



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

January 2020

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the persecution of Christians.

The UK has always championed freedom of religion or belief for everyone. As a country that has always been a beacon for freedom and tolerance, I passionately believe the UK should not shirk its responsibilities.

I am glad the Independent Review of Foreign and Commonwealth Office support for persecuted Christians, conducted by the Anglican Bishop of Truro, the Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen, has been published. As you may know, the Review is the conclusion of a project that began in December 2018, when the Foreign Secretary asked Bishop Mounstephen to carry out this important research with the full support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

In recent years, the FCO has stepped up its work on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). In response to new evidence and as a sign of the UK's commitment, the previous Prime Minister appointed Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon in 2018 as the UK's first Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. In that role, Lord Ahmad championed FoRB across government, through the FCO's diplomatic network and in his travel overseas. The UK has raised the rights of religious minorities at the highest levels, including in Nigeria, Iraq and Pakistan.

In the Middle East, the UK has been at the forefront of global efforts to bring Daesh to justice for their crimes, including through a commitment of £1 million in support of an investigative team to collect evidence of Daesh crimes. The UK supported efforts to help Christians and other minority groups in Iraq to return home and in Syria the UK provided a range of support to help bolster civil society, and promote human rights and accountability. The UK government has provided £252.5 million of humanitarian relief to Iraq since 2014, and £2.71 billion to Syria and Syrian refugees since the start of the conflict. This is the UK's largest ever humanitarian response to a crisis.



Bishop Mounstephen's report has identified specific steps the UK Government can take to address the issues faced by persecuted Christians around the world. Ministers have accepted the recommendations in full and Rehman Chishti MP, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, is overseeing their implementation.

I will continue to engage with Ministers across government as they agree a formal collective response.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY