

24 April 2025

REFERENCE: FOI25\27

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your request for information dated 24 February 2025 and detailed below.

Can DoJ provide the minutes of ministerial meetings that took place with these people between 1 July 2024 to the end of September 2024?

1. Secretary of State
2. Andrew George, National Black Police Association
3. Helen McEntee TD, Irish Justice Minister
4. Dr. Wasif Naeem and other representatives from Belfast Islamic Centre
5. NIPSA, PSNI and NI Policing Board

Some of the information you have requested is covered by the following sections of the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

- section 24 (1) (Safeguarding national security);
- section 36(2) (b)& (c) (Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs)
- section 40 (2) (Personal Information);

Qualified Exemptions

The exemption provisions of sections 24(1) and 36 confer a qualified exemption to our duty under section 1(1)(b) of the Act – to release the information requested. Information covered by qualified exemptions can only be withheld where the public interest falls in favour of applying the exemptions.

We have provided details of our Public Interest Test considerations in Annex A to this letter.

The note of the meeting with the Secretary of State, which was to discuss legacy issues, is not being released under Section 36 (2) (b) & (c) of the FoI Act. The other documents being released have been annotated with the relevant exemptions applied.

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you request an internal review please do so in writing stating the reasons to the address above.

If following an internal review you were to remain dissatisfied you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner and ask the Commissioner to investigate whether the DOJ has complied with the terms of the FOIA. You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

The Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out.

Further details on the role of the Information Commissioner and the handling of appeals can be found at: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Records & Information Manager

Annex A

24(1) (Safeguarding National Security)

In favour of release

There is a general public interest in being able to understand the way in which Government works, how decisions are made and the extent to which various factors influenced those decisions. Disclosure would provide greater transparency and accountability, and increased levels of public interest and trust in the conduct of public affairs.

In favour of non-disclosure:

There needs to be a space within which the Justice Minister is able to engage with external stakeholders to discuss the Government's position on arising and sensitive issues, as well as stakeholders being able to express their views frankly. These are ongoing politically-charged issues for which there needs to be clear space, free from public pressure, to discuss and allow all relevant issues to be considered.

Without the space for discussion, it may not be possible to sufficiently explore all issues which could, in turn, adversely impact on the outcome for the public and could have a detrimental effect on operational issues in relation to national security. Releasing information on sensitive and current issues could also place external pressure on the Minister, officials, or the external representatives, which may have a negative impact on the long term value of future discussions and engagement.

Conclusion

On the basis of the issues outlined above, it is considered that the balance lies in not releasing the information.

36(2) (b)& (c) (Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs)

In favour of release

There is a general public interest in being able to understand the way in which Government works, how decisions are made and the extent to which various factors influenced those decisions. Disclosure would provide greater transparency and accountability, and increased levels of public interest and trust in the conduct of public affairs.

In favour of non-disclosure:

There needs to be a space within which the Justice Minister is able to engage with external stakeholders to discuss the Government's position on sensitive issues, as well as stakeholders being able to express their views frankly. These are ongoing politically-charged issues for which there needs to be clear space, free from public pressure, to discuss and allow all relevant issues to be considered.

Without this space for free and frank discussion it may not be possible to sufficiently explore all issues which could, in turn, adversely impact on the outcome for the public. Releasing information on sensitive and current issues could also place external pressure on the Minister, or the external representatives, which may have a negative impact on the long term value of future discussions and engagement.

In addition, some of the information relates to the development of ongoing policy and operational issues. Releasing the information could potentially hinder the future of sensitive discussions around decisions that in this instance could impact negatively on *inter alia* police staff and victims. That could have a detrimental impact both in the short term and longer term.

Conclusion

On the basis of the issues outlined above, it is considered that the balance lies in not releasing the information.