



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Somalia Unit
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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15 October 2013

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0760-13

Thank you for your email of 19 August asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Does the Government of the United Kingdom have any plans to recognise the currently unrecognised country of the Republic of Somaliland?

What diplomatic relations are currently undertaken between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Somaliland?

What treaties or other legal instruments such as memoranda of understanding have been entered into with the Republic of Somaliland?

What assistance is given to the Republic of Somaliland to help prosecute and combat international piracy in the Indian Ocean?

What assistance is given to the Republic of Somaliland to help prosecute and combat international terrorism in the Horn of Africa?

Does the Government of the United Kingdom plan on providing any direct military assistance to the Republic of Somaliland to help prevent the on-going conflict in Somali spreading to the Republic of Somaliland?

What assistance is given to help the Republic of Somaliland cope with individuals fleeing the on-going conflict in Somalia? And what is the legal classification the Government of the United Kingdom gives to these people fleeing the on-going conflict in Somalia?

Does the Government of the United Kingdom recognise the elections held in Somaliland as free and fair? And if so does the Government of the United Kingdom recognise the results of those elections as being for the legitimate representatives and governors of the Republic of Somaliland?

How much money has the Foreign and Commonwealth Office spent on an annual basis dealing with issues specifically related to the Republic of Somaliland? And can a broken down budget be provided for each item of expenditure over £500? Please provide the

information for the individual financial years commencing with the financial year 1997 – 1998 to the 2012 - 2013 financial year?

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.

Please find responses to your questions. Some of the information is exempt under section 27 (International relations) of the FOIA.

Does the Government of the United Kingdom have any plans to recognise the currently unrecognised country of the Republic of Somaliland?

Our policy on Somalia is well known. Somaliland is not officially recognised by any country, including the UK, or by the international community or UN. Our policy is that the Somali people themselves should determine their future relationship and that their regional neighbours should take the lead in recognising any new arrangements.

Following the London Conference in February 2012, which 'recognised the need for the international community to support any dialogue that Somaliland and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) or its replacement may agree to establish in order to clarify their future relations', the TFG and Somaliland met for the first time at Chevening, in the UK, in June 2012 and agreed to cooperate on matters of mutual interest. Somalia and Somaliland held talks in Turkey in April 2013, and again in July. We welcome Turkish-led efforts and remaining willing to provide assistance and support, if requested.

What diplomatic relations are currently undertaken between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Somaliland?

We have close links with the Somaliland Administration. Somaliland Ministers regularly meet with UK representatives both in the UK, and in the region, to discuss a wide variety of issues.

The UK formally opened an office in Hargeisa on the 3 September, 2012, in line with the Foreign Secretary's intent to establish a presence in Mogadishu and Hargeisa as soon as local conditions allow. This office enables officials to stay in Hargeisa for short periods to carry out diplomatic work in Somaliland. Because of the security situation this office will have only very limited consular functions.

We have locally engaged staff, who work on projects and political work. British diplomats based in the region visit Hargeisa regularly.

What treaties or other legal instruments such as memoranda of understanding have been entered into with the Republic of Somaliland?

We signed a memorandum of understanding on immigration returns with the Somaliland Administration in 2007, and a project-level memorandum of understanding this year on

aviation security. In addition, we are planning to sign a memorandum of understanding jointly with the Danish Government for support to the Somaliland Development Fund (SDF), which will help build infrastructure, improve service delivery and support progress on public financial management, in line with the National Development Plan.

What assistance is given to the Republic of Somaliland to help prosecute and combat international piracy in the Indian Ocean?

The UK supports the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's Counter Piracy Programme (UNODC CPP). The Counter Piracy Programme focuses on fair and efficient trials and imprisonment in regional centres, humane and secure imprisonment in Somalia, and fair and efficient trials in Somalia. In addition, in April 2011, a new prison in Hargeisa, Somaliland, was officially opened with the support of the UNODC CPP. UK funds have contributed to improving conditions in the prison to meet international standards. With UK funding, a workshop facility for prisoners and new prison staff accommodation have been constructed. Also supported by the UK, the UNODC CPP is in the process on constructing a new building for the Somaliland Ministry of Justice in order to ensure that a coherent justice system for the oversight for piracy prosecutions is in place. With the support of UK funding, the UNODC CPP, in conjunction with the Somaliland Counter-Piracy Coordination Office, conducted five counter-piracy awareness workshops in Hargeisa in July 2012. UK funding has been utilised to provide support to the Puntland and Somaliland Counter-Piracy Focal Point Office in Hargeisa, Somaliland

What assistance is given to the Republic of Somaliland to help prosecute and combat international terrorism in the Horn of Africa?

This information is being withheld under section 27(1)(c) and (d) (International relations) of the FOIA.

Section 27(1)(c) is a qualified exemption and as such we have considered where the greater public interest lies. The effective conduct of international relations depends upon the UK maintaining trust and confidence with others. If the United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. The disclosure of information of our work in combating international terrorism in Somaliland falls into this category. Likewise, for similar reasons Section 27 (1) (d) of the FOIA, which relates to the promotion or protection of by the UK of its interests abroad, is also relevant.

Does the Government of the United Kingdom plan on providing any direct military assistance to the Republic of Somaliland to help prevent the on-going conflict in Somalia spreading to the Republic of Somaliland?

No

What assistance is given to help the Republic of Somaliland cope with individuals fleeing the on-going conflict in Somalia? And what is the legal classification the Government of the United Kingdom gives to these people fleeing the on-going conflict in Somalia?

The Department for International Development (DFID) has contributed £9m this year to the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) which will provide support to internally placed persons (IDPs) across Somalia, including in Somaliland. The CHF provides grants to partners in all

areas in Somalia where humanitarian needs exist. The UK also supports other humanitarian partners to assist IDPs elsewhere in the country, the majority of whom are in the South of Somalia. UK does not “classify” these individuals as such. Their status is determined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), according to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Those fleeing from one part of Somalia to another are classed as IDPs, not refugees. They are protected under national human rights law and the internally displaced conventions.

Does the Government of the United Kingdom recognise the elections held in Somaliland as free and fair? And if so does the Government of the United Kingdom recognise the results of those elections as being for the legitimate representatives and governors of the Republic of Somaliland?

The UK recognises the positive steps that Somaliland has taken towards democratisation over the last decade. Since 2003, Somaliland has held two Presidential elections, one Parliamentary election and one local election. We welcome these elections as further steps towards the consolidation of political participation and progress in Somaliland. The UK recognised President Ahmed Mohamed Silanyo as the winner of the last Presidential election in 2010, and we have a strong bilateral relationship with him. The UK continues to encourage the Somaliland authorities to ensure the integrity of the electoral process ahead of the 2015 Presidential election.

How much money has the Foreign and Commonwealth Office spent on an annual basis dealing with issues specifically related to the Republic of Somaliland? And can a broken down budget be provided for each item of expenditure over £500? Please provide the information for the individual financial years commencing with the financial year 1997 – 1998 to the 2012 - 2013 financial year?

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. You may therefore wish to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit. One way to do this might be to narrow your request to a specific year.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

Yours sincerely,

Desk Officer - Somaliland
Somalia Unit



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.