



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Arabian Peninsula & Iran Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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11 May 2016

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0198-16

Thank you for your email of 16 February asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- 1) Please confirm how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) risk assessments have been completed in respect of this package of technical assistance since it began.*
- 2) The dates of each of the OSJA assessments relating to technical assistance projects in Bahrain.*
- 3) Copies of the OSJA assessments that you say are in place to test with regards to British technical assistance projects in Bahrain.*

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does hold information falling within the terms of your request.

The Overseas Security and Justice Assistance guidance was introduced in 2011. Since then, in line with HMG guidance, all projects have an accompanying Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) instrument in place. We have completed a search of all the relevant files in the FCO and we have 8 OSJAs relating to Bahrain.

The dates of the 8 OSJA assessments are as follows:

- 29 August 2013
- 24 August 2015
- 24 August 2015
- 8 October 2015
- 9 November 2015
- 1 February 2016
- 3 February 2016
- 3 February 2016

After careful consideration, we have decided not to release copies of the OSJAs as the information is exempt from disclosure under section 27 (1) (a) and (c) of the Freedom of Information Act. 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 s27(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 OSJAs 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.

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Yours sincerely,

Head of Arabian Peninsula & Iran Department

