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Your Reference:  
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31 July 2012

Dear Mr Blomfield

Thank you for your letter of 5 July to Damian Green on behalf of a number of your constituents about the return of failed asylum seekers to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Your letter has been passed to me to reply.

The UK Government is committed to providing protection for those individuals found to be genuinely in need, in accordance with our commitments under international law. However, in order to maintain the integrity of our asylum system and prevent unfounded applications, it is important that the UK is able to enforce returns to the DRC of those who are found not to be in need of protection, and who have no other basis to remain in the UK.

Our enquiries into the treatment of failed asylum seekers on return to the DRC are still ongoing. Officials from our Country of Origin Information Service have returned from a fact finding mission in Kinshasa and, after clearance from the parties consulted during the trip, will publish a report in due course. To date, the UK Border Agency, working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has found no evidence to substantiate the allegations that returnees to the DRC are at risk, and therefore there is no reason to halt the enforced returns of those who have no right to remain in the UK. No international organisation, including Amnesty International, has expressed any concerns about the safety on return of failed asylum seekers from the UK to the DRC.

On 7 June, we returned five DRC nationals by a charter flight. Officials from the UK Embassy in Kinshasa were present at N'Djili airport and the returnees passed safely through immigration controls.

Our returns policy is kept constantly under review and we will only enforce the return of individuals to the DRC who have no right to remain in the UK, who do not need protection and who refuse to leave voluntarily. Enforced returns are carried out in the most sensitive way possible, treating those being removed with courtesy and dignity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rob Whiteman', written in a cursive style.

Rob Whiteman  
Chief Executive