



Home Office

Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism

2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF

OSCTFOI@homeoffice.x.gsi.gov.uk Website: www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Mr Rizwaan Sabir
Rizwaan_sabir@hotmail.com

HO reference: 14890
24 September 2010

Dear Mr Sabir,

Freedom of Information Requests – Quilliam

I am writing further to my letter of 27 August, regarding your request for information held by the Home Office in relation to meetings and correspondence between the Home Office and Quilliam, and funding provided by the Home Office to Quilliam. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You specifically requested:

1. The total amount of funding provided by the Home Office to Quilliam since 2008 and the amount which is scheduled to be given to Quilliam in the near future;
2. All correspondence between the Home Office and Quilliam in relation to applying for / negotiating funding;
3. All correspondence between the Home Office and Quilliam since July 2007;
4. A list of all meetings between the Home Office and Quilliam, with a summary of the purpose of each meeting, since July 2007; and
5. To release any minutes or official accounts of the meetings where they exist.

Further to the information that was released to you on 2 July, I am pleased to be able to release some information held by the Home Office in relation to your requests, as set out in **Annex B**. Some names and contact details have been redacted under section 40(2) of the Act, an absolute exemption.

I can also confirm that the Home Office holds further information in relation to your requests. However, after careful consideration we have decided that the information is exempt from disclosure under sections 36(2)(b)(i) and 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. These sections provide that information can be withheld where disclosure would prejudice, respectively, the free and frank exchange of views and

the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding the information), and the public interest falls in favour of applying the exemptions.

Arguments for and against disclosure in terms of the public interest, with the reasons for our conclusion, are set out in **Annex A**.

One further document held by the Home Office has been exempted from disclosure (Quilliam's November 2009 report *Unlocking Al-Qaeda: Islamist Extremism in British Prisons*) under section 21 of the Act – an absolute exemption – as it is easily accessible to you via the Internet.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to the address below, quoting reference 14890. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

Information Access Team
Home Office
Ground Floor, Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

E-mail: info.access@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Yours sincerely,

J Fanshaw

Annex A

Public Interest Tests

Section 36

Section 36(2)(b)(i) has been applied to official accounts held by the Home Office of two meetings between the Home Office and Quilliam. Please find below the description of section 36(2) in the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Section 36(2)

'Information to which this section applies is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, disclosure of the information under this Act-

(b) would, or would be likely to, prejudice -

(i) the free and frank provision of advice, or

(ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation'

Considerations favouring disclosure

In favour of disclosing the information being withheld under this exemption are considerations of openness and transparency. It is in the interests of government and public bodies to be as open and transparent as possible. The greater the degree of information that is released in to the public domain the better informed the general public become. This should in turn lead to a better quality of public debate on all area of government business and policy formulation.

There are also considerations favouring disclosure specific to this case, including increased public understanding of the relationship between the Government and Quilliam.

Considerations favouring non-disclosure

The considerations favouring disclosure, laid out above, must be balanced against those favouring non-disclosure. The main consideration favouring non-disclosure of the information covered by Section 36(2) is that its release could adversely affect the conduct of public affairs by inhibiting the free and frank provision of advice and exchange of views, and the resultant negative impact that this would cause to the Home Office's ability to deliver against its objectives.

The information under consideration was prepared by officials in the knowledge and expectation that it would not be made available to those outside of the individuals it was originally intended for. Officials are entitled to deliberate and provide advice to senior officials and partners in an honest and candid fashion. If such information were to be released there is a substantial risk that advice provided in future, on similarly sensitive subjects, would be less candid than required.

It is of paramount importance to the good conduct of government that officials are given the opportunity to prepare briefings and communicate with each other in confidence so that effective deliberation can take place. There is an inherent public interest, in ensuring that the conduct of government is subject to rigorous deliberation. In my opinion, such a release would, on the balance of probabilities, prevent officials from conducting these deliberations in future with the candour and confidence required to ensure good quality government and decision making.

As such, I am satisfied that the public interest favours non-disclosure of the information covered by this exemption.

Section 43

Section 43(2) has been applied to correspondence between the Home Office and Quilliam which deal with applications for and negotiating funding, and official accounts held by the Home Office of one meeting between the Home Office and Quilliam. Please find below the description of section 43(2) in the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Section 43(2)

'Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).'

Considerations favouring disclosure

There is a general public interest in openness and transparency in government, particularly where public funds are being spent. Release of the information held would go some way to ensuring that government departments are getting value for money when purchasing services.

Considerations favouring non-disclosure

It is, however, necessary to balance the considerations in favour of releasing the requested information with those considerations favouring withholding the information. The information in question contains commercially sensitive details of products produced by Quilliam and a commercial advantage could be gained by a competitor to Quilliam if the information was released. The information also contains Government commentary on products produced by Quilliam. In this regard, the Government is not Quilliam's only customer and releasing those comments could undermine Quilliam's competitiveness.

Releasing details of the grant agreements signed with Quilliam could damage Quilliam's commercial interests by undermining their ability to secure funding from non-Government bodies and damage the willingness of other grant holders to enter subsequent contractual relationships with the Home Office. Moreover, Quilliam operate in, what is effectively, a niche market with few competitors. In such circumstances, releasing the details of the Home Office's previous grant agreements

with Quilliam would undermine the Home Office's ability to secure optimum value for money for the public purse.

Having considered the competing interests outlined above, I am satisfied that the public interest favours non-disclosure of the information covered by this exemption.

Annex B

Question 1 – The total amount of funding provided by the Home Office to Quilliam since 2008 and the amount which is scheduled to be given to Quilliam in the near future:

- 2008-09 – £664,908.00
- 2009-10 – £387,382.10
- 2010-11 – At this time, we have agreed to fund the Quilliam Foundation £83,183.

Question 4 – A list of all meetings between the Home Office and Quilliam, with a summary of the purpose of each meeting, since July 2007:

Date	Short Summary of Purpose	Record Available
04/08/2008	To discuss training programmes delivered by Quilliam	Yes
21/10/2008	Quilliam presentation to Home Office officials on the process of radicalisation	No
13/02/2009	<i>No information held</i>	No
30/04/2009	To discuss a Quilliam press release	No
02/11/2009	Informal catch-up between Director of Prevent and Quilliam Directors	No
30/11/2009	To discuss Quilliam's November 2009 report <i>Unlocking Al-Qaeda: Islamist Extremism in British Prisons</i>	Yes
16/12/2009	Quilliam attended a roundtable hosted by the Home Office, which was also attended by other representatives of Muslim communities, where a general discussion around Prevent took place.	No
04/01/2010	Informal catch-up between Director of Prevent and Quilliam Directors	No
22/03/2010	Informal catch-up between Director of Prevent and Quilliam Directors	No

Question 4 – All correspondence between the Home Office and Quilliam since July 2007:

Email chain 1:

From: Home Office official
Sent: 14 October 2008 10:17
To: Quilliam employee

Hi again

Yes, 11am on the 22nd is fine. Are you happy to come into the Home Office? Can you let me know if anyone else will be coming with you so that we can arrange passes?

Thanks, and look forward to seeing you.

Kind regards

XXX

From: Quilliam employee
Sent: 14 October 2008 9:19 AM
To: Home Office official

Hi XXX

Thank you very much for your reply. 22nd October is fine. Is 11am ok ?

Regards

From: Home Office official
Sent: 13 October 2008 13:18
To: Quilliam employee

Hi XXX

Thanks for getting in touch, I agree it would be useful to meet and discuss the work that you're doing.

Are you happy to come to the Home Office to meet and would some time next week be ok for you? 22 or 23 October both look possible for me at the moment.

Please let me know if these dates are convenient for you and if so what time would suit.

Kind regards

XXX

From: Quilliam employee
Sent: 10 October 2008 11:22 AM
To: Home Office official

Dear XXX

Further to our meeting yesterday I would like to tell you more about ourselves. The **Quilliam Foundation** is the world's first counter-extremism think tank. Located in London, our founders are former leading ideologues of UK-based extremist Islamist organizations. My unit intends to reach out to communities all over the country in order to fill knowledge and information gaps so that they can benefit from our

expertise in this area. We tend to put emphasis on the Prevent strand of the PVE agenda and that is where our skill set lies. We are already working on putting together proposals for a number of initiatives for various councils which will help build resilience in local communities to extremist ideas. The specifics of each of these initiatives depends largely on the area itself and the needs of the community. We are very keen to reach to even more communities around the country in order to work on community based initiatives.

We would like to come and meet you to discuss our initiatives and answer any questions you may have about ourselves.

Kind Regards

Email chain 2:

From: Quilliam employee
Date: Sat, 14 Nov 2009 17:17:42 +0000
To: Home Office official

Hi XXX/XXX,

Please find an advanced copy of Quilliam's prison report attached. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on it. The report will be published on Monday.

I'm sorry for the delay in sending this to you. I had hoped to send it to you earlier this week – however we only received the final PDF on Friday evening and then I was unable to send it to you earlier today as our server was down and we could not access emails until it was mended – all very frustrating!

So far, only the Sunday Times and a few senior Conservatives have a copy – and these were draft versions which we printed out for them earlier this week. The rest of the media will receive the report on Sunday when we send out press-releases – on Monday we will send out the report to everyone else and make it available on our website.

All best,

XXX

Email chain 3:

From: Quilliam employee
Sent: 10 April 2008 2:38 PM
To: Home Office official

Dear XXX,

It was my pleasure meeting you, and I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to the launch of our foundation. If interested, we would request that you send the full name, organisation and email address of all those planning to attend to our events coordinator, XXX (email given below). XXX will then deal with matters related to confirmations.

The Quilliam Foundation (www.quilliamfoundation.org), Britain's first Muslim counter extremism organisation, will launch on the 22nd of April at 1:00pm at the British Museum in London.

In addition to providing a counter narrative to the al-Qaeda mindset, we will:

- give the media and attendees access to a large group of former Islamists (going public for the first time)
- facilitate engagement with mainstream Muslim scholars
- articulate our vision for countering, and make practical policy suggestions for preventing, further radicalisation of young Muslims
- provide attendees with new Quilliam publications.

Confirmed speakers include Jemima Khan, Lord Paddy Ashdown, Professor Timothy Garton Ash, and prominent Muslim leaders.

The full programme will be sent out to attendees in due course.

Seating is limited, so to reserve your seat please contact my colleague XXX at XXX or on:

XXX

Our kindest regards,

Email Chain 4:

From: Home Office official
Sent: 25 November 2009
To: Quilliam employee

XXX

Entirely up to you about XXX or XXX – it would be good to see them, but it's not a pre-requisite!

On our side, I suspect it will be OSCT and NOMS – I'll get back to you with a cast list (and promise to avoid it being too heavy-handed). Thanks for responding so swiftly.

XXX

From: Quilliam employee
Sent: 25 November 2009 4:10 PM
To: Home Office official

Hi XXX,

Many thanks for your letter. I am very sorry to hear that you were disappointed by Quilliam's prisons report. I look forward to discussing this with you further – and particularly the issue of access to prisons and the lack of co-operation from the Prison Service.

I am happy to meet anytime on Monday or else on Tuesday morning if that works for you. Do you wish for either XXX or XXX to attend as well?

Best wishes,

XXX

Email chain 5:

From: Home Office official
Sent: 25 November 2009 14:08
To: Quilliam employee

XXX

Letter attached. I'll get my office to set up a meeting.

XXX

Letter 1:



Debbie Gupta
Director – Prevent/RICU
Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism
[REDACTED], Home Office
2 Marsham Street, London, England, SW1P 4DF
Tel: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

23 November 2009

James Brandon
Quilliam Foundation
PO Box 60380
London
WC1A 9AZ

Dear James

I was disappointed at the way in which the publication of your report on prisons – “Unlocking Al-Qaeda: Islamist Extremism in British Prisons” – was handled. Neither OSCT nor colleagues at the Ministry of Justice/National Offender Management Service were given an opportunity to read the report in full prior to publication and, indeed, press coverage.

I appreciate that you may have had IT problems at the end of last week, but a copy had already been provided to the Sunday Times and – as I understand – to senior members of the Opposition. Quilliam’s handling of the publication is at odds with your assertions of willingness to work constructively with Government.

Having read the report, I feel it has rather fallen short of the high standards we would expect from publications – supported by Government funding – of this kind, or the standards we have seen from other work by Quilliam. This is not to say that we

expect *carte blanche* endorsements from independent 'think tanks'. But it does make it difficult for us to respond effectively and constructively to your recommendations.

My view is that your report would have benefited from:

- applying to NOMS for access to prisoners and prison staff as part of a structured data collection process. I understand that NOMS suggested such a research application was made, without prejudice to its prospects, but that none was received;
- greater depth in your engagement with NOMS, rather than having a read through of an early draft of your recommendations.

The report appears to be based on unsubstantiated accounts attributed to terrorist offenders and material (such as inspection reports) that predate the NOMS Extremism Programme, on which they work closely with OSCT. As a result, a number of your recommendations are out of date or impractical.

We would have welcomed the opportunity to engage with this agenda and report's recommendations. And, while I appreciate that it is not Government's role to determine the research methodology of your report, it does mean that flawed and out-dated approach taken in the report has restricted our ability to give the recommendations real weight. That is, in my view, a missed opportunity.

I hope that this is not the basis on which we will continue to debate these issues. I know that you have had a constructive meeting with officials from NOMS, and I would like to build on this. As a first step, perhaps I could propose a meeting between OSCT, NOMS and yourself – ideally to be held before Maajid speaks at Kings College on Thursday 3 December. I will ask my office to fix a time.

I would reiterate my request that, in future, you share with us material you intend to release to the press in advance and in a timely fashion. This can be done without compromising your independence. As part of any meeting I would be happy to discuss a process for this.

I am copying this letter to Phil Wheatley, Director General of NOMS.



Debbie Gupta