



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Arabian Peninsular and Iran Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

05 January 2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0946-16

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 10 October 2016. In your request you asked for;

Copies of any and all recorded information held by the FCO about a visit to the UK by Bahrain's Office of the Ombudsman for the Ministry of Interior in early 2013. I understand that on this visit, an FCO delegation including British Deputy Ambassador to Bahrain Russ Dixon accompanied individuals from the Ombudsman's Offices to meetings with some or all of: the Northern Ireland Policing Board; Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland; the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland; the Northern Ireland Prisoner Ombudsman; PSNI; the Independent Police Complaints Commission; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons; the Metropolitan Police; the International Bar Association; and the Mayor of London's Office for Policing and Crime. By 'recorded information' I refer to emails, minutes, briefing notes, reports, evaluations and diary notes.

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 information that we can release to you is enclosed as a digest. However, some information has been withheld under section 21 (Information accessible to the applicant by other means), section 27 (International Relations) and section 40 (Personal Information).

Some of the information we hold which is relevant to your request is, in our view, already reasonably accessible to the applicant. Under Section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to the applicant. In this instance the information relates to maps with directions to meetings at the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) in London and at the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) in Belfast. For ease of reference a copy of the map of the IPCC's location is included and the location of the NIPB is available through the following link, <https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/sites/nipb/files/media-files/NIPB-Map.pdf>.

S27 is a qualified exemption and requires the FCO to consider the public interest in releasing or 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. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the UK does not respect such confidences, its ability to protect and promote UK interest through international relations will be prejudiced. Bahrain may be more reluctant to share sensitive information with the UK Government in future and may be less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government, to the detriment of UK interests. For all these reasons, we consider that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information covered by section 27 (1)(d).

The remainder of the information you have requested, is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

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Yours sincerely,

Head of Arabian Peninsula & Iran Department



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