



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Arabian Peninsula and Iran Department**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

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

04 October 2016

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0301-16**

Thank you for your email of 14 March asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*"I would like to request the following under FOIA : On 16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016, Gillingham MP Rehman Chishti led a five MP delegation to Saudi Arabia, meeting the King , Shura Council Members, Justice Minister. I can see that the British Embassy in Saudi helped with the trip – chairing the meeting with the Shura members, for example.*

*So I would like any available documents – emails, timetables, minutes – relating to the trip, either from the Embassy or the FCO in the UK"*

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. Please find attached a digest of the information that the FCO can release to you.

Some of the information you requested has been withheld under Section 27(1)(a), (c) and (d). The application of these exemptions requires us to consider the public interest test arguments in favour of releasing and withholding the information. We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with Saudi Arabia. However, sections 27 (1)(a), (c) and (d) recognise the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the UK does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests overseas will be hampered. Countries may be more reluctant to share sensitive information with the UK Government in future and may be less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government, to the detriment of UK interests. For all these reasons, we consider that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information covered by section 27.

I also wish to advise that some of the information you requested has been withheld as it falls under Section 40 of FOIA – personal information. The nature of your request means that the

information found contains personal data relating to living 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 of the Act confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is therefore no public interest test to apply.

Additionally, some of the information that you requested has been withheld under Section 41 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act – information provided in confidence. This allows for information to be exempt if it was obtained by the public authority from any other person and the disclosure of the information to the public (otherwise than under this Act) by the public authority holding it would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that or any other person. Section 41 also confers an absolute exemption on disclosure, and therefore a public interest test is not required.

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](http://gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

Most documents supplied by the FCO will have been produced by government officials and will be protected by Crown Copyright. To re-use Crown Copyright documents please consult the [Open Government Licence v3](#) on the National Archives website.

Information you receive which is not subject to Crown Copyright continues to be protected by the copyright of the person, or organisation, from which the information originated. You must ensure that you gain their permission before reproducing any third party (non-Crown Copyright) information.

Yours sincerely,

Arabian Peninsula and Iran 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.