offences against a minor. This prosecution arose from information I passed to the police (I also gave evidence at the trial) – but no story ever appeared in the News of the World or Sunday Times relating to this matter. In that respect my statement that “*articles I had published in the News of the World*” had led to successful criminal prosecutions should in fact have said that “*my work as a journalist*” had led to these prosecutions.

Mahmood Qureshi

14. Mr French's statement also refers to an article I wrote in September 1996 which mentioned a man called "Mehmood, known as Jaws" who the article suggested bought British passports from members of the public for use by a people-smuggling gang. At paragraphs 32 to 36 of his statement, Mr French asserts that "Mehmood" is in fact Mahmood Qureshi – the man who later became my minder – and asks why I didn't take my evidence on "Mehmood" to the police so they could investigate.
15. "Mehmood" was indeed Mahmood Qureshi – Mahmood can be spelt either with an "a" or an "e". Mr Qureshi was the source of this September 1996 story. As a journalist, I strive to protect to protect my sources and as such, I wrote about him in terms which suggested that he bought genuine British passports for the gang to use to bring migrants into the country. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, he had only been asked by the gang to do so and then brought the story to me. I therefore wrote about him in these terms in an effort to deflect the gang's attention from him, so that they would not suspect him as having been my source. If they had, his personal safety could have been at risk.
16. As I name Mr Qureshi as "Jaws" in my book (*Confessions of a Fake Sheikh*), and in light of the fact that Talib Hussain – the leader of the gang in the 1996 story - has now died, Mr Qureshi has confirmed that he is content for me to name him as the source for this story.
17. I cannot now recall whether or not the police chose to investigate this story, but if they did, then I believe I would have disclosed to them the fact that Mr Qureshi was my source – indeed it would have been obvious to them from the tapes that I would have provided to them, as he recorded covert conversations with Mr Hussain for me, and what investigations they then pursued would have been a matter for them.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed:

[Redacted Signature Box]

Dated:

18th July 2012