

**An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála**

Oifig na bPasanna, Teach Knockmaun, 42-47 Sráid an Mhóta Íochtarach,  
Baile Átha Cliath 2 D02 TN83

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**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Passport Office, Knockmaun House, 42-47 Mount Street Lower, Dublin 2 D02 TN83

29 February 2016

Our Ref Fol/Req/2016/005

Mr Colin Coyle  
The Sunday Times  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Bishop's Square  
Redmond's Hill  
Dublin 2

Dear Mr Coyle

I refer to your recently submitted request for information, made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, 2014, in which you requested:

*Access to a list of current holders of diplomatic passports, details of all former diplomatic passport holders that returned their passports since 2013 and copies of any correspondence with current or former diplomatic passport holders created since 2013 who objected to returning their diplomatic passports.*

The issue and use of Diplomatic passports is governed by Section 16 of the Passports Act 2008. This permits the issuing of Diplomatic Passports to facilitate holders to travel abroad in connection with the performance of official duties. This is in line with international practice and the provisions of international law. Diplomatic Passports are mainly issued to officials (and dependent family members) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and from other government departments assigned to work in missions abroad for the duration of assignments/postings. They are also issued to the President, the Taoiseach, members of the Government and Ministers of State for the period of their term in office and to Private Secretaries and Special Advisors to members of the Government for use when travelling on official government business. Other categories of holder include senior Irish officials working for the European External Action Service and senior members of the judiciary assigned to work for the UN and/or the international courts. In line with international practice, diplomatic passports are cancelled once the assignment or role for which they are issued is terminated.

I have made a decision to part grant your request and attach a schedule which shows the documents relevant to your request.

In my decision to refuse the names of the passport holders I have decided that all the records come within the scope of Section 37(1) of the Act which makes provision for the refusal of records that involves the disclosure of personal information in respect of the individuals concerned. In making

this decision I have had to consider that disclosure would involve identifying the place of or nature of employment of the individuals concerned without the prior consent of the individuals in circumstances where such information is not in the public domain.

Furthermore, some of the records come within the scope of Section 32(1)(a)(iii) of the Act, and as such I am obliged to refuse to release any information in regard to them. This section of the Act makes provision for the non-disclosure of certain records that could affect law enforcement and public safety.

These records are also being refused access under Section 33(1)(a)(b) which makes provision for the exemption of certain records in the interest of security, defence and international relations. In making this decision I have had to consider that the disclosure of these names could also put at risk the personal security of those involved and by extension their families and additionally their capacity to freely travel to undertake business on behalf of the State.

In addition under Section 42(h) of the Act, records relating to the President are exempt from disclosure and therefore this information has been redacted.

Having balanced these issues along with the broad public interest in providing access to public records I have decided to release the titles of the current diplomatic passport holders and the numbers of passport holders under each title. In a separate list I have included the number of spouses, civil partners and children who hold diplomatic passports.

You have also requested a list of former holders of diplomatic passports that returned their passports since 2013. Likewise, this request has been part-granted and I enclose a list of titles of those who held diplomatic passports since 2013 and who returned their passports for cancellation. In a separate list I have included the number of spouses, civil partners and children who returned their diplomatic passports.

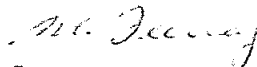
In relation to your request for access to records created since 2013 and relevant correspondence, I wish to advise that no current or former diplomatic passport holders objected to returning their diplomatic passports.

#### 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](mailto: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](mailto:foi@dfa.ie) or 01 4082857.

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



Mary Feeney  
Passport Service  
42-47 Mount Street Lower  
Dublin 2