



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Arabian Peninsula & Iran Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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12 December 2016

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0992-16

Thank you for your email of 20 October asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Under the Freedom of Information Act I would like to inquire about the following, in relation to the FCO's technical assistance package to Bahrain for 2016-2017:

- *How much money will be spent on technical assistance projects in Bahrain for the year 2016-2017?*
- *Will this be funded by the CSSF or other fund?*
- *What specific projects and human rights institutions in Bahrain will this fund for the year 2016-2017?*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

The total budget for the Financial Year 2016-2017 is £1,688,220. This will be funded by the CSSF, Magna Carta Fund & Bilateral Programme Budget. We do not directly fund any human rights institutions in Bahrain but we do provide provide training/experience sharing to them.

The UK continues to support independent human rights and oversight institutions such as the National Institution of Human Rights (NIHR), the Ministry of Interior (MOI) Ombudsman, the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission (PDRC), and the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), which provide independent oversight of police behaviour and detention standards, and were established as a result of the recommendations of the **Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI)**.

The projects that we are supporting in 2016-2017 are currently in progress. After careful consideration we have decided to withhold further information on the projects under section 27 (International Relations).

Section 27(1)(a) and (c) of the FOIA recognises the need to protect information that would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and other states and the interests of the UK abroad if it was disclosed. The application of s.27(1)(a) and (c) requires us to consider the public interest test arguments in favour of releasing and withholding the information. We acknowledge that disclosure could meet the public interest in transparency and accountability. Indeed, we are transparent about the UK government's support to Bahrain's reform programme – it is detailed in the FCO's human rights report, which is updated annually, and through public correspondence and parliamentary questions.

However, the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. If the UK does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interest through intentional relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. The disclosure of the projects currently in progress could potentially damage the bilateral relationship between the UK and Bahrain. This would reduce the UK government's ability to protect and promote UK interests, which would not be in the public interest. For these reasons we consider that, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Yours sincerely,

Arabian Peninsula & Iran Department



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