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Dear Chairman,

Thank you for your recent letter about the IPGA report, 'Running Scared'.

It may be helpful if I clarify the role the British Embassy in Baku played in its production. In line with Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) policy, the British Embassy in Baku has sought to promote fora in which different stakeholders are able to debate matters of public interest in Azerbaijan. This has included support for projects related to freedom of expression, (but also others focused on wider issues such as confidence building between communities and support for gender issues within the IDP community).

In this specific case, the Embassy agreed to provide support to Article 19 (a member of the IPGA) with hosting a number of public meetings designed to consider the issue of media freedom in Azerbaijan and to promote debate about this subject. This was the full extent of our involvement.

It is standard policy for the FCO to request that its contributions to projects be recognised, usually in the form of our Embassy crest. But the display of our crest in no way implies that the report was officially approved by us. That was not the case. Our commitment was to the fora that preceded the drafting. The final contents of the report are the responsibility of the authors alone.

I hope that this clarifies our position. We value our relationship with the European Azerbaijan Society and look forward to developing it further. There is much we can do together to promote good relations and understanding between our two countries. In this context, I look forward to speaking at your business conference on 2 May and will hope to see you again there.

My best wishes in the meantime.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Bateman

HM Ambassador