



SG.2
Head of Division

Brussels, 14 March 2022
eeas.sg.2 (2021) 8259898

To



Subject: Your request for access to documents of 23 November 2021
Our ref: 2021/175



I would like to thank you for your request for access to documents, which the EEAS has examined in the framework of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.¹

After a search in the EEAS filing systems, the document management databases and archives, the EEAS has identified a number of 159 documents matching your request.

All these documents contain sensitive information relating to the situation in Syria and the region. They were mainly produced by the EU delegations in the Syria region, namely Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. The documents include reports on EU Delegations missions in the Syria region, analysis of the political, economic, military and humanitarian situation in these countries, and reports of contacts with various local stakeholders and representatives from EU Member States.

Please note that the requested documents are based on information gathered by EU delegations as regards the extremely sensitive situation in Syria. This information is essential in protecting the public from a serious security threat, for considerations of defence and military nature, and for the determination of the international relations of the EU and its Member States with the country at stake, with the countries in the region, and with other international actors. The public disclosure of these documents would risk not only endangering the sources and methods through which the information was collected, but also

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (hereafter the "Regulation").

make known to the public the level and the nature of information gathered. Such a release would specifically and actually undermine the protection of the public security, defence and security matters, as well international relations of the EU and its Member States in the geographical area at issue, in particular since this information may be used by hostile and/or malicious actors against the interests of the EU and/or its Member States. Indeed, releasing the requested documents would adversely affect the capacity of the EU and its Member States to define their strategic goals and actions concerning Syria in the fields of security, defence as well international relations.

Besides, it is not possible to list the documents since any further details about these documents would give sufficient elements to affect the aforementioned public interests and would allow actors in the geographical region to identify the sources and the ways in which intelligence information is gathered, which may even put at risk the physical integrity of actors, if any, thanks to whom these information have been collected on the ground or processed.

In addition, it would lead to a breach of trust between the EU institutions and its Member States, as well as third states in the intelligence information gathering as regards the situation in Syria.

Moreover, from a geostrategic point of view, releasing the requested documents would reveal the specific nature of the political and security interests of the EU and its Member States and the level of strategic understanding concerning Syria.

Therefore, I regret to inform you that we are not in a position to disclose these documents at this point in time, neither as a whole or partially, since it could seriously undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security, defence and military matters, as well as international relations, pursuant to Article 4(1), first, second and third indents of the Regulation No 1049/2001, and therefore access to these documents shall be refused.

Nevertheless, the EEAS has identified a series of statements related to your request which are public and published on-line. Kindly find the links to these statements in the attached document.

Should you wish this position to be reviewed, you may confirm your initial request within 15 working days.

Yours sincerely,

