



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

25th November 2022

Jean Contrevent

RE: PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS WORLDWIDE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns surrounding the persecution of Christians worldwide.

My ministerial colleagues and I are committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and to promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Indeed, promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities. Regrettably, however, HM Government remains deeply concerned about the increase in FoRB violations globally.

Nobody should live in fear because of their identity or beliefs. Rest assured that officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) regularly raise concerns with national governments who are not meeting their obligations to this end, both publicly and in private, including at a ministerial level.

The FCDO also works via multilateral fora, such as the UN, G7, and the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance to promote and protect FoRB for all, and in July 2022, the UK hosted an International Ministerial Conference on FoRB to energise collective efforts on this agenda. This is just the latest step in the UK's leadership on this matter.

In December 2020, Fiona Bruce MP was appointed as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for FoRB - a clear testament to the UK's commitment to this cause. In this role, Fiona works with ministers, officials, and others, to deliver HMG's goal of seeing everyone, everywhere, able to have and practice a faith, belief, or no religious belief, in accordance with their conscience. I commend Fiona's determined action on this matter as Envoy.

Most prominently, Fiona is working with FCDO Minister, Lord Ahmad, to drive forward the implementation of the recommendations from the Bishop of Truro's report on FCO support for persecuted Christians in a way that improves the lives of those persecuted for their faith, or belief, or for not holding a religion. I was encouraged that at the FoRB Conference in July, the former Foreign Secretary made clear that those 22 recommendations have been taken forward in a way that will make a real change. I am confident that the review has also set a standard that it is worth other countries following too.



When FoRB is respected, societies are more likely to be stable and secure, and to flourish economically. They are also less prone to extremist attacks. It is therefore not to put too fine a point on it to say that in promoting FoRB we are promoting peace, and doing so now is as critical as ever.

The FCDO regularly engages with Open Doors UK and other NGOs to build capacity and share expertise to promote human rights for all. I have no doubt that Ministers have paid heed to the recommendations made in the '2022 World Watch List Report' and I am glad that the report praised the many positive advances already made by HMG. My fellow parliamentarians have also taken steps to support those facing religious persecution, including by way of engaging with several Westminster Hall debates on this matter.

Finally, I am grateful for your kind invitation to attend the launch of Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List on the 18th January 2023. It would be my pleasure to attend this event, should my other parliamentary duties allow. I hope this response has provided some reassurance to you on this important matter.

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

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**