

# Straw urged to send judge after Jersey pair are freed

David Brown

Jack Straw faced pressure yesterday to appoint an independent judge to oversee the child abuse investigation in Jersey, after police were prevented from charging two suspects.

Detectives said that there was sufficient evidence to charge the couple with serious sexual and physical assaults within the childcare system during the 1960s and 1970s. A member of the island's volunteer police force refused to do so after seeking legal advice from the office of Jersey's Attorney-General.

Politicians said that the Justice Secretary ought to use his powers to appoint an outside judge to Jersey because of the risk to the rule of law.

Jersey Police said that they had "no alternative" but to release the

believed to have been foster parents.

The decision has highlighted the links between Jersey's judges, prosecutors and the Honorary Police force, which have led to concerns about Jersey's ability to oversee the inquiry, one of Britain's biggest abuse investiga-

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tions. More than a hundred people say that they were abused in children's homes. Six people have been arrested and three men have been charged.

Under Jersey law, members of the elected Honorary Police force with the rank of Centenier are the only officers authorised to charge or bail suspects. Centenier Danny Scaife refused to charge on Tuesday evening after receiving advice from the offices of the island's Attorney-General, William Bailhache, QC.

Mr Bailhache is also the head of the Honorary Police. His brother Sir Philip Bailhache is the island's Bailiff or head of the judiciary.

William Bailhache said: "When all the evidence has been received and assessed, the decision as to whether or not to charge will be made, being handled by an independent Crown Advocate with advice from a barrister from London and there has been no interference by me or anybody else in the Law Officer's Department."

Austin Mitchell, MP for Great Grimsby, said: "Jack Straw must appoint an independent inquiry headed by a judge from outside the island."