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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: FOI 0503-16

Thank you for your email of 16 May 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

"Can I please request the following information:

- 1) How many new cases of international parental child abduction and custody cases was the FCO involved in the following years: 2014, 2015?*
- 2) What was the total number of cases, involving non-Hague countries for the following years: 2014, 2015*
- 3) How many new cases in 2014 and 2015 involved India and Pakistan."*

We have now completed our search and consultation process and I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold some information relevant to your request.

For questions 1 and 3, the table below shows the total number of child abductions and custody cases reported to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in 2014, and those in India and Pakistan in 2014. We released this information for 2014 to your colleague in our letter of 16 January 2015, under our reference FOI 0005-15.

Year and Post	Child Abduction and Custody
All 2014	477
India 2014	19
Pakistan 2014	39



This data has been taken from the FCO's global consular assistance database, and includes cases that were recorded by consular officers where the main or secondary reason that consular assistance was provided was in connection with child abduction or child custody.

It is also possible to obtain our statistics on the GOV.UK website – the link for this is as follows: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/consular-data>. The information is available by month, for each of our diplomatic missions overseas.

You also requested the data for 2015. However this information is exempt under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act as it is intended for future publication.

Section 22 provides that:

1. Information is exempt information if –
 - (a) The information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not),
 - (b) It is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to in paragraph (a).

The exemption under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act recognises that it must be reasonable in all circumstances to withhold the information until the date of publication. Given the necessary preparation and administration involved in publishing the information, which includes collation and submission, we consider that our publication timetable is indeed reasonable.

This information is scheduled for publication at the end of this month, once Purdah is over. My colleagues will contact you with further information about the publication once this letter issues to make sure you receive the information as soon as it is available.

Therefore it is also not possible to consider your question 2, about non Hague countries, without providing the 2015 data that is currently being withheld. My letter of 20 February 2015 set out the difficulties around Hague and non Hague countries and this remains the case. You may wish to refine your request further to a single country or much smaller number of specific countries and we can re-examine it.

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Yours sincerely,

Consular FOI/DPA team
Consular Directorate



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