



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Near East Group
Middle East & North Africa
Directorate
King Charles Street
SW1A 2AH
www.fco.gov.uk

Mr Guy Freeman
whatdotheyknow.com
By email: request-41693-9c639059@whatdotheyknow.com

04 October 2010

Dear Mr Freeman,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST 0606-10

I am writing regarding your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act in which you asked for:

“Frances Guy, the British Ambassador to the Republic of Lebanon, published a post to her blog at http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/guy/entry/the_passing_of_decent_men/ concerning the death of Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, a post that was later deleted.

Please provide electronic copies of all internal correspondence you hold related to this post, including (but not restricted to) reactions from colleagues and managers of Ms. Guy, whether directed to her or not; how the decision to delete the post was come to; and any correspondence relating to the decision of Ms. Guy to write a new blog post about the incident, published at http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/guy/entry/the_problems_of_diplomatic_blogging/.”

The FOI Act obliges us to respond to requests promptly and in any case no later than 20 working days after receiving your request. However, when a qualified exemption applies to the information and the public interest test is engaged, the Act allows the time for response to be longer than 20 working days, and a full response must be provided within such time as is reasonable in all circumstances of the case. We do, of course, aim to make all decisions within 20 working days, including in cases where we need to consider where the public interest lies in respect of a request for exempt information. In this case, however, we have not yet reached a decision on where the balance of the public interest lies.

In your case we estimate it will take up to an additional 15 working days to take a decision on where the balance of the public interest lies. Therefore, we plan to let you have a response by 25 October. If it appears that it will take longer than this to reach a conclusion, we will of course keep you informed.

The exemptions we are currently considering in relation to your request are Section 27 (International Relations) and Section 36 (Prejudice to effective conduct of Public Affairs).

I understand you will shortly receive a substantive response to your request for an internal review into the time taken to process this request. As you are aware if you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you should write to me at the above address. Please note any request for an internal review must be submitted within 40 working days from the date our response was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by The Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Please contact me if you have any queries about this letter. I note that you have placed several FOI requests with the FCO. Without wishing to prejudice any current or future appeals - you may wish to contact me or one of my colleagues in Information Rights Team to discuss aspects of freedom of information requests generally. We would be willing to discuss over the telephone or meet in person to discuss these general aspects of Freedom of Information as they apply to the FCO.

Please contact me if you have any queries about this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Neville Jones

Near East Group

Foreign and Commonwealth Office