

# News Statement

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# Carter-Ruck

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## STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF SHEHBAZ SHARIF

### Alasdair Pepper, Carter-Ruck Solicitors

We can today confirm that Mr. Shehbaz Sharif, President of the PML-N Party, Leader of the Opposition in Pakistan and former Chief Minister of Punjab, has issued court proceedings in the Royal Courts of Justice in London and has served them on the publisher of the *Mail on Sunday* newspaper and the *Mail Online*.

The proceedings relate to gravely defamatory articles published on 14 July 2019. The articles carried a grotesque allegation that Mr. Sharif misappropriated UK taxpayers' money and in particular government aid intended for the victims of the devastating 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. Mr Sharif categorically denies this allegation: he asserts that there is no truth in it whatsoever.

The UK government has also flatly contradicted the *Mail's* claim. On the very day of publication the UK's Department for International Development (DIFD) responded to the *Mail on Sunday*, stating, and I quote, that:

*"...we only gave money once the agreed work, which was primarily focused on building schools, was completed, and the work audited and verified. The UK taxpayer got exactly what it paid for and helped the vulnerable victims of a devastating earthquake."*

DFID stated that the *Mail* had alleged that money was stolen *"without providing any substantial evidence this was the case with the earthquake fund."*

What is more, a minister of the Pakistan government has supported DFID's refutation of the *Mail's* claim. According to a press report the Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Mr. Shafqat Mahmood told a conference at the Dorchester Hotel last week that Britain's aid programme to Pakistan was by and large well managed and run properly under the previous PPP and PML-N governments.

Faced with these harmful allegations, Mr. Sharif attempted to secure a correction and apology from the publisher of the *Mail*. He has now commenced court proceedings only after the *Mail* failed to give a detailed and substantive response or to make any sensible proposals to resolve the complaint. They even continue to host the article online.

As a leading politician and public figure in Pakistan Mr. Sharif intends to clear his name. He seeks the withdrawal of the allegations and an unreserved and unambiguous apology from the *Mail's* publisher. Mr. Sharif states that any sums awarded to him in damages will be paid to charity.

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