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Saudi
Arabia



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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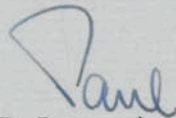
8 May 1980

Dear Michael, O/R.

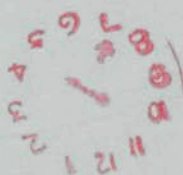
The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and some of our posts abroad have, like No 10 and the Lord President's Office, received a number of similar messages from Muslim organisations around the world critical of ATV's programme 'Death of a Princess'.

We propose for convenience to send a standard letter via appropriate posts along the lines of the enclosed draft.

I am copying this letter to Miss N Chapman (Lord President's Office).

Yours etc

(P Lever)

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street



8 MAY 1980

Registry
No.

DRAFT

Type 1 +

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret,
Secret.
Confidential.
Restricted.
Unclassified.

To:—

From
ASST HEAD/MED
Telephone No. Ext.

Department

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

I have been asked to reply to the message you sent to about ATV's film "Death of a Princess".

The strength of your feelings about the film, touching as it did on aspects of the law of Islam, is well understood here. It has been widely condemned in this country, not least for the offence it has given to our Muslim friends and fellow countrymen. As Sir Ian Gilmour, the Lord Privy Seal and deputy to Lord Carrington, said in the House of Commons on 24 April, "There were undoubtedly incidents in the film that had virtually no factual basis at all and were based on innuendo and rumour. I have no doubt that it (the Independent Broadcasting Authority) will have taken note of what has happened arising from this incident".

As I am sure you are aware, it is not possible, for constitutional and legal reasons, for the British Government to intervene to prevent the broadcasting of a particular film, even though it may be offensive to the Government or its friends. However, the Government is fully aware of the shortcomings of the film and deeply regrets the offence it has caused. These regrets have been passed to the Saudi authorities at a very high level.

The United Kingdom is the home of a large and increasing number of Muslim people and there is a growing understanding amongst thinking people here of the Islamic

contribution to the spiritual and cultural heritage of mankind. In recent years a number of conferences have been held in London on ^{Islamic themes} ~~various aspects of Islam~~, notably the World Festival of Islam in 1976. In connection with this, books were published, lectures and television programmes were arranged and series of films were produced covering various aspects of Islamic life. We recognise the importance of the moral values and historical and religious traditions which Islam and the Western world hold in common. Amidst so many dangers threatening us all it is more than ever a time to maintain close relations and to foster mutual understanding and respect; and we hope, despite incidents of this kind, that steady progress will continue to be made toward this important goal.