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The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

08 March 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing with regard to a communication sent by the Home Secretary to Conservative Party members yesterday following the announcement on small boat crossings.

The Home Secretary, in the second paragraph of that note, states: “But an activist blob of left-wing lawyers, civil servants and the Labour Party blocked us.”

This is an extraordinary statement from a serving Home Secretary. As you and the Home Secretary are well aware, civil servants advise and ministers decide. Once a decision is made, civil servants are tasked with carrying out the settled will of government. Not only is this statement factually incorrect, but the tone of that paragraph and the brigading of civil servants with the Labour Party and “left-wing lawyers” is a direct attack on the integrity and impartiality of the thousands of civil servants who loyally serve the Home Secretary, doing some of the most complex and difficult work in government.

This cowardly attack on civil servants, whom the Home Secretary knows are unable to publicly defend themselves, also risks further stoking tensions over a matter which has previously resulted in violent clashes with protesters. Staff at 2 Marsham Street have already been advised about security precautions to avoid being identified.

I am sure I do not need to remind you that Paragraph 5.1 of the Ministerial Code states that “ministers must uphold the political impartiality of the civil service”. I cannot see how the Home Secretary’s statement to Conservative Party members can be reconciled with her obligations under the code.

As Prime Minister and Minister for the Civil Service I would be grateful if you could ensure that this statement is publicly withdrawn as a matter of urgency and an apology made to all Home Office civil servants from the Home Secretary.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Penman', is written over a light blue horizontal line.