



Our Ref: FOI Req 19-314

Date: 4 December 2019

Dear Mr. Brady,

I refer to the request that you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to the following records held by this Department:

Any memos, minutes, reports, topics, correspondence regarding the meeting between the Shura Council of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, led by H. E. Dr. Mu'addi bin Mohammed Al Mathab and Irish State officials during the visit in September 2019.

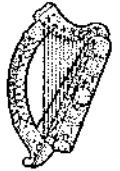
I have identified 37 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant 6, part-grant 18, and refuse 13 of these records. Where access has been refused, the records are exempt from release under sections 29, 33, 35, and/or 37 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (the Act).

Exemptions under Section 33 relate to the security, defence and international relations of the State. I have refused two records under Sections 33(2)(b)(i). These are mandatory exemptions under the legislation, and I am obliged to refuse access to information from records falling within this subsection.

I have also exempted information from 19 records under Section 33(1)(d) of the Act, on the basis that access to said information could reasonably be expected to adversely affect the international relations of the State. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for managing relations between Ireland and 190 countries. Based on the Department's direct knowledge and expertise in international relations, its strongly held position is that the mere granting of access to this information would adversely affect the State's relations by, among other things, introducing major doubts with regard to the security and confidentiality of our diplomatic communications. It is important to maintain that mutuality of trust in order to protect and promote Ireland's interests internationally. My decision to refuse access to the information contained in these 19 records is informed by my consideration of the likelihood that its release could result in negative consequences, and the likely severity of said consequences.

I have exempted information from 1 record under Section 29(1)(a), which concerns records containing matter relating to the deliberative processes of an FOI body.

Finally, under Section 37(1), I have exempted information from 18 records. Section 37(1) refers to personal information and is a mandatory exemption. I have considered the public



interest in the context of the public right to access information. However, I am satisfied that, on balance, the broader community interest, as distinct from your particular interest, is best served by protecting the privacy (including contact details) of the individuals concerned.

Right of Appeal

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so in writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to foi@dfa.ie. A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at foi@dfa.ie, or +353 (0) 1 408 2857.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks (20 working days) from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely,

Ciarán Byrne
Middle East and North Africa Unit
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
+353 (0) 1 408 2194, ciaran.byrne2@dfa.ie