

The BBC will not disclose any more detailed information about these visits. We consider this information would be exempt under section 38(b) of the FOI Act, as releasing this information “would, or would be likely to...endanger the safety of any individual”. As you may be aware, the BBC is under a legal as well as moral duty to act to protect the health and safety of its employees. In this case, one of the BBC's employees faced the threat of an imminent and unlawful death. As a media organisation, there is always a threat that one of the BBC's reporters (or in fact a non BBC reporter) may be kidnapped whilst doing their job. The information you have requested could be used to identify the process undertaken to help obtain Alan Johnston's release. Releasing this information to the public would be likely to result in these methods having less effect if the same situation arose in the future, the result being that it could unnecessarily endanger the safety of reporters in the future.

Can you please let me know whether or not Mr Thompson has held any talks with Palestinian leaders.

During the visit mentioned above in November 2005, time was also set aside for meetings with senior Palestinians (including Mahmoud Abbas and Diana Buttu).

Finally, could you please let me know whether these trips were funded using licence payers money?

I can confirm that these trips were funded from the BBC's income, which includes both money raised by the licence fee, and other sources of income, for example profit from the BBC's commercial subsidiaries. You can see more about the BBC's income in the BBC's Annual Report and Accounts, available online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/annualreport/> ; please see table 1b on page 106.

Please note that, with the exception of the information relating to the 2007 visits made for the purpose of discussing the kidnapping of Alan Johnston, the information you have requested is outside the scope of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”). This is because the BBC and the other public service broadcasters are covered by the Act only in respect of information held for purposes “other than those of journalism, art or literature” (see Schedule 1, Part VI of the Act)¹. We are not therefore obliged to supply information held for the purposes of creating the BBC's output or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities. However, on this occasion we're happy to respond to your request by providing the information given above.

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner.

¹ For more information about how the Act applies to the BBC please see www.bbc.co.uk/foi. Please note that this guidance is not intended to be a comprehensive legal interpretation of how the Act applies to the BBC.

The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545 700 or see <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>
Please note that the BBC does not offer an internal review when the information requested is not covered by the Act. If you disagree with our decision you can appeal directly to the Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Hallett
Advisor, Information Policy & Compliance