



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Near East Department**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

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19 July 2016

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0435-16**

I refer to your email of 25 April asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked for:

1. *minutes of the "strategic dialogue" meeting between Dore Gold of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and Simon McDonald of the FCO mentioned in this article to have taken place in early March 2016 <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.707763>*
2. *any other material related to this meeting including but not limited to documents discussed and/or exchanged, and correspondence both prior to and in the weeks following the meeting regarding matters discussed*

I can confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. I apologise that the process of collating and considering all of the relevant information has taken so long. We are withholding some information under Section 21 – Information accessible by other means; Section 27 – International Relations; Section 40 – Personal Information; and Section 41 – Information provided in confidence.

Under Section 21, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already accessible to you. One document held can be found at:

<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutTheMinistry/Pages/Ambassador-Dore-Gold.aspx>

The application of S.27 (1)(a) 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. However, S.27 (1)(a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. If the United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. The disclosure of information that could potentially damage bilateral relationships with States in the Middle East, 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.

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, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Section 41 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.

Please find attached the information that can be released.

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.

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Yours sincerely,

**On behalf of Near East Department**



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