

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



19th August 2020

HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

New Content

**RE: PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS & ACCESS TO AID DURING THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns regarding the persecution of Christians and access to aid during the Coronavirus pandemic; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

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 that the UK should not shirk its responsibilities.

That is why I am glad the Independent Review of Foreign & Commonwealth Office Support for Persecuted Christians, conducted by the Anglican Bishop of Truro, the Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen, has been published. The UK Government is committed to implementing the recommendations from the Bishop of Truro's review.

These recommendations, which can be accessed by anyone on the Government website, have been divided into short, medium and long-term priorities which Ministers have already begun to implement. This includes marking Red Wednesday in support of persecuted Christians and members of other minority groups.

I understand your concerns about the increased vulnerability of Christians during the Coronavirus outbreak. It is of course vital that we do all we can to ensure aid is accessible to those that need it most. I know that the UK Government works to ensure that all aid reaches the most vulnerable including those from religious minorities. The Coronavirus outbreak is likely to reinforce their marginalised position in society, increase levels of discrimination, violence and stigma, and further limit essential access to support and services. I welcome that, for this reason, guidance was circulated across the Department for International Development highlighting that inclusion must be central to the UK's response and the specific contexts and needs of all religious minorities must be taken into account when developing practical measures to tackle Coronavirus and its damaging effects.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

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