



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

North Africa Team
Middle East and North Africa Directorate
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2HA

10 April 2014

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0086-14

I am writing in response to your email of 23 January 2014 requesting:

“Please could you provide me with copies of any internal correspondence, submissions to Ministers or locally held files concerning Christian persecution in Egypt since November 14 2013”

I am writing to advise you that following a full search of our paper and electronic records I can confirm the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold some information falling under the terms of your request. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt.

We would like to point out that by our understanding of your words “*locally held files*” you mean information *only* held locally

Some of the withheld information is personal data relating to third parties. It is our view that disclosure of this information would breach the first data protection principle, which states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. Section 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act therefore apply. It is the fairness aspect of this principle which we think would be breached by disclosure in this case. In such circumstances section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. We do not therefore have to apply the public interest test.

Please find enclosed the releasable documents.

Some of the information you requested is being withheld as it falls under the exemptions in sections, 27 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA):

We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with Egypt. But section 27(1)(a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments and organisations. If the UK does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote the UK’s interests through its international relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest.

For these reasons we consider the balance of the public interest lies with withholding this information.

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Yours sincerely,

Deputy Open Government Liaison Officer
North Africa Team



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