

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

October 2016

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the persecution of Christians in Iraq and Syria.

The situation for Christians in Iraq and Syria is deeply troubling. Daesh is an organisation that has repeatedly shown its capacity for acts of staggering brutality; including beheadings, crucifixions, the use of rape as a weapon and the slaughter of children.

Many of the attacks perpetrated by Daesh have clearly been designed to incite violence and create sectarian division and have no place in the future of Iraq. It is therefore vital that all Iraqis unite together to confront the serious threat Iraq faces. I am assured the UK Government will do all that is in its power to encourage the different communities and countries involved to reach out to each other in rebuilding an Iraq capable of defeating the poisonous ideology Daesh represents.

It is also crucial that the authority of the legitimate Iraqi authorities over the area now being terrorised by Daesh is re-established. I firmly believe the UK must play its part in destroying these evil extremists and therefore support UK involvement in air strikes against Daesh in Iraq. I hope that these strikes, combined with the support the UK and allies are providing the Kurdish Peshmerga and Iraqi Security Forces operating on the ground, will continue to roll back the Daesh advance.

The actions of Daesh in Syria, where Christians have been beaten and killed for their beliefs, show how far Daesh are from international norms of religious tolerance. Additionally, President Assad's actions throughout the ongoing conflict in Syria have included a deliberate attempt to stir up sectarian tensions in his effort to hold on to power.

The threat to religious minorities in Syria, including Christians, can only be eradicated by a pluralist, democratically elected Syrian Government and the Government is supporting the moderate Syrian opposition in its pursuit of this goal. Measures include the provision of training and life-saving equipment to the Supreme Military Council, and assistance to the Syrian National Coalition and civil society with capacity building efforts. In addition, a number of UK Government-funded projects have brought together religious leaders from all denominations (including Alawi,



Christians, Kurds, Druze and Sunnis) to foster greater understanding between faiths and support reconciliation.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and I hope this has reassured you of the Government's commitment to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY