



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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

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

19 June 2016

Your Freedom Of Information Request: 0390-17

Thank you for your email of 20 April asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked for:

Information concerning the United Arab Emirates banning of three British charities - Islamic Relief, Muslim Association of Britain and Cordoba Foundation - which first took place in November 2014.

I am writing to 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.

Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you. Some of the information has been withheld under sections 21, 27(1)(a), 35(1)(a), 40, 41(1)(b).

Under section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. This applies to some news articles relating to your query that were shared within the FCO and can be found at the following addresses:

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/government/uae-addresses-root-causes-of-terror-1.1413289>

<http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/two-groups-on-uae-terror-list-set-to-appeal>

Further information has been withheld under section 27(1)(a) of the Act, which recognises the need to protect information that would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates if it were disclosed. In this case, reducing the British Government's ability to protect and promote UK interests in the UAE, which would not be in the public interest. Section 27 is a qualified exemption and as such, we are required to consider the public interest arguments in favour of releasing and withholding the information. We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge of the UK's interests overseas. However, section 27 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 detailing our relationships with governments overseas could potentially damage the bilateral relationship between the UK and those governments. For these reasons, we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Additional information you requested is exempt under Section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act which requires the application of a public interest test. It is recognised that there is public interest in the 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 disclosing it.

Further information relating to your request comprises 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.

Some information has been withheld under Section 41(1)(b), as it is information that was provided in confidence. It is our view that disclosure of this information would constitute an actionable breach of confidence and so disclosure would also be unlawful under the Act. In these circumstances, Section 41 of the Freedom of Information Act confers an absolute exemption on disclosure and there is no public interest test to apply.

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

Yours sincerely,

Gulf Team

Arabian Peninsula and Iran Department

