



Viral emails protesting about government spending on international aid

Standard Note: SN/EP/06682

Last updated: 29 December 2014

Author: Gloria Tyler & Lorna Booth

Section Economic Policy and Statistics

Members may be contacted by constituents complaining at the perceived contrast between generous government spending on foreign aid and inadequate domestic benefits and services, citing a forwarded chain email.

This viral email, sometimes given the title 'Something to think about' alleges that "We're broke and can't help our own Pensioners, Veterans, Orphans, Homeless, etc". It cites figures for international aid to various countries – and also Hamas – while making claims of governmental neglect of various domestic groups.

The House of Commons Library first became aware of the email in early 2013, but it has been circulating on the internet in some form since at least 2010, and appears to have originated in the US.

The figures quoted in the email, which are often without any indication of currency, do not resemble actual UK international aid figures. It is however true that, as the email claims, the UK spends billions of pounds on aid (£11.5 billion in 2013).

This note gives details of the email, some actual UK foreign aid figures, and some information on state support available to those groups named in the email.

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as being up to date; the law or policies may have changed since it was last updated; and it should not be relied upon as legal or professional advice or as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

This information is provided subject to [our general terms and conditions](#) which are available online or may be provided on request in hard copy. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.

Contents

1	The email	2
2	Analysis	3
2.1	Aid figures	3
2.2	Other claims	4

1 The email

Various versions of the email are in circulation, but they invariably include a list of countries, including 'Hamas', with a figure. The following example is typical:

We read all the jokes and forward the good ones, but I just wonder who will pass this one on. How about you sending it on and back to me, if you got the guts to do so. I am and just wonder how many I will get back?
 AND very happy to be of the 1%.
 Someone please tell me what the Hell is wrong with all the people that run this country!!!
 LABOUR & LIBERALS, say We're "broke" and can't help our own Seniors, Veterans, Orphans, Homeless, etc.,???

In the last years we have provided direct cash aid to
 Haiti- 1.4 B,
 Hamas - 351 M,
 Pakistan- 2 B,
 Libya1.45 B,
 Egypt- 397 M,
 Mexico- 622 M,
 Russia- 380 M,
 Haiti- 1.4 B,
 Jordan- 463 M,
 Kenya- 816 M,
 Sudan- 870 M,
 Nigeria- 456 M,
 Uganda- 451 M,
 Congo- 359 M,
 Ethiopia- 981 M,
 South Africa- 566 M,
 Senegal- 698 M,
 Mozambique- 404 M,
 Zambia- 331 M,
 Kazakhstan- 304 M,
 Iraq- 1.08 B,
 Tanzania- 554 M,

With literally Billions £'s they still despise us. On top of that £50M a day to the EU. Pensioners living on a fixed income do they get any breaks while our government and religious organizations pour Hundreds of Billions of ££'s and Tons of Food to Foreign Countries!
 We have hundreds of adoptable children who are shoved aside to make room for the adoption of foreign orphans.
 UK homeless without shelter, children going to bed hungry, elderly going without needed medication and mentally ill without treatment... etc.
 YET

We still allow illegal immigrant & other free loaders on UK shores
While we are lining up with food, clothes, bedding, doctors and medical supplies.
Imagine if the "GOVERNMENT" gave 'US' the same support they give to other
countries.
Sad isn't it? 99% of people won't have the guts to forward this.
I'm one of the 1%...
I Just Did

Variations include reference to 'Democrats and Republicans' or 'Conservatives, Labour and Liberals' at the start of the message, and 'seniors' in place of 'pensioners'.

There are similarities between this viral email and another which contrasts state benefits alleged to be available to "illegal immigrants/refugees" with those for which pensioners are eligible. More about this email may be found in [Library Standard Note SN/SP/5621](#).¹

2 Analysis

2.1 Aid figures

The aid figures for particular countries in the email are generally without currency, time period or source, and as such are fairly difficult to find meaning in. They do not tally with any official UK sources, unsurprisingly given the inclusion of Hamas in the list. The same numbers also appear in a version of the email that has been sent round relating to the situation in the USA.

As an example of an incorrect figure, the first number given in the email is for aid spending in Haiti, suggesting that 1.4 billion has been spent there. According to the Department for International Development's [Statistics on International Development 2014](#), a total of £39.5 million was given by the UK to Haiti from 2010 to 2013. These figures are for net bilateral Official Development Assistance – a key international measure of aid spending. Figures for other countries can be found in [DFID Statistics on International Development 2014](#), and, for the countries mentioned in the email, in the table below.²

One point made in the email is that billions are spent on aid, and this is true. Figures from the Department for International Development's [Statistics on International Development 2014](#) indicate that the UK provided £11.5 billion of net Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2013.³

¹ Library Standard Note SN05621 [Viral emails protesting about financial assistance for "illegal immigrants/refugees living in Britain"](#) (March 2013), at <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05621>

² DFID, [Statistics on International Development 2014](#) (30 October 2014) at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-2014> - see additional tables A4a- A4e 'Total UK Bilateral ODA by Country'

³ DFID, [Statistics on International Development 2014](#) (30 October 2014) at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-2014>

For further details see Library Standard Note SN05880 [UK overseas aid expenditure](#) (June 2013) at <http://intranet.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05880>

Comparison of claimed aid sums and official UK aid figures

Emillions, net bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA)

	Viral email	Official UK aid figures:			
		2010	2011	2012	2013
Haiti	1,400	16.9	9.7	3.3	9.6
Hamas	351	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pakistan	2,000	193.3	206.8	189.2	338.2
Libya	1,450	1.0	10.5	9.9	15.8
Egypt	397	5.8	10.9	8.9	21.0
Mexico	622	6.1	3.6	3.7	5.7
Russia	380	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Jordan	463	1.7	1.7	4.7	16.7
Kenya	816	68.1	88.6	101.8	160.2
Sudan	870	77.1	98.1	51.8	69.2
Nigeria	456	171.3	186.4	197.3	248.8
Uganda	451	116.1	89.2	94.2	58.2
Congo (DRC)	359	162.4	238.9	138.9	161.6
Ethiopia	981	263.5	344.5	265.7	329.5
South Africa	566	25.4	29.1	-13.7	36.5
Senegal	698	0.6	1.2	3.2	1.0
Mozambique	404	67.6	116.3	81.8	78.7
Zambia	331	51.3	57.8	53.2	59.9
Kazakhstan	304	0.2	1.7	3.3	1.8
Iraq	1,080	20.1	8.3	6.9	7.0
Tanzania	554	156.0	99.1	157.8	152.1

Source: Statistics on International Development 2014, DfID, 30 October 2014

2.2 Other claims

- ***“Then, on top of that £50 million a day to the EU”***

Gross contributions to the EU budget in financial year 2013/14 were £14.1bn, or £39m per day. The UK also receives money back from the EU budget. Net of these receipts, the UK contributed £10.2bn, or £27.9m per day. Net contributions are expected to be slightly lower most years to 2018/19.⁴

- ***“We're broke and can't help our own Pensioners, Veterans, Orphans, Homeless, etc.”***

Although there are arguments about the amount of help provided, various services and **benefits** are currently available to these groups in the UK, with the social security system providing support depending on personal circumstances.⁵

⁴ Office for Budget Responsibility, *Economic and Fiscal Outlook December 2014*, Supplementary Fiscal Table 2.19, at <http://budgetresponsibility.org.uk/economic-fiscal-outlook-supplementary-fiscal-tables-december-2014/>

⁵ See the gov.uk page on benefit entitlement at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/entitlement>

Pensioners for example are likely to be eligible for the [State Pension](#) and may be able to top up their weekly income using [Pension Credit](#) if their income is below £148.35 (single people) or £226.50 (couples).⁶ The State Pension and Pension Credit have seen larger [increases](#) than most other benefits in recent years.⁷

The Library Standard Note [The Armed Forces Covenant](#) gives more details on government commitments to **ex-service personnel** and their families.⁸ Library Standard Note [Housing options for ex-service personnel](#) may also be of interest.⁹

Local authorities have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children – including **orphans** – within their area when they are in need, under [statutory guidance](#) in the Children Act 1989.¹⁰

Local authorities have a duty to secure permanent accommodation for unintentionally **homeless** people in priority need. The Standard Note [Homelessness in England](#) has more information on help in these circumstances.¹¹ The Standard Note [Rough sleeping](#) discusses wider initiatives to tackle rough sleeping.¹²

- ***“We have hundreds of adoptable children who are shoved aside to make room for the adoption of foreign orphans”***

While some foreign children might be adopted in place of children from this country, the number of inter-country adoptions is relatively small compared with the total number of adoptions. In 2011 there were estimated to be around 150 inter-country adoptions in England compared with about 4,700 adoptions in England and Wales overall – suggesting that most adoptions are still carried out within the country.¹³ Adoption of children from abroad requires fulfilment of stringent criteria, in particular the adopter must be assessed as eligible and suitable to adopt from overseas by a local authority or adoption agency in the UK.¹⁴

- ***“We still allow illegal immigrant & other free loaders on UK shores”***

Illegal immigrants are people who have entered the UK unlawfully, or who have stayed here for longer than they were allowed without making another application. Since they are in the UK without legal status, they are liable to be removed if they come to the attention of immigration authorities.

⁶ See the gov.uk page on the State Pension at <https://www.gov.uk/state-pension> and the page on Pension Credit at <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/overview>

⁷ Library Standard Note SN06774 [2014 Benefit Uprating](#) (February 2014) at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN06774/2014-benefit-uprating>

⁸ Available at <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN06519>

⁹ Available at <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN04244>

¹⁰ Department for Education: The Children Act 1989: <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00224478/stat-guid-care-plan>

¹¹ Library Standard Note SN01164 [Homelessness in England](#) (October 2014), at <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01164>

¹² Library Standard Note SN02007 [Rough sleeping](#) (April 2014), at <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN02007>

¹³ Statistics for intercountry adoption from [HC Deb 30 Jan 2012 c427W](#) – figures include intercountry adoptions by prospective adopters resident in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the isle of Man who have made an inter-country adoption from countries that have not implemented the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. Statistics for adoptions in England and Wales are from Office for National Statistics, [Adoptions in England and Wales 2012](#) (August 2013)

¹⁴ See the gov.uk page on overseas adoption at <https://www.gov.uk/child-adoption/adopting-a-child-from-overseas>