

John Templon
BuzzFeed News
111 E 18th Street
New York, NY 10003
john.templon@buzzfeed.com
646-214-7158

Director, Office of Information Policy (OIP)
United States Department of Justice
Suite 11050, 1425 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you today to appeal the response to my FOIA request 2019-003947, which requested a copy of the case file U.S. v. Khanani, 15-cr-20468-MGC, U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida (SDFL) (Miami) and related memos, which was filed on July 25, 2019. [Please see the file named *Original Request*.]

On August 5, 2019 I received a response from EOUSA Assistant Director Kevin Krebs citing a third party personal privacy exemption. [Please see the attached *Response*.] I believe that this response was in error due to two reasons. One is that Altaf Khanani, the third party in reference, is a public figure. The second is that the public interest in understanding the actions of the Department of Justice outweighs any personal privacy concerns that may exist.

Altaf Khanani is a public figure

Altaf Khanani is one of the most notorious money launderers in the world. Before his network was sanctioned by the Treasury Department it laundered “illicit funds for organized crime groups, drug trafficking organizations, and designated terrorist groups throughout the world.”¹ A Google Search for Altaf Khanani brings up nearly 34,000 results, including numerous articles and videos about his actions by numerous international and national news outlets. [See attached screenshot *google-altaf-khanani.png*.] Khanani also has a personal Wikipedia page.²

The public interest outweighs personal privacy concerns

In addition, the public’s interest in understanding how the Department of Justice, specifically the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Florida, handles sensitive international money-laundering cases must be weighed against the personal privacy of Altaf Khanani. See for instance, *Citizens for Responsibility & Ethics in Washington v. DOJ*, 746 F.3d

¹ See: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0265.aspx>

² See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altaf_Khanani

1082 (D.C. Cir. 2014) Where the court stated, "Indeed, we have repeatedly recognized a public interest in the manner in which the DOJ carries out substantive law enforcement policy[.]"

After an investigation by the Drug Enforcement Agency, Khanani was initially charged with 14 counts related to the laundering of drug money throughout the United States. Eventually he accepted a plea deal for just one count of money laundering and had his sentence reduced to 68 months and a \$250,000 fine. The process through which that agreement was made is of the utmost importance in contributing to the public's understanding about how prosecution of international drug money laundering cases are conducted. In addition, the investigation was initially handled by multiple countries, including Australia and the United Arab Emirates and a release of records in this case would help improve the public's understanding of the Department of Justice's work with law enforcement in these countries.

Due to these reasons I ask that you remand the case for a full search of records so that FOIA request 2019-003947 may be completed and the public more fully informed about this important public figure and the DOJ's actions in his case.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

-John Templon



John Templon <john.templon@buzzfeed.com>

FOIA Appeal EOUSA-2019-004094 Submitted

1 message

admin@foiaonline.gov <admin@foiaonline.gov>
To: john.templon@buzzfeed.com

Mon, Aug 12, 2019 at 2:51 PM

This message is to notify you of a new appeal submission to the FOIAonline application. Appeal information is as follows:

- Appeal Tracking Number: EOUSA-2019-004094
- Request Tracking Number: EOUSA-2019-003947
- Requester Name: John Templon
- Date Submitted: 08/07/2019
- Appeal Status: Submitted
- Description: see attached open appeal