



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Middle East and North Africa  
Directorate  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
LONDON  
SW1A 2AH

16 October 2009

Our reference: 0614-09 Guy Freeman

**By e-mail**

Dear Mr Freeman,

Thank you for your e-mail of 30 July 2009 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act. In your request you asked for;

*'any documents, reports, emails and minutes of meetings or other relevant materials of discussions, correspondence or other business relating to the British Embassy in Tel Aviv's funding recently referred to by the Embassy's spokesperson as follows:*

*"£450,000 over 4 years to support projects in east Jerusalem and the West Bank that help Palestinians better understand and effectively use the Israeli planning laws to gain permission both retrospectively for existing homes, and prospectively for new homes on their side of the Green Line." [Source: The Jerusalem Post newspaper, July 30, 2009.*

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1248277926821>

*In particular, but without prejudice to any other materials that may fall within the parameters of the request as outlined in the first two paragraphs, I would like to have made available the following information (and any correspondence or other written materials concerning the following):*

*\* How the £450,000 is to be divided for each of the four years, what the four years are, and which projects the money is going to;*

*\* Under what procedures did the projects receive the money, and information concerning the openness and transparency of these procedures to other organisations;*

*\* Under what part of the Embassy's budget was the money drawn from;*

*\* Considerations of the Israeli government's opinion concerning this funding;*

*\* The validated consequences of this funding in quantitative terms, for example, of court cases undertaken and won, number of new planning permission requests submitted, and so on;*

*\* Why the funding is deliberately aimed at "Palestinians" when information concerning the planning laws in Israel would also be useful to other non-"Palestinian" residents of the State of Israel."*

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is able to respond to your request as follows.

With regards to the first part of your request, I enclose information relevant to your request and disclose for your attention. During our initial assessment some of the information located was considered to be exempt under section 27 (International Relations). However, following a closer review of the material we concluded this exemption was not engaged and that s35 (Formulation of Government Policy) was appropriately engaged. We have therefore withheld the majority of information under Section 35 (1) (a). Some additional information has also been withheld under section 40 (Personal Information).

Some of the information you requested is exempt under section 35(1)(a), which relates to the formulation or development of government policy. This exemption requires the application of a public interest test. It is recognised that there is a 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 the pros and cons without there being premature disclosure which might close off better options and inhibit the free and frank discussion of all policy options. This information refers to discussions between officials from the FCO and the Department for International Development in London, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem about whether the projects posed by the IPCC meet the Conflict Prevention Pool objectives and if the funding is appropriate to meet those objectives. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure of the information.

Some of the names in the documents have been retracted under Section 40 (1) (Personal Information) of the FOI Act. Under section 40(1) we are required to exempt information that constitutes personal data (as defined in the Data Protection Act 1998) which might cause damage or distress to an individual. Section 40 is absolute and does not require the Public Interest Test to be applied.

In response to the second part of your request I will respond to your questions in order as noted in your request.

**Response to question one:** *How the £450,000 is to be divided for each of the four years, what the four years are, and which projects the money is going to;*

The current funding for the project ***Urban Intervention to Reduce Tension in East Jerusalem*** is a 2 year project and has been allocated UK HMG funding of **£298,529**. The project ***Re-planning Palestine: West Bank "C" Areas*** will run for fourteen months and has been allocated UK HMG funding of £149,000, a combined funding total allocation is £447,529.

### **Project Information**

The projects referred to in your Freedom of Information request are run by the NGO, **International Peace and Cooperation Centre (IPCC)** and are called ***Re-planning Palestine: West Bank "C" Areas*** and ***Urban Intervention to Reduce Tension in East Jerusalem*** and are funded from the Conflict Pool (CP)'s budget. The Conflict Pool supports the UK government's policies on preventing conflict and brings together the UK government's development, diplomatic and defence expertise and resources from the Department of International Development (Dfid), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Her Majesty's Government are aware that Palestinian communities face significant hardships due to a lack of urban development, shortage of housing and an awareness of how to engage with the Israeli planning system.

### **Project Purposes:**

#### ***Re-planning Palestine: West Bank "C" Areas:***

The estimated cost of this project is **£149,000** and will run from April 2009 till 31 June 2010.

The purpose of this project, to provide legal and professional planning assistance for 14 Area C West Bank communities in a holistic approach to help develop Palestinian

communities by working with the Office of the Quartet on mapping and statutory planning of Area C.

The anticipated outcomes of this project are that the Palestinian communities begin to feel empowered by greater prospects of developing their own neighbourhoods, thus leading to reduced tensions among Israelis and Palestinians.

***Urban Intervention to Reduce Tension in East Jerusalem:***

The estimated cost of this project is **£298,529** and will run from May 2008 till April 2010.

The IPCC seek to provide the Palestinians with housing solutions particularly on seeking retrospective planning permission by training professionals on how to navigate the Israeli planning system and raising Palestinian public awareness on planning and building issues.

**Response to question two and three:** *Under what procedures did the projects receive the money, and information concerning the openness and transparency of these procedures to other organisations and a Response to question three: Under what part of the Embassy's budget was the money drawn from*

**The procedures of acquiring funding from the Conflict Pool**

All projects should initially be agreed by CP staff at post through the post projects committee. Project committees should ensure that projects are in line with country level programme objectives, represent good value for money and are designed for maximum impact.

Once project proposals have been agreed at post, they should be sent to the Programme Manager, for consideration by the programme team. The programme team will ensure that projects meet CP eligibility criteria, are financially viable within the regional programme, and that the views of MOD, DFID and FCO in London and of the CP Secretariat are communicated back to CP staff at post.

Any projects above £1m, which represent novel or contentious activity, or on which tri-departmental consensus has not been reached, should be referred to the Programme Board. The Programme Board may decide that tri-departmental Ministerial agreement is required. Advice and guidance from the CPP Secretariat is available.

**Response to question four:** *Considerations of the Israeli government's opinion concerning this funding*

### **Israeli concerns**

Large efforts were made to include the Jerusalem Municipality in discussions about this project. It is important for the IPCC to create an effective working relationship with the local authority. The Jerusalem Municipality were consulted in April 2007 about IPCC project proposals. The Municipality stated they “understand the urgent need of working with on the planning of neighbourhoods and understand the importance of involving Palestinian architects and planners in the planning of Palestinian neighbourhoods, and we welcome Palestinian NGOs to work on this issue”.

**Response to question five:** *The validated consequences of this funding in quantitative terms, for example, of court cases undertaken and won, number of new planning permission requests submitted, and so on*

### **Project outcomes**

The number of houses that either have been saved or will be saved as a result of the *Urban Intervention to Reduce Tension in East Jerusalem* project is about 2,800 which is approximately 15% of the total number of houses (18,000) under the threat of demolition.

The project, *Re-planning Palestine: West Bank “C” Areas* is still in its early stages and does not have quantifiable evidence as yet.

**Response to question six:** *Why the funding is deliberately aimed at "Palestinians" when information concerning the planning laws in Israel would also be useful to other non-"Palestinian" residents of the State of Israel.*

### **Funding aimed at Palestinians**

The CP has a set budget and NGOs with project proposals are welcome to approach the CP for funding. No Israeli organisation has requested funding from the Conflict Pool for this type of activity. The Jerusalem Municipality itself recognise the benefits of Palestinian involvement when planning and developing Palestinian neighbourhoods and the positive effect this would have on the whole of Jerusalem.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint, or request an internal review you should write to the FOI - Information Rights Management Team (e-mail: [Dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk) ) if you wish to complain. You should do so within 40 working days from the date our response issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

*Near East Group*