



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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

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

18 August 2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST: Ref 0176-17

Thank you for your e-mail of 17 February 2017, in which you asked for the following information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA);

Please provide communications between the British Embassy Qatar and the FCO concerning worker's conditions on world cup construction projects.

Please provide information from 1st January 2014 to date.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. Enclosed with this response is a digest of that information that we are able to release to you.

Some of the information the Foreign and Commonwealth Office holds in relation to your request is being withheld under Section 35 (Formulation of government policy), Section 27 (International relations), Section 40 (Personal information) and Section 41 (Information provided in confidence) of the FOIA.

Whilst considering the test under section 35(1)(a) formulation of government policy, it is recognised that there is public interest in greater transparency in the decision making process to ensure accountability within public authorities. However, officials need to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies and programmes including considerations of pros and cons without there being a risk of premature disclosure which might close off better options and inhibit the free and frank discussion of all policy options. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 27(1)(a) International relations of the FOIA, applies because disclosure would be likely to prejudice the relationship between the United Kingdom and Qatar. 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 Qatar. But section 27(1)(a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between States. The disclosure of information detailing our

relationship with Qatar could potentially damage the bilateral relationship between the UK and Qatar. This would reduce the UK Government's ability to protect and promote UK interests through its relations with Qatar, 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 the information.

Some of the information you requested has also been withheld as it falls under Section 40 – personal information of the Freedom of Information Act. 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.

Finally, information has been withheld that was provided in Confidence under section 41. We are not obliged to provide information that has been provided in confidence to us (section 41(b) of the Act), if disclosure of the information to the public would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that or any other person. This means that we are not required to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information.

Yours sincerely,

Arabian Peninsula & 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.