



Prime Minister

I am sure that the advice  
is right.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

In addition, I doubt whether you  
would approve of the fundamentalist resistance group.  
They are not interested in restoring democracy in Afghanistan.  
Agree that we should decline?

A.T.C. 15/3.

Yours truly

Dear John,

We spoke about the suggestion from Viscount Cranborne MP, the Chairman of the Afghanistan Support Committee, that the Prime Minister might see Mohammed Yahya, the brother of Masood, the Afghan resistance leader in the Panjshir Valley, during a visit which he is undertaking to this country from 21 - 24 March at the invitation of the Afghanistan Support Committee.

The Afghanistan Support Committee are arranging for Yahya to meet MPs and Ministers (Mr Hurd has agreed to see him). They also hope to attract some media coverage. Yahya acted as Mr Sandy Gall's interpreter during his filming trip to Afghanistan last year, and we understand that he will be helping over this. As a personality, we understand that he is somewhat colourless.

There is a particular problem over Yahya seeing the Prime Minister. His political master, Professor Rabbani, the leader of one of the fundamentalist groups based in Peshawar, is visiting the UK as a guest of HMG in late March and has also asked to see her. We would advise against this. Our policy to date has been to show no preference towards one or other of the Peshawar groups. If the Prime Minister saw Professor Rabbani, it would be widely taken as a gesture of political recognition. Other resistance leaders could resent this and would at least expect similar treatment. Perhaps more important, it could upset the Pakistan Government who are sensitive about the political status of the Peshawar groups. No Western Head of Government or Foreign Minister has, to the best of our knowledge, so far received any of the Peshawar leaders.

But if Yahya were to see the Prime Minister, and Professor Rabbani did not, this would be bound to sour the visit of the latter. It could also sow discord within Professor Rabbani's group, when we wish to promote unity among the resistance. Yahya is not of course in the same category as the six Afghan witnesses to Soviet atrocities whom the Prime Minister received on 20 January. This group was a representative cross-section with no political affiliation.

/We therefore

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| We therefore advise against the Prime Minister agreeing to see Yahya. Mr Pym will ~~be~~ abroad during the period and would not be able to see him in any case.

Yours ever  
J E Holmes

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street



MR. GOW

Your minute attached.

I have consulted the Prime Minister. I should be grateful if you would tell Lord Cranborne that she regrets that she cannot see Mohammed Yahya. You might plead a particularly busy week with the European Council in Brussels and a state visit by President Kaunda.

For your own information, the Prime Minister does not want to receive the leader of a particular resistance group. The various groups quarrel greatly amongst themselves and any one of them would be delighted to receive high-level political recognition. Moreover, Yahya comes from one of the "fundamentalist" groups, whose philosophy is, to say the least, not exactly that of the Prime Minister.

A. J. COLES

16 March, 1983

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*Afghanistan*



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

16 March, 1983

Afghanistan

Thank you for your recent letter about the suggestion that the Prime Minister might see Mr. Mohammed Yahya.

The Prime Minister accepts your advice that she should not do so.

A. J. COLES

John Holmes, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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John Coles

I have had a note from Robert Cranborne asking whether the Prime Minister would agree to meet Masaud's brother, Yahya, when he is over in England during the week beginning Monday 21st March.

How please, would you like me to reply to this request?

10.3.83

*Ivan*

*I* IAN GOW