



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

North Africa Department  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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London SW1A 2AH

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

11 September 2015

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0811-15**

Thank you for your email of 20 August asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked for:

- “- The organization chart of the British Embassy in Tunisia*
- The organization chart of the North Africa Department in the FCO*
- The list of FCO's structure related to oil and gas”*

I can confirm that the FCO does hold information relevant to your request.

We have attached a digest organisational chart of the British Embassy Tunis and a digest organisational chart of the North Africa Department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Following assessment, we have concluded that some of the information that you requested in your first and second points is exempt under section 38(1)(a) and (b) of the Freedom of Information Act as disclosure would or would be likely to endanger the physical or mental health of any individual or endanger the safety of any individual. This qualified exemption also requires the application of the public interest test.

We recognise that there is a public interest in transparent and open government, and releasing information that would inform public debate on our work, in this case that releasing such information would demonstrate openness in the FCO's dealings with Tunisia. We understand that customers often feel that we should not protect the names of our officers acting in an official capacity. However, we have to balance this with the need to ensure that our staff are able to carry out their jobs without fear of undue repercussions and as their employer we have a duty of care to ensure that they are not individually targeted for perceived failings of the department as a whole. In this case we believe that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in release.

Additionally, some of the the information you have requested in your first and second points is exempt under section 40 – personal information. Some of the information you have requested is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the

first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Information that you requested in your third point has been withheld under Section 12 of the FOIA. 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 in your third point 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. Normally under section 16 of the Act we would be obliged to advise you to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit. However, in this case we cannot advise you how to narrow your request.

Yours sincerely,

North Africa Department



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.