



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From the Foreign Secretary

2 March 2009

Our reference: 68141

The Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dr Lelw,

Thank you for your letters of 15 January and 10 February on behalf of your constituent, Ms Judith Majlath of 10 Kempford Gardens, London, SW5 9LH about the disappearance of her sister in Hungary.

I appreciate this is a worrying and difficult time for Ms Majlath and the family and friends of Eva Rhodes.

Officials from the British Embassy in Hungary have been in regular contact with the Gyor police, most recently on 3 February, to find out if there has been any news in relation to the whereabouts of Ms Rhodes. Gyor police confirmed that they have offered a reward of 1,000,000 Hungarian Forint, approximately £2,980, for any information concerning Ms Rhodes. Our consular staff have also been in contact with the Hungarian County Police Criminal Department to express our concern for the welfare and whereabouts of Eva and to learn what action they intend to take.

Embassy officials have also checked the status of the investigation with the County Police Criminal Department in Hungary. They were informed that the crime department had appointed a group of four police officers whose main priority is the Eva Rhodes' case. Although the administrative procedure had been closed the case is still very much ongoing. The police have returned to Ms Rhodes' property many times to look for evidence as to her whereabouts but nothing there yet suggests that a crime has been committed. This is why the case remains a missing person case and not a criminal case. The officer in charge has informed Embassy officials that they are looking at all of Ms Rhodes' telephone calls over the past year but are getting little help from local people.

I understand that Ms Majlath has been in contact with consular staff in Hungary and London and has been fully informed of what the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) can and cannot do to assist when a British citizen is reported missing overseas.

The responsibility for investigating this case is a matter for the Hungarian authorities. Only occasionally do UK police forces become more actively involved in missing persons enquiries overseas and they can only do so at the invitation of the relevant government. The UK police have assisted by providing support to the family through a Family Liaison Officer. They have also conducted specific enquiries with Ms Rhodes' daughter, in line with a request by the Hungarian police via Interpol who co-ordinate international police co-operation. The UK police will continue to support the Hungarian police with any further assistance they can give in relation to the UK-based enquiries. Any request for the UK police to travel to Hungary must come from the Hungarian authorities. This request would need to be made through Interpol.

I attach two publications: "Support For British Nationals Abroad: A Guide" and "Missing Persons Abroad". These clearly set out what we can and cannot do in the case of a missing person.

We have assured Ms Majlath that she will be contacted whenever further information is received or Ms Rhodes comes to the attention of our consular staff.

If you or Ms Majlath have any further enquiries about this case, please do not hesitate to contact Erin Adamson or Jill Bayliss on the Consular Assistance Group Desk for Hungary on 020 7008 0138 or 020 7008 0141 respectively.

Us,



DAVID MILIBAND