SOPHIE RAWORTH:
Now the deportation of Abu Qatada is something of a personal triumph for the Home Secretary, Theresa May. After years of legal wrangling and more than £1.5 million of public money spent on the case, in the end his deportation was only made possible after she negotiated a special treaty with Jordan, the country to which he has now returned. The treaty guarantees that evidence gained by torture won’t be used against him. Well to talk about all this in more detail, I’m joined now by the Home Secretary. Good morning.

THERESA MAY:
Good morning.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
You weren’t sure whether he was going to be leaving until right up to the very last minute last night, were you?
THERESA MAY:
Well that’s right, I mean there was a possibility right up to the very last minute of further legal challenge. But I’m very pleased that, having been clear all along that we wanted to deport Abu Qatada, that it was important that he was not in the UK but back in Jordan to face charges there, that we have been able to achieve that.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
It’s been a very long battle, hasn’t it? It’s gone through six home secretaries. You have been the one who’s finally got him on that plane. Your thoughts as he left, as you watched him cross the tarmac?

THERESA MAY:
Well I was very pleased that we were actually able to achieve, finally achieve the deportation of Abu Qatada. As you say, Sophie, it has taken a long time. We need to look and we will be looking at the processes that we go through here in the UK on such deportations. And in the Immigration Bill later this year I’m going to be bringing forward some changes - for example to the number of appeals that people can make - because I think most people were deeply frustrated by how long it took, I was deeply frustrated by how long it took. I know the Prime Minister was as well and we want to ensure that in future deportation can be done more quickly.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
He arrives this morning in Jordan. Are you confident that he will be treated as he should be?

THERESA MAY:
Yes I am. And if you just look back over the time that I’ve been dealing with this particular case, we did receive assurances from the Jordanian government. The European Court of Human Rights moved the goalposts, so we had to deal with that. We received further assurances. I myself went over to Jordan and we got further assurances from the Jordanian government. And then last autumn, the courts here in the UK noted this final issue about whether or not evidence that it was alleged had been attained by torture would be used in the case against him. And the treaty has been negotiated. I signed the treaty in March. It was ratified by both Parliaments.
Fully came into force at the beginning of this month. And putting all that together, that does provide, I believe, the assurance about how Abu Qatada will be treated.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
Two million pounds that has been spent on this. Almost a decade and, as I say, six home secretaries. I mean it’s been an extraordinary battle for you personally. What have you learnt from this? What lessons have you taken away from it?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well I think the first lesson is that when you want to achieve something, just keep at it. I think it’s been determination to ensure that we could deport Abu Qatada that has finally enabled us to overcome all the legal hurdles that were put in the way and actually see him removed from the United Kingdom. So you have to be prepared that sometimes these are lengthy processes, but that if you’re determined you can get there in the end. But the other lesson is the one I mentioned earlier, which is that we have to look in this country at how we do these things, and that’s why in the Immigration Bill later this autumn I will be bringing some changes forward in terms of how we deal with appeals processes here in the UK.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
And what will that mean?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well it’ll mean I think looking at reducing the number of different levels of appeals that are available for people. Of course there’s another issue we have to look at, which is slightly long-term, which is the relationship of the UK with the European Court of Human Rights. We’re starting work on that and I think that nothing should be off the table in terms of looking at that relationship.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
Okay, well let’s look at that in a minute. But just first of all in the short-term, before the next election - because obviously you do have the problem of the Liberal Democrats and you’ve been talking about leaving you know the Human Rights Act, for example, though that’s not going to happen whilst you’re in power in coalition -
but in short-term can you be confident you can stop these kind of long, drawn out appeals? Are you actually going to be able to do anything significant that will enable you to stop that kind of … the sort of scenario we’ve seen going through the courts in recent years?

THERESA MAY:
Yes, I believe we can. I think … And this is why I’m saying that actually in primary legislation in a new Immigration Bill, we will be making some changes which will make it quicker to deport people from the United Kingdom. And you know we’ve been looking elsewhere, we’ve been seeing what other countries can do. But we know that we can make some changes here in the UK for cases like these and for the other sorts of cases which people read about in the papers where they see that somebody has perhaps claimed this right to - the so-called Article 8 - the right to a private or family life - and we’re going to be making some changes in the Immigration Bill to deal with that issue as well.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
But surely you can make the changes? You changed the rules last summer, didn’t you - the immigration rules - but then judged there was some room for manoeuvre and actually it hasn’t been as effective as you would have hoped. You can make the changes, but people can still appeal, can’t they, to the European Court of Human Rights?

THERESA MAY:
Well they have that appeal to the European Court. You’re right that I did make changes to the immigration rules on this right to a family life last summer, but … and some of the cases have not seen the interpretation of those rules being what I’d hoped and expected it would be. That’s why I’m going to bring it forward into primary legislation, actually bring it into an Act of Parliament through the Immigration Bill later this year. But I’ll also be looking, as I say, at the appeals processes, so that we can ensure that in cases like Abu Qatada’s, we would be able to see people being deported more quickly in future.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
In the long-term then, after the next election - if you are in power, if you have a majority government, are you going to go into the next election promising to scrap the Human Rights Act and withdraw from the European Court of Human Rights?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well I’ve been very clear that we should be repealing the Human Rights Act and very clear that nothing should be off the table in terms of looking at the European Convention on Human Rights. We’re working on that at the moment; and, as the Prime Minister said this morning, the Conservative manifesto will set out clearly what we would do in government in relation to both of these issues. But I think nothing should be off the table, but we need to do that work and then we will come forward with our proposals and our manifesto.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
You’ve been very clear about that, but you have colleagues, some of your colleagues who have their own reservations, don’t you?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well the work has to be done. We have to look at what is going to be right, we have to look at what’s going to work. The one thing I think that … One of the other things I’ve taken from the whole issue of dealing with Abu Qatada is that we need to ensure that anything, any changes you make are actually going to work because that’s what we want to be able to do. We want to be able to deport people who are a threat to this country, people who should not be here in the United Kingdom. We want to be able to see them removed, as we have with Abu Qatada.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
If you scrap the Human Rights Act though, what would it be replaced with?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well the last election, as Conservatives we went into the election with a commitment to replace it with a British Bill of Rights. We’ve obviously had the Commission looking at the issue around a British Bill of Rights and some further work needs to be
done on that. This is an issue that I think many people feel does need to be addressed and in the next Conservative manifesto leading up to the next election, we will set out quite clearly what we believe we should be doing.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
But the point of a Human Rights Act is actually to take the power really away from I suppose the populist mass agenda, the politicians as well, and actually look at all these cases in a sort of clear light. Now I know Abu Qatada has obviously used the system, but there are people who perhaps wouldn’t be protected if the politicians had a greater say.

THERESA MAY:
Oh no, it’s not about the politicians necessarily having a greater say; it’s about all the laws for the United Kingdom should be made in our Parliament. I mean we’re clear about that. But what we need to do is to ensure that, yes, of course we protect human rights - and this country has a fine record in relation to the protection of human rights - but we do want to make sure that when there is somebody in this country who is dangerous and when there’s somebody in this country who poses a threat to this country, that we are able to remove them from the UK. That’s what we’ve been able to do. Following much work, we’ve been able to do that with Abu Qatada. I’m pleased that he is now in Jordan. He’ll be obviously facing charges in Jordan and that was the right thing to do. We need to make sure that we can do it more quickly in future.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
What was it the Prime Minister said - he would be the happiest man around if he saw Abu Qatada on a plane? Is that how you feel today?

THERESA MAY:
I feel … Well I’m very pleased that we’ve been able to deport Abu Qatada. A lot of work’s gone in on that. As I say, I went to Jordan. My security minister James Brokenshire went to Jordan. Our ambassador there’s worked hard, Home Office officials have worked hard. So there are a lot of people today whose hard work has
paid off and I think most people in this country will be very pleased and say thank goodness Abu Qatada is now in Jordan.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
How many more cases of similar perhaps or a similar kind are still going through the courts at the moment? Are you having to deal with all kinds of appeals for similar cases that people would be probably furious about?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well there are always cases that are going through where people are appealing on different grounds against us stopping them from being in the United Kingdom, be that deportation of foreign national offenders, for example. That’s why it’s very important that we’re doing what we’re going to do this autumn, which is bringing forward a new Immigration Bill which will address some of these concerns and some of the hurdles that mean that we can’t remove people as quickly as we want to.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
You are going to have quite a fight on your hands in many senses though to get that through, aren’t you?

**THERESA MAY:**
Well I think, I would hope … I think the public, if you went out and said to members of the public “Should the Government change the law so that we can make it easier to deport people who are threat to this country?”, I think the vast majority of members of the public would say yes. So I hope that when it comes to Parliament …

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
*(over)* In terms of …

**THERESA MAY:**
… that will be reflected in the views that Members of Parliament take.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
Okay. And absolutely, you’ve got to … I mean the one coalition partner you’re going to have to convince is the Liberal Democrats though, isn’t it?
THERESA MAY:
And we’ve got agreement across the coalition government that we will be bringing forward the Immigration Bill and that this will be part of it.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
Okay, Theresa May, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS