



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Near East Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Mr Michael Price
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Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

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15 February 2017

Dear Mr Price,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0075-17

Thank you for your email of 18 January 2017 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

“Does the FCO pay any money to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, either directly or indirectly? The FCO uses SOHR as a source for some of its data. How does the FCO check the accuracy of its information? Does the FCO have any contacts with SOHR and if so please send me the latest email either way.”

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.

You asked about funding for the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR). The FCO does not currently fund the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR); it previously provided £41,600 in May 2012 to support their human rights work.

You asked how the FCO checks the accuracy of information provided by SOHR. The FCO is not in a position to verify the information published by SOHR or other organisations. Where we cite statistics provided by SOHR, we attribute these clearly. The FCO draws upon a wide range of information sources, both internal and external, when assessing the situation in Syria.

The FCO is in occasional contact with SOHR, most recently when we invited them to attend a meeting on September 2016.

You asked to see the most recent correspondence with SOHR. Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you. Some of the information you have requested is

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.

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.

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I hope this reply proves satisfactory. However, if you wish to make a complaint or if you would like a review of our decision, please write to the FOI and DPA Team, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room K4.04, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. E-mail: foi-dpa.imd@fco.gov.uk. You have 40 working days to do so from the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may then apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the FCO. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Near East Department

