

Reference	FOI-1903251
Received date	19/03/2025
Response date	17/04/2025, 15/07/2025
Subject	UK aid to Gaza
Status	Withheld, S21, S36

Request summary

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding UK humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The ICAI's May 2024 information note on UK humanitarian aid to Gaza outlines the severe challenges in delivering aid due to access restrictions, logistical difficulties, and security concerns. The report highlights that while the UK has committed significant funding, the actual delivery of aid remains constrained. I would therefore like to request the most up-to-date information ICAI holds on the following:

1. The latest available figures (please specify the date the figures were accurate) on the total amount of UK aid allocated for humanitarian assistance to Gaza since 7 October 2023.
2. A breakdown of how this aid has been allocated by sector (e.g., food, medical supplies, shelter).
3. The latest available figures (please specify the date the figures were accurate) on the total amount of UK-funded aid that has been successfully delivered to Gaza, including:
 - Quantities of food, medical supplies, and other essential aid distributed to beneficiaries.
 - The number of people reached by UK-funded humanitarian aid.
 - Any available data on aid deliveries to northern Gaza, where famine conditions have been reported.
4. Any assessments, reports, or internal correspondence held by ICAI regarding:
 - Significant obstacles preventing UK-funded aid from reaching intended recipients.
 - The effectiveness of diplomatic efforts in improving humanitarian access.
 - Any recent changes in the volume of aid entering Gaza since ICAI's May 2024 report.

Response

Initial response sent 17/04/2025:

Thank you for your FOI request of 19 March.

You asked: "I would therefore like to request the most up-to-date information ICAI holds on the following:

The latest available figures (please specify the date the figures were accurate) on the total amount of UK aid allocated for humanitarian assistance to Gaza since 7 October 2023.”

ICAI does hold information in scope of this request. This information is covered by Section 21 exemption (information already reasonably accessible). The most recent information held by ICAI has been published in ICAI’s May 2024 report, UK humanitarian aid to Gaza.

“A breakdown of how this aid has been allocated by sector (e.g., food, medical supplies, shelter).”

ICAI does hold information in scope of this request. This information is covered by Section 21 exemption (information already reasonably accessible). The most recent information held by ICAI has been published in ICAI’s May 2024 report, UK humanitarian aid to Gaza.

“The latest available figures (please specify the date the figures were accurate) on the total amount of UK-funded aid that has been successfully delivered to Gaza, including:

- Quantities of food, medical supplies, and other essential aid distributed to beneficiaries.
- The number of people reached by UK-funded humanitarian aid.
- Any available data on aid deliveries to northern Gaza, where famine conditions have been reported.”

ICAI does hold information in scope of this request. This information is covered by Section 21 exemption (information already reasonably accessible). The most recent information held by ICAI has been published in ICAI’s May 2024 report, UK humanitarian aid to Gaza.

“Any assessments, reports, or internal correspondence held by ICAI regarding:

- Significant obstacles preventing UK-funded aid from reaching intended recipients.
- The effectiveness of diplomatic efforts in improving humanitarian access.”

Regarding the information related to the above part of your request, the exemptions in Sections 27(1) for information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, harm UK interests and 36, prejudice to the conduct of public affairs, are engaged. We require additional time to consider the public interest test, including consulting third parties. We will respond to this part of your request as soon as possible.

“Any recent changes in the volume of aid entering Gaza since ICAI’s May 2024 report.”

ICAI does not hold any information in scope of this request.

Additional response sent 15/07/2025:

Thank you for your Freedom of Information Requests of 19 March 2025 relating to ICAI's information note on UK humanitarian aid to Gaza. I apologise for the length of time it has taken to respond to this part of your request.

I can confirm that ICAI does hold information in scope of your requests, specifically "Any assessments, reports, or internal correspondence held by ICAI regarding:

- Significant obstacles preventing UK-funded aid from reaching intended recipients.
- The effectiveness of diplomatic efforts in improving humanitarian access."

However, we are withholding this information under Sections 36 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

In accordance with the Information Commissioner's Office's guidance on consultation with third parties, ICAI has consulted FCDO, where the information originated, in order to help consider whether the information is suitable for disclosure. Our response reflects this consultation. ICAI considers that the information is caught by s36(c) (as disclosure of it would be likely to prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs). The s36 exemption requires a determination by a 'qualified person' that disclosure of the requested information would have one of the specified prejudicial effects. The ICAI Chief Commissioner, Jillian Popkins, is the 'qualified person' for ICAI for the purposes of s36 of FOIA. She considers that the information you have requested is caught by s36(c) and should also be withheld on that basis.

Section 36 is also qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test. In favour of disclosure is the public interest in that release would promote openness and commitment to transparency in the government's activities on providing aid to Gaza which can build public trust which aligns with ICAI's mandate to hold the government accountable. Releasing the information allows people to understand how decisions are being made, therefore strengthening confidence in the decision-making process that drive policy. It also contributes to meaningful debate on the role the UK is playing in providing aid to Gaza which is an area with high public interest. This ensures that public discussions are supported by facts, allowing for more constructive criticism and policy suggestions.

However, an argument in favour of non-disclosure is the need for ICAI to maintain the effectiveness of its role and its ability to scrutinise government actions. In order to do so ICAI must have access to government information to be able to scrutinise government actions effectively. ICAI is without any statutory powers to demand release of information and relies on the cooperation of government departments to share information. This is considered on a case by case basis but, If ICAI were to disclose information that would have been withheld by other public authorities that ICAI deals with in response to FOI requests, in defiance of those bodies' considered views as to why that information should rightly be withheld under FOIA, it is reasonable to assume that this cooperation could be reduced or withdrawn, prejudicing the ability of ICAI to fulfil its mandate. This is all the more likely when the area of scrutiny remains a live and contested public policy issue, such as Gaza. It is also likely given the ongoing scale of the humanitarian crisis that ICAI will want to conduct further reviews of the UK humanitarian operation in the future, and this gives further weight to argument in favour of withholding.

Therefore, on balance, Ms Popkins has concluded that the public interest favours the maintenance of the exemption under s36 and the information should be withheld.

If you would like us to carry out an internal review of this decision, please contact us at: icai-enquiries@icai.independent.gov.uk

If, after any internal review, you are still not satisfied with our response, you can complain or appeal to the [Information Commissioner's Office](#).