



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Rights and Democracy Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

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

05 April 2016

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0152-16

Thank you for your email of 5 February asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please provide me with copies of the following, between October – December 2015:

- *Copies of all correspondence and e-mails between Ministers and officials about Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy and its predecessor, the Human Rights and Democracy Programme Fund?*
- *Can I also ask for any documents assessing the projects (we assume this meant “programme’s”) impact and value for money?*

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 attached the information that the FCO can release to you.

Some of the information has been withheld using section 38 since it is likely to endanger the safety of individuals. We fund a number of projects that we consider to be sensitive; if the existence of these projects were in the public domain, those who are running the projects or are in any way involved with them could face reprisals. In applying the public interest test we took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; in this case that releasing such information would give the full picture of all the projects we have funded over the last five years through the Human Rights and Democracy Programme, thus showing the impact and value for money of the Programme in its entirety. However, release of this information could

seriously endanger the health and safety of a large number of individuals defending human rights across the world. For this reason we therefore judge that the public interest in withholding this information outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Similarly, some of the information you requested has been withheld under exemption 35(1)(a), formulation of government policy. The FCO considers that there is a general public interest in greater transparency in the decision-making process in order to ensure government is accountable to the public. However, the Government requires a clear space, immune from public view, in which it can debate matters internally free from the pressures of public political debate. This information is withheld due to the need for officials to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessment of their policies and programmes, including their pros and cons, without there being premature disclosure which could close off alternative options and inhibit the free and frank discussion of all policy options. This would have a negative impact on the quality of decision making, which is clearly not in the public interest. We have judged that in this case, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on gov.uk in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

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Yours sincerely,

Human Rights and Democracy Department



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