



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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

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

18 October 2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0470-17

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 12 May 2017. I apologise for how long it has taken to finalise a response to your request. In your request you asked;

Please can you provide me with any official reports produced by the FCO that has examined the issue of human rights abuses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 2011.

These can come in the form of official briefings to Parliament, internal reports or any other fact finding missions that specifically deals with human rights abuses in the Kingdom, or perpetrated by the Kingdom in terms of its military or police use of force.

On 16 May you revised the scope of your request,

[T]hree year period would be more suitable for purpose and would enable you to help cherry pick the most pertinent and relevant reports on Saudi's Human Rights records, then please - from May 2014 to date would be perfect.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does hold information falling within the terms of your request. Please find attached a digest of the information that we can release to you.

Saudi Arabia is a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights Priority Country, and we publish our concerns on the human rights. The reports for the period you have requested are available here [2014](#), [2015](#) and [2016](#).

In respect of your remaining questions, information is being withheld under section 27 (International Relations) of the FOIA. Section 27(1)(a), concerning International Relations, applies here because disclosure would be likely to prejudice the relationship between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia. The application of section 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 about our relations with Saudi Arabia. But section 27(1)(a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between States. This would reduce the UK Government's ability to protect and promote UK interests through its relations with Saudi Arabia, counter to the public interest. For these

reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Some of the information you requested has been withheld as it falls under Section 38 (1) (a) and (b) – information that would endanger the physical or mental health of any individual or endanger the safety of any individual. Section 38 is a qualified exemption and as such a public interest test had to be applied. In applying the public interest test I took into consideration the factors in favour of disclosure; in this case that releasing such information would demonstrate further openness in the FCO's response to the controversy that surrounded the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia. I balanced this against the grounds for non-disclosure, which are that release of the information would likely endanger the life of an individual by revealing details of his work and location. On balance I concluded that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

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.

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.