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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REFS: FOI 0042-17 & FOI 0083-17

Thank you for your emails of 11 and 23 January 2017, in which you ask for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 about the repatriation of victims of forced marriage for the years 2016 and 2015 respectively.

For 2016 (your first request) you asked:

- “1) How many victims or alleged victims of forced marriage did you repatriate...?”***
- 2) What countries were they repatriated from?***
- 3) What was the sum of emergency loans issued to victims of forced marriage in 2016?***
- 4) What is the outstanding debt owed to the Foreign Office by victims or alleged victims of forced marriage for repatriation costs?”***

For 2015, you asked:

“How many forced marriage victims/alleged victims were repatriated from Pakistan in 2015 and how much did this cost?”

Outcome of Search

We have now completed our search and I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your first request and may do for your second request.



Disclosure FOI 0042-17

- 1) We repatriated 55 victims / alleged victims of forced marriage in 2016.
- 2) We repatriated victims / alleged victims of forced marriage in 2016 from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Additionally we have repatriated from other countries but they fall into the category of five or fewer cases. Please note that where the number of reported cases is fewer than or equal to five, we do not disclose to avoid the risk of identifying the individuals concerned. To release this data would contravene one of the data protection principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. 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.
- 3) The total sum of emergency loans issued to victims / alleged victims of forced marriage in 2016 was £9,048.89.
- 4) The current outstanding debt owed to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by victims / alleged victims of forced marriage is £6,282.41.

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) provides a range of support and assistance to both women and men who are at risk of forced marriage. The statistics on forced marriage collected by FMU are also available on gov.uk (link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage#statistics-on-forced-marriage-collected-by-fmu>)



FOI 0083-17 and Exemption Applied

Cost Limit Section 12

You asked for the information about forced marriage repatriation cases and their associated costs for 2015. I regret that we are not able to provide this information as we only began recording repatriation cases by theme from 2016.

Section 12 of the FOIA 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 as presently formulated I estimate will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances, we are not obliged under the FOIA to comply with your request. A search yielded approximately 1,200 cases in 2015 relating to alleged forced marriage for which we provided advice and assistance in 2015. We estimate that in one working day one consular officer would be able to assess approximately 50 records. It would therefore take us approximately 25 working days to manually search 1,200 cases for the information you request.

In the longer term we will have repatriation cases recorded by theme on our database.

