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DFID Department for
International
Development

1 Palace Street London SW1E 5HE

From the Minister of State

Rt Hon Clare Short MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

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Dear Clare,

3 September 2009

Thank you for your letter of 7 August to Douglas Alexander enclosing an email from your constituent, Christopher Burns-Cox of Southend Farm, Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucester, GL12 7PS, about the rate and severity of foetal abnormalities in infants born to mothers in Fallujah. I am replying on his behalf as the Duty Minister.

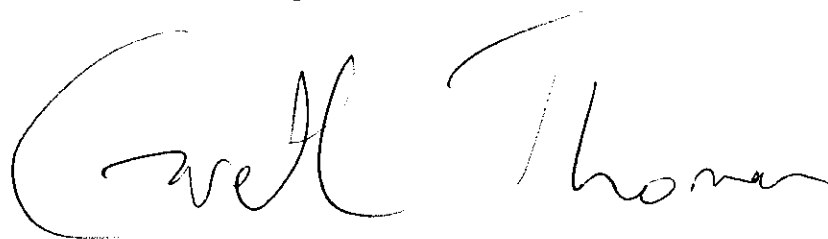
DFID channels its funding for health services in Iraq through the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). We have not received specific reports concerning a rise in foetal abnormalities in Fallujah, although we are aware of some reports of a rise in foetal abnormalities in recent years in Iraq. On DFID's request, the ICRC has discussed this with the technical director of Al-Fallujah General Hospital as well as another doctor based there. Both responded that although there were occasional cases of foetal abnormalities, these did not exceed two to three cases per year. Fallujah General Hospital, could therefore not confirm a rise in such abnormalities.

The ICRC provides regular support to key hospitals and health structures in Iraq to enable them to respond to the needs of the local population and also to ensure that the wounded and sick can have improved access to functional services. In this respect, Fallujah General Hospital and Rutba General Hospital have been assisted twice this year. In addition, a new physical rehabilitation centre was built and equipped by the ICRC in Fallujah in 2008.

If you are interested in discussing the issue further, I suggest you contact the two main agencies currently working in the health sector in Fallujah for ICRC, Dorrit de Neergaard at ddeneergaard.gva@icrc.org, and for Medecins Sans Frontiers, Colin McIlreavy at msfh-amman-hom@field.amsterdam.msf.org.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gareth Thomas". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the closing "Yours sincerely,".

GARETH THOMAS