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Dear Prime Minister

I am pleased to say that I am now in a position to write setting out a timetable for the completion of the Iraq Inquiry's report into the UK's involvement in Iraq between 2001 and 2009. With your agreement, I should like to publish this letter on the Inquiry's website on Thursday 29 October.

My colleagues and I estimate that we will be able to complete the text of our report in the week commencing 18 April 2016. At that point, National Security checking of its contents by a team of officials, who will be given confidential access to the report on your behalf, can begin.

National Security checking is distinct from the process of declassifying material for disclosure in the Inquiry's report. Its purpose is to ensure that the Government's obligations under Article 2 of the ECHR and for the protection of National Security will not inadvertently be breached by publication of the Inquiry's report as a whole. The Inquiry will obviously seek to ensure no such breach might occur, but I entirely understand that a checking process is necessary and is normal procedure in inquiries which have considered a large volume of sensitive material, as we have.

The very considerable size of our report – more than two million words in total – means that it will take some weeks to prepare the report for printing and publication. For security reasons, I understand elements of that work cannot commence before the text is cleared for release to the publishers after the National Security checking process.

We will complete that work as swiftly as possible. I consider that once National Security checking has been completed it should be possible to agree with you a date for publication in June or July 2016.

Between today and the week of 18 April my colleagues and I will be finalising our findings, including in light of responses to the Maxwellisation process, and to bring that process to its final conclusion. We will continue to be reliant on the co-operation of the Civil Service as we do so.

My colleagues and I remain committed to producing a report that will meet the very wide ranging terms of reference we were given and reflect the considerable investment of time and effort by all involved.

Yours sincerely
John Chilcot

SIR JOHN CHILCOT