



## An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Our Ref: Fol/Req/17/214

20 November 2017

Dear Mr Doyle,

I refer to the request which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

***Details of the costs involved in the assistance offered to Ibrahim Halawa since his imprisonment, to include, costs for his family to travel there and hotel costs etc., the Ambassadors special flight to accompany Ibrahim and his sister back to Ireland as well as DOFA costs and costs associated with TD's travelling to Egypt***

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 03 November 2017.

I am the deciding officer in this case. I have identified no records that fall within the scope of your request and so am refusing your request under section 15(1)(a) of the Act - *the record concerned does not exist or cannot be found after all reasonable steps to ascertain its whereabouts have been taken.*

The State has a permanent Embassy in Cairo normally staffed by three posted diplomatic officers and a number of locally-recruited staff. Consular work is an integral part of the work of all of our bilateral missions overseas, including the Embassy in Cairo. Officials from the Embassy of Ireland in Cairo have carried out an extensive number of consular visits and held regular meetings with Egyptian Authorities over the past four years in relation to the case of Ibrahim Halawa. However, no records can be identified that would make it possible to break down the costs of running the mission in Cairo on the basis of individual activity areas or individual cases.

Officials from this Department have paid visits to Egypt in the period in question, either in their own right or accompanying Ministers. These visits were generally linked to a variety of purposes and may have included elements related to the consular case in question, but no records exist which would provide information that would make it possible to attribute any particular element of the costs of such travel or activity to any individual consular case.

In certain instances during the course of a consular case it may be necessary for the Department to pay for the costs relating to travel expenses and/or accommodation for individual citizens as part of the consular assistance bring provided to them. This is generally done only in exceptional circumstances and where there is a clear undertaking from the citizen concerned that these costs will be reimbursed to the Department, so that there is no cost to the taxpayer. In this case, the Irish Embassy in Cairo incurred certain costs on behalf of the citizen concerned and the Department has since been in touch with the citizen to arrange repayment of the amount involved.

In relation to the costs associated with the Ambassador flying to Ireland, I can advise that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade covers the costs of travel for Departmental staff relating to their official duties. Ambassador O'Regan attended a number of meetings and carried out a number of other functions during his recent visit to Dublin.

The costs associated with TDs travelling to Egypt were not borne by this Department and therefore I have no information or records on the costs associated with their visit to Egypt.

### **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,



**Edward Canavan**  
**Consular Assistance Manager**