

DEBATE PACK

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Bishop of Truro's Review on Persecution of Christians Overseas

Main Chamber

Thursday 18 July 2019

**Backbench Business Committee
Debate**

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

The non-Governmental organisation, [Open Doors](#), estimates that in the top 50 countries on their World Watch List for 2019, 245 million Christians are persecuted for their religious beliefs; while 1 in 9 Christians, worldwide, experience high levels of persecution. In 2014 only one country, North Korea, was ranked as 'extreme' for its level of persecution of Christians. In its 2019 report, 11 countries fall into that category.

Indeed, the International Society for Human Rights estimates that, worldwide, Christians are believed to be targets of about 80% of all acts of religious discrimination or persecution.

Acknowledging the seriousness of the situation, in December 2018 the Government asked the Bishop of Truro to conduct an independent review into the Foreign Office's support for persecuted Christians worldwide, and to recommend improvements. An [interim report](#) of that review was published in May 2019, followed by a [Final Report](#) in July 2019.

Among its recommendations are:

- To seek a Security Council Resolution urging all governments in the Middle East and North Africa to protect Christians, and other persecuted minorities, and allow UN observers to monitor the necessary security measures.
- To identify a label for Christian persecution, to better inform and develop tailored Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) policies in response.
- To consider imposing sanctions on perpetrators of serious human rights abuses against religious minorities, including Christians.
- To establish a stream of the Magna Carta Fund, dedicated to helping persecuted Christians.
- All Foreign Office staff – at home and abroad – should have mandatory training on religious literacy, subject to resources.
- British embassies and high commissions in relevant countries should deliver tailored responses to any violations of freedom of religion or belief.

In [response to the Final Report](#), Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief said:

Freedom of Religion or Belief has been a key priority for the FCO within our human rights agenda in recent years. Both strategically and through a focus on priority countries, we have not only raised the profile of religious persecution and abuse, but also acted on

the rising tide of Christian persecution across the world with some success.

We therefore note the findings of this independent report and will consider the recommendations carefully and how they may further enhance our work in tackling Christian persecution specifically and in strengthening our work on Freedom of Religion or belief.

2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

[Anti-Christian Attacks in France Quietly Quadrupled. Why?](#)

Real Clear Investigations
Richard Bernstein
10 July 2019

[UK government urged to take steps to prevent persecution of Christians](#)

The Guardian
Harriet Sherwood
8 July 2019

[Why Christians are dismayed by Modi's landslide victory](#)

Catholic Herald
Andreas Thonhauser
30 May 2019

[Second Christian woman and her disabled husband fighting death row conviction for committing 'blasphemy' in Pakistan](#)

Fox News
Hollie McKay
9 May 2019

[Persecution of Christians 'coming close to genocide' in Middle East – report](#)

The Guardian
Patrick Wintour
2 May 2019

[Sri Lanka and the global war on Christians](#)

The Spectator
Stephen Daisley
23 April 2019

[The persecution trap: vulnerable Christians are running out of allies](#)

Catholic Herald
John O'Sullivan
4 April 2019

[280 Christians killed in attacks in Nigeria](#)

Baptist Press
Diana Chandler
18 March 2019

[11 Christians killed every day for their decision to follow Jesus](#)

Open Doors
Lindy Lowry
13 March 2019

[Asia the 'new hotbed of Christian persecution'](#)

The Week
17 January 2019

[Egyptian Christians Celebrate Another Christmas in Fear](#)

National Review
Marlo Safi
7 January 2019

[Staff Members at Emergency Maternity Ward in Pakistan Kill Christian, Relatives Say](#)

Morning Star News
28 March 2018

3. Speeches and Statements

[Persecution of Christians review: Foreign Secretary's speech following the final report](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
8 July 2019

When I was moving house last year, I came across a book called God's Smuggler which I first read when I was about 10. At the height of the Cold War, Brother Andrew van der Bijl would smuggle Bibles across the Iron Curtain to communist countries where Christianity was ruthlessly suppressed.

When the Berlin Wall fell 30 years ago, the European nations that Brother Andrew had visited undercover won their liberty and achieved one of the greatest advances of human freedom in modern history.

Yet when I became Foreign Secretary, I learned that almost a quarter of a billion Christians were still enduring persecution around the world.

The evidence shows sadly that the situation is becoming worse. The number of countries where Christians suffer because of their faith rose from 128 in 2015 to 144 a year later. In the Middle East, the very survival of Christianity as a living religion is in doubt.

A century ago, 20% of the region's people were Christians; today the figure is below 5%.

Britain has always championed freedom of religion or belief for everyone. I would particularly like to thank Lord Ahmad, our Minister for Human Rights – who was appointed the Prime Minister's Special Envoy in 2018 – for his vital work in this field.

And he has made an immense personal contribution, working across Government, visiting 13 countries to reach across religious divides, and securing funding for programmes in Iraq, Malaysia, Burma and Sudan. And as someone who himself comes from a persecuted minority, I have always valued his wise counsel and his passion for this cause.

In my first weeks as Foreign Secretary, I prioritised the plight of the Rohingya Muslims, who are targets of a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing mounted by the army of Burma.

But I am not convinced that our efforts on behalf of Christians have always matched the scale of the problem, or indeed have reflected the evidence that it is Christians who frequently endure the heaviest burden of persecution. Indeed around the world, Christians are believed to be targets of about 80% of all acts of religious discrimination or persecution.

Perhaps because of a misguided political correctness – or an instinctive reluctance to talk about religion – British governments have not always grappled with this problem.

So in December [I asked the Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen](#), the Anglican Bishop of Truro, to review the Foreign Office's support for persecuted Christians and recommend improvements.

I am grateful to Bishop Mounstephen for submitting his [final report](#), which describes in harrowing detail the scale of the suffering and the moral obligation that rests on all of us.

So I thank him and all his team for the work they put into this excellent review which I hope will lead to a sea change in our approach at the Foreign Office.

The Bishop writes: "If one minority is on the receiving end of 80% of religiously motivated discrimination, it is simply not just that they should receive so little attention." His report highlights the "decimation" of some of Christianity's "oldest and most enduring communities".

When Islamist terrorists struck Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, killing over 250 people, this was the third Easter in a row disfigured by a terrorist attack somewhere in the world. And these attacks stand alongside the equally appalling attacks on worshippers in mosques in Christchurch in New Zealand, reminding us how people across the world, of all faiths are still in this, the 21st century, being murdered for their religion.

So I warmly welcome this report and its recommendations. We are working across Government to agree a formal collective response as soon as possible. Let me highlight some of those recommendations in particular.

Firstly, the report recommends that we seek a new UN Security Council Resolution urging all governments in the Middle East and North Africa to protect Christians and allow UN observers to monitor the necessary security measures.

Secondly, it says that for too long, governments have preferred the vague language of general condemnation rather than face the specific problem of anti-Christian discrimination and persecution. The report recommends that I instruct my officials to define this abuse, and I believe we should do that by calling it out clearly with the label Christophobia.

Thirdly, as we establish independent national sanctions regimes after Brexit, the report says we must be prepared to consider imposing such measures on perpetrators of serious, religiously-driven human rights abuses.

Fourthly, it proposes that we establish a John Bunyan stream of the Magna Carta Fund, named in honour of the author of Pilgrim's Progress, dedicated to helping persecuted Christians. This would, for example, be used to fund trauma care for survivors.

Fifthly, all Foreign Office staff – at home and abroad – should in the view of the report, undergo mandatory training on religious literacy, subject to resources.

And finally, I already expect British Embassies and High Commissions in relevant countries to deliver tailored responses to any violations of freedom of religion or belief.

There will be, for example, a new focus on this subject by our High Commission in Nigeria, including greater engagement with Christian leaders and visits to those communities affected by persecution.

Bishop Mounstephen's review was independent and, in some respects, he is critical of our approach. We must accept such criticism in the constructive spirit in which it was intended. For example, the report highlights different views of the causes of conflict between largely Muslim herders and Christian farmers in the central belt of Nigeria.

But whether or not the bloodshed is driven principally by competition over land and water, it would be a mistake to overlook religious hatred as an important factor.

Indeed it's hard to avoid concluding that the gunmen who raided a church in Benue state last year, murdering 2 priests and 17 worshippers, just one of the atrocities highlighted in the report, were motivated by anything else.

So in closing, I repeat my thanks to Bishop Mounstephen for calling our attention to a terrible burden of suffering. As the Christian doctrine of Original Sin reminds us, the capacity for wickedness is inherent in the human condition. We will never be able to extirpate anti-Christian bigotry.

But nor must we shrug our shoulders and walk on the other side of the road. As a country that has always been a beacon for freedom and tolerance, the United Kingdom will not shirk its responsibilities and I am determined we will look up to them.

[Review into Christian persecution catalyst for action](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

8 July 2019

The [report](#), carried out by the Bishop of Truro and published today, records widespread evidence of the kind of persecution and discrimination that Christians face worldwide.

It also points to evidence that Christians constitute by far the most widely persecuted religion.

The review into the persecution of Christians outlines the seriousness of the challenge, and makes recommendations for how the Foreign Office can better address the issue. This includes calling for action at the United Nations, including a Resolution to allow UN observers to monitor necessary security measures.

Speaking ahead of the launch, the Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen said:

Addressing this issue with the seriousness it deserves represents a step change for democratic governments. My hope is that in adopting my recommendations the Foreign Office will be able to bring its considerable experience and expertise to bear in helping some of the planet's most vulnerable people.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief said:

Freedom of Religion or Belief has been a key priority for the FCO within our human rights agenda in recent years. Both strategically and through a focus on priority countries, we have not only raised the profile of religious persecution and abuse, but also acted on the rising tide of Christian persecution across the world with some success.

We therefore note the findings of this independent report and will consider the recommendations carefully and how they may further enhance our work in tackling Christian persecution specifically and in strengthening our work on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The report highlights the shocking impunity with which discriminatory laws, fear and violence are used by state and non-state actors to discriminate appallingly against Christians in countries across the world.

Recommendations for the Foreign Office include:

- seek a Security Council Resolution urging all governments in the Middle East and North Africa to protect Christians, and other persecuted minorities, and allow UN observers to monitor the necessary security measures
- identify a label for Christian persecution, to better inform and develop tailored Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) policies in response
- consider imposing sanctions on perpetrators of serious human rights abuses against religious minorities, including Christians
- establish a stream of the Magna Carta Fund, dedicated to helping persecuted Christians
- all Foreign Office staff – at home and abroad – should have mandatory training on religious literacy, subject to resources
- British embassies and high commissions in relevant countries should deliver tailored responses to any violations of freedom of religion or belief

[Persecution of Christians across the Globe independent review: Foreign Secretary's launch speech](#)
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
30 January 2019

Archbishop, bishop, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, a very warm welcome this morning to this very important occasion and very significant launch.

Last Sunday, many people here will have been going to church, as indeed was the case in the Philippines at the Cathedral of Our Lady of

Mount Carmel in the Southern Philippines. And in the middle of that service, a bomb exploded and 20 people were killed and the perpetrators then issued a hate-filled statement labelling the Cathedral as a 'crusader temple'.

And this was a very vivid reminder of the terrible truth that freedom of worship is something that cannot only not be taken for granted, but is a growing concern all over the world.

And what happened in the Philippines has happened in Egypt. We know now from the excellent Open Doors report that a quarter of a billion Christians are suffering some sort of persecution all over the world, and we know that a number of the countries where this happens are countries that we don't necessarily talk about.

Countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, North Korea, but also in some of the bigger countries.

We know that there are serious and growing issues in China. And also in countries where we might have hoped there wouldn't be a serious issue, like India, we know that this is becoming a much bigger issue.

And as me and my team at the Foreign Office reflected on this, we wanted to ask ourselves a question as to whether the FCO, which has one of the best global networks of any diplomatic service – we basically after the Americans and the Chinese have the third biggest diplomatic network of any country alongside the French – and we wanted to ask ourselves a question as to whether we really are doing as much as we possibly could.

And we wanted to do this not just because freedom of worship is a fundamental human right, but because also freedom of worship is the invisible line between open societies and closed societies.

Where freedom of worship is hampered or prevented, then usually that's a sign of lots of other things going wrong, and we wanted to make sure that the UK is doing everything to champion the values that we all believe in.

I am a Johnny-come-lately to this, because we have in the Foreign Office a fantastic minister, Lord Ahmad, who has been championing religious freedom since before I became Foreign Secretary, and himself comes from a Muslim minority faith – the Ahmadiyya community that have effectively been banished from Pakistan because it's not safe for them to be in Pakistan, and have had to move away. And many of them are based in the UK, but actually all over the world, so this is someone who knows from his own life the dangers.

But very much on his advice, we particularly want to look at the issue of Christian persecution.

Because the evidence is that 80 per cent of all the people who are suffering religious persecution are Christian.

And we want to, if I can put it this way, banish any hesitation to look into this issue without fear or favour that may exist because of our imperial history, because of the concerns that some people might have in linking the activities of missionaries in the nineteenth century to misguided imperialism. And all those concerns may have led to a hesitation to really look at this issue properly, and we don't want that to happen.

And in order to keep us on the straight and narrow I've asked the Bishop of Truro, Bishop Philip Mounstephen, to do an independent review, and to work with all of you, to work with the FCO, and to tell us how we should approach this and what more we can do.

And what I want to do is, what I'm hoping the outcome of this will be is, first of all in practical terms, I want to make absolutely sure when I am meeting a foreign minister, a prime minister or a president in another country, and there's an issue concerning religious freedom, and in particular the rights of Christians, I want to make sure that it is absolutely on my list of things that I need to raise.

Sometimes you do these things publically, sometimes you do them privately, but we should always be doing them if they need to be done and I want to make sure that happens and I don't think it does at the moment.

But secondly, I want to see what we can do to build an international coalition of countries that are concerned about this so that we can play, I think the role that Britain has played for many years, which is whilst recognising that we're not a superpower, at the same time, not underestimating the power and influence that we have as a very well-connected country to bring together other countries that share our values and give a voice to people who don't have a voice.

And I think the final point I want to make which everyone in this room will be well aware of, but I'm not sure necessarily that the public outside are: we are a wealthy country and we sometimes think that when it comes to the rights of Christians this is really about wealthy people.

It isn't.

The people who are suffering are some of the poorest people on the planet and they happen to have the faith that I have, that many people here have, and they happen to be suffering very badly for it.

There is sometimes good news.

I think the news about Asia Bibi this week is extremely encouraging, but the truth is that unless we make a real effort and unless the world knows that we are making a real effort, those bits of good news will become the exception and not the rule. And that's what we don't want to allow to happen.

So thank you very much for your support.

I'm sure, I say this in advance as a bit of expectation-setting, I'm sure we won't be able to do absolutely everything you want, Philip, but we are very, very serious about doing what we can and we're incredibly grateful for the support of many people here and many people outside as we in the Foreign Office go on a journey and think really hard about what we could do better.

APPG Statement on Review of FCO's Support for Persecuted Christians

All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief

8 July 2019

The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief welcomes the publication of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's work to support persecuted Christians.

The report outlines the dramatic and deeply worrying scale of Christian persecution globally. It also rightly highlights that persecution for one's religion or beliefs is not limited to Christians, or indeed any one religious or non-religious group. Violations of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are something that all religious or belief communities face in some part of the world and protecting any one group requires promoting respect and tolerance for all. As was stated by three of the most eminent academics in the field of freedom of religion or belief, Sir Malcolm Evans, Dr Nazila Ghanea and Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, in their letter to the Sunday Telegraph on Feb 10th, "seeking to protect some from persecution necessarily requires seeking to protect all from persecution".

Therefore, the APPG welcomes the report's focus on recommendations to advance the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief for all.

The APPG suggests caution around recommendation 3, which asks the UK Government "to name the phenomenon of Christian persecution and discrimination", as such an action could have unintended negative consequences for Christians.

However, the APPG strongly encourages the next leader of the Conservative Party to assess and implement the other recommendations made in the report and echoes its call for a follow-up independent mechanism to be established in three years' time to ensure that this has been done.

4. PQs

Pakistan: Blasphemy

15 July 2019 | HL16782

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the sentencing of Shagufta Kauser and her husband to death in Pakistan for alleged blasphemy; what assessment they have made of whether Shagufta Kauser is (1) from a Christian minority, and (2) illiterate; what representations they have made to the government of Pakistan on her behalf; what response they have received to these representations; and what estimate they have made of the number of people currently facing the death sentence in Pakistan for alleged blasphemy.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We continue to monitor the case of Shagufta Kauser and her husband Shafqat Emmanuel who were sentenced to death in April 2014. We understand that Shagufta Kauser is of the Christian faith and we are aware of media reports stating that she and her husband are both illiterate.

We regularly raise our concerns about the misuse of the blasphemy laws with the government of Pakistan at a senior level. The harsh penalties for blasphemy, including the death penalty, add to these concerns. We remain firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances. We have repeatedly called upon the Government of Pakistan to end capital punishment and, as a minimum, commit to publicly renewing the previously imposed moratorium on the death penalty. Concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief and the protection of minority religious communities were raised with Pakistan's Federal Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, during a ministerial visit to Islamabad in February.

We do not hold figures for individuals on specific charges overseas. According to the US State Department 2018 Report on Freedom of Religion or Belief, at the time of publication, 77 individuals were imprisoned in Pakistan on blasphemy charges, 28 of whom had received death sentences.

Persecution of Christians across the Globe Independent Review

15 July 2019 | 275654

Asked by: Dr David Drew

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the evidential basis was for the downgrading of the impact of persecution of Christians in the Middle East between the the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians and (a) Interim and (b) Final Report.

Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

This is an independent Review. As the Foreign Secretary has stated, the findings of the report make for harrowing reading and we are concerned about the situation for all Christians, including those in the Middle East. The report states that further evidence will be published and will be available incrementally from 15 July on the Review's website.

India: Christianity

10 Jul 2019 | 273749

Asked by: Gregory Campbell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to his Indian counterpart on attacks on Christians by Hindu activists.

Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The British High Commission in New Delhi, and our network of Deputy High Commissions, maintain a continuous assessment of the human rights situation across India and raise issues with Indian officials where appropriate. We have raised Christian persecution with the Indian Government. Most recently, on 25 March 2019, the British High Commission highlighted the importance of tackling Christian persecution with India's Ministry of External Affairs.

We will continue to engage with India on the full range of human rights matters, working with Union and State Governments, and with non-governmental organisations, to build capacity and share expertise to promote human rights for all.

China: Religious Freedom

08 July 2019 | 272262

Asked by: Wes Streeting

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations the Government has made to the Government of the People's Republic of China on the treatment of (a) Christian and (b) Muslim minority communities in that country.

Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians, Muslims and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practise, change or share ones faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy.

Accordingly, at the 40th UN Human Rights Council in March 2019, during his opening address on 25 February, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad raised concerns about restrictions on freedom of religion and belief in China including on Muslims in Xinjiang and Christians across China. We also

co-sponsored a side event on “Protecting the fundamental freedoms in Xinjiang” in March 2019, which helped to raise awareness of the situation among the international community. Lord Ahmad also set out the Government’s position when answering an Oral Question in the House of Lords on 4 April 2019. Further, we raised our concerns on freedom of religion and belief during China’s Universal Periodic Review in November 2018.

Ministers and senior officials frequently raise human rights issues bilaterally with their Chinese counterparts. The Foreign Secretary highlighted our concerns on Xinjiang with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his most recent visit to China in July 2018. Our Embassy in Beijing regularly raises the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and concerns about the pressures facing Christians directly with Chinese officials.

Business of the House

04 July 2019 | 662 c1372

Asked by: Jim Shannon

Last week, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister dismissed accusations of Christian persecution in Pakistan, claiming that any examples are only individual incidents that do not constitute a trend and comparing it with knife crime in the UK—what a comparison. It is very concerning that any member of the Pakistan Government should view 1,500 people of religious minorities being charged with blasphemy in Pakistan since 1987 as not constituting a trend. This is only the tip of the iceberg. I travelled to Pakistan last year and heard at first hand horrific accounts of abductions, child marriages, rape, forced conversions and other forms of persecution that Christians and other religious groups face in Pakistan. This week, I went to the Backbench Business Committee and requested a debate— 67 Members of this House want to speak in that debate. Will the Leader of the House agree to set aside time to discuss the persecution of Christians across the world?

Answered by: Mel Stride | Leader of the House

I know that the hon. Gentleman, rightly, persistently raises—as he has done at more than one business questions since I have been the Leader of the House—the issue of religious persecution. He is absolutely right to do so. I know that his commitment to that particular issue has, as he has outlined, involved travelling to Pakistan and looking closely at some of the deeply disturbing matters that he has just raised. Given his persistence in raising these issues, perhaps he and I could meet at a time of his convenience and look at some of them and at the particular ways in which, using the parliamentary timetable, it may be possible to further the points that he is making.

Burma: Christianity

01 July 2019 | HL16392

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty’s Government (1) what assessment they have made of, and (2) what representations they made to the government of

Burma about, reports from Chin State, Burma, that on 24 and 25 May three Christians in Padekyaw village were forced to sign documents by village officials and local monks verifying their conversion to Buddhism after being threatened with eviction if they refused; that Christians were told they could not live in Hmwar Village Tract; and a public announcement made in eight villages threatening residents that communicating or trading with Christians would result in a fine.

Answering member: Baroness Goldie | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The British Government has noted the recent report from the China Human Rights Organisation and continues to be concerned by restrictions on freedom of religion and belief, including reports of forced conversions, in Burma. The UK, working with the EU and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, secured a UN Human Rights Council Resolution on 27 September 2018 that called for the amending or repealing of discriminatory provisions of the "protection of race and religion laws" in Burma covering religious conversion, interfaith marriage, monogamy and population control. Our Ambassador met the Burmese Minister for Religious Affairs on 9 August 2018, and underlined the importance of interfaith dialogue.

[Christianity: Oppression](#)

01 Jul 2019 | 269655

Asked by: Gregory Campbell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will write to the UN Secretary General highlighting the recent Open Doors report on the persecution of Christians worldwide.

Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Government works with a large number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), including Open Doors, to help promote and protect freedom of religion or belief. We do not routinely raise specific reports by NGOs, but we work closely on this matter with international partners, and through the UN, using information from a wide range of sources to inform our work, and will continue to do so.

[Business of the House](#)

27 Jun 2019 | 662 cc808-9

Asked by: Fiona Bruce

Early-day motion 2453 has very quickly gained substantial support from 47 MPs to date.

That this House welcomes the establishment by the UN General Assembly of the UN International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief on 22 August each year; is deeply concerned that acts of violence based on religion or belief are increasing all over the world and often flourish with impunity; notes the concerning findings of the interim report of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for

Persecuted Christians; recognises the dire situation of religious minorities in many parts of the world; calls on the Government to mark the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief and use the initiative to develop and implement a comprehensive action plan, across Departments to address religious persecution whenever and wherever it occurs; and further calls on the Government to use all its diplomatic powers to combat religious persecution around the world and bring impunity for such atrocities to an end.

The EDM welcomes the establishment by the UN of an international day commemorating the victims of violence based on religion or belief. Will the Leader of the House also welcome it and consider how this annual day could be appropriately recognised by this House, bearing in mind that it will fall during our recess on 22 August?

Answered by: Mel Stride | Leader of the House

My hon. Friend raises an important point. I know that she is, rightly, deeply passionate about that matter, and we have discussed it personally on a number of occasions. The Government are entirely committed, and rightly so, to freedom of religion and belief and to promoting respect between people of different religions and beliefs. I wonder whether this would be a good subject for an Adjournment debate. However, as she pointed out, the event to which she refers falls within the recess. I do not have a ready answer to that conundrum, but I would be happy to discuss with her later what options there might be, if that is of use.

Topical Questions

25 Jun 2019 | 662 c568

Asked by: Dame Caroline Spelman

This Foreign Secretary deserves credit for setting up an independent review into the persecution of Christians worldwide, but will he ensure that a lasting legacy is achieved, whatever the outcome of that review, by ensuring that diplomats who are sent to countries where persecution occurs receive training in religious literacy?

Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

That is a very interesting suggestion, and I defer to my right hon. Friend's great knowledge on these topics. I would like to wait for the Bishop of Truro's recommendations, which we are expecting next month, before I consider that idea in the round, but it is certainly worthy of consideration.

Topical Questions

25 June 2019 | 662 c564

Asked by: Bill Wiggin

Nobody can criticise our Government's reaction to atrocities committed against the Muslim community, or indeed Muslims around the world; however, given that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary seeks to

lead this Christian country, has his Department not rather let him down in the way we have sought to protect Christians abroad?

Answered by: Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I think that has been somewhat of a blind spot, but we are putting it right, and that is why I asked the Bishop of Truro to conduct an independent review into what more we can do to tackle the persecution of Christians, which accounts for about 80% of the religious persecution in the world. That report will be received next month.

Pakistan: Minority Groups

24 June 2019 | HL16351

Asked by: Lord Gordon of Strathblane

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Pakistan about addressing hate speech against Christians and other minorities in schools, the workplace and places of worship.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We regularly raise our concerns about the protection of minority communities, including religious minorities, with the Pakistani Government at a senior level. I raised the treatment of religious minority communities with Pakistan's Federal Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, during my visit to Islamabad in February. While in Pakistan, I also met a range of Pakistan's faith leaders to discuss freedom of religion or belief.

Under the Government's Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy, the UK has supported projects in Pakistan to promote greater tolerance and religious freedom. In November 2018, the Government announced a new £12m fund to bolster the work of civil society and NGOs to promote respect and the value of religious diversity and tolerance.

We continue to urge the government of Pakistan to guarantee the rights of all people in Pakistan as laid down in the Constitution and in accordance with international standards. It is vital that Pakistan guarantees the rights of all its citizens, regardless of ethnicity or belief.

Christianity: Oppression

20 June 2019 | 263917

Asked by: Ian Paisley

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the persecution of Christians abroad.

Answering member: Mark Field | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief as a universal human right

which should be enjoyed by everyone. The UK regularly raises this issue with governments across the world, through our diplomatic network and at the Human Rights Council, and the UK funds and supports projects that promote respect for all people of different faiths and none. As the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon regularly raises this subject with his international counterparts. The Foreign Secretary launched an independent Review of FCO support for persecuted Christians on 30 January. The Review is led by the Bishop of Truro. It will map levels of persecution and discrimination against Christians around the world, and provide robust recommendations on how the FCO can respond. The Bishop submitted his interim report in May and will submit his final report in Summer.

Persecution of Christians: Bishop of Truro's Inquiry

20 June 2019 | 662 cc348-349

Asked by: Andrew Griffiths

To ask the right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church Commissioners are taking to promote the Bishop of Truro's inquiry into the persecution of Christians.

Answering Member: Dame Caroline Spelman | Church Commissioners

The Church welcomed the decision by the Foreign Secretary to invite the Bishop of Truro to chair an independent review of the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. That is not a Church of England inquiry, but a Foreign Office inquiry. However, the Church is actively encouraging its agencies and charities to feed in their experiences.

Asked by: Andrew Griffiths

I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. I wholeheartedly support her in congratulating the Foreign Secretary and the Bishop of Truro on producing the report, which highlights the persecution of Christians not only on a large scale, as we saw in places such as Sri Lanka, but on a small scale in everyday life. Is not promoting the good work of Christians and Christianity in our society one of the best things that we can do? May I draw her attention to the Renew church in Uttoxeter, which has its mission week this week involving digging gardens, helping schools, washing cars and showing the best of Christianity?

Answering Member: Dame Caroline Spelman | Church Commissioners

It is just the interim report that has been published, and the important thing was that it mapped where the persecution takes place around the world. We await phase 2 with great interest, when we expect to hear more about what we can actually get done. I agree with my hon. Friend about the kind of approach that could be taken.

Religious Freedom

18 June 2019 | HL16018

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Leeds

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their strategy for promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief as an objective of UK foreign policy.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is committed to using our influence to defend Freedom of Religion or Belief as a universal human right which should be enjoyed by everyone. That is why the Prime Minister appointed me as her Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The UK regularly raises this topic through Ministers, our diplomatic network and at the Human Rights Council. In recent years we have seen reports of a particular rise in the persecution of Christians. The Foreign Secretary launched the independent review of FCO support for persecuted Christians on 30 January. The Review is led by the Bishop of Truro. It will map levels of persecution and discrimination against Christians around the world, and provide robust recommendations on how the FCO can respond. The Bishop has now submitted his interim report and will submit his final report in the Summer.

Cuba: Religious Freedom

18 Jun 2019 | 262349

Asked by: Chris Evans

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Cuban counterpart on the potential effect of that country's new constitution on freedom of religion or belief.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Cuba's new constitution addresses freedom of religion or belief in Articles 15 and 57, and provides for protection against discrimination on the grounds of religious belief in Article 42. The new constitution was adopted on 10 April, following a referendum on 24 February and a public consultation exercise during which religious groups were consulted. We are concerned about reports from Christian Solidarity Worldwide that some religious groups were pressured to vote in favour of adoption of the constitution, although we believe that this pressure was common throughout Cuban society and not only confined to religious groups. The UK will continue to monitor human rights in Cuba, including freedom of religion or belief, in line with guarantees in the new constitution, and to discuss human rights regularly with the Cuban Government, bilaterally, through our continuing membership of the EU and multilateral human rights fora.

Christianity: Oppression

17 June 2019 | 261520

Asked by: Luke Hall

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the protection of Christians from persecution in (a) Africa, (b) the Middle East and (c) East Asia.

Answering member: Mark Field | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief as a universal human right which should be enjoyed by everyone. The Government is deeply concerned about the severity of violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief in many parts of the world. In recent years we have seen reports of a particular rise in the persecution of Christians. The Foreign Secretary recently asked the Bishop of Truro to conduct an independent global review into the persecution of Christians. The review will provide recommendations on the additional practical steps the FCO can take to support persecuted Christians. The Bishop has now submitted his interim report; he will submit his final report in the Summer.

Overseas Aid: Christianity

14 June 2019 | 261524

Asked by: Luke Hall

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that UK aid reaches persecuted Christians.

Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Department for International Development

The UK Aid Strategy commits the UK to be the lead on the "Leave No One Behind" promise. Our analysis of poverty and vulnerability looks at a range of factors that lead to exclusion including religious identity. Humanitarian assistance is provided on need, irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity and we work to ensure that aid reaches the most vulnerable including those from religious minorities.

We work closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who lead on the protection of freedom of religion and religious minorities.

Pakistan: Aid for Persecuted Minorities

06 Jun 2019 | 798 c174

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

I thank the Minister for that reply and welcome her to her new responsibilities. Is she able to intervene on behalf of Shagufta Kauser, an illiterate woman from one of Pakistan's beleaguered minorities, who now occupies Asia Bibi's cell in Multan and who, like her, has been sentenced to death for allegedly sending blasphemous texts in English? When two children are forced to watch a lynch mob of 1,200 burn alive

their parents; when no one is brought to justice for the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's Minister for Minorities; when 1,000 Hindu and Christian girls are forcibly married and converted; and when minorities are ghettoised into squalid colonies, which I have visited, and forced to clean latrines and sweep streets, is it not time that DfID re-examined its policy of refusing to specifically direct any of the £383,000 that, on average, we give every single day to Pakistan in aid for the alleviation of the suffering and destitution of these desperate minorities?

Answered by: Baroness Sugg

I pay tribute to the noble Lord's long-standing involvement in this important issue. We remain deeply concerned by the misuse of blasphemy laws and the treatment of minority religious communities in Pakistan. We regularly raise these concerns with the Government of Pakistan at a senior level. I share the noble Lord's desire to ensure that our international aid funding reaches those who most need it.

Currently, many Pakistanis are reluctant to declare themselves members of religious minorities because of fear of discrimination. We are working to ensure that we understand where our aid is going. I can reassure the noble Lord that we continually keep our programmes under review, and where we can better prioritise resources we will do so.

Pakistan: Aid for Persecuted Minorities

06 Jun 2019 | 798 c175

Asked by: Lord Singh of Wimbledon

My Lords, the treatment of minorities in Pakistan, particularly Christians, infringes not only the UN declaration of human rights but, ironically, also the clear teachings of the Koran, which says that the people of the book—that is, Christians and Jews—should be allowed to practise their religion unhindered. Despite this, members of the Christian community have been murdered and placed on death row for years on end for professing their faith, and it is now reported that some Christian women and young girls are being sold into slavery in China and used for the harvesting of organs. With that in mind, does the Minister agree that we should now look to the targeting of our aid and moving for Pakistan to be expelled, not for the first time, from the Commonwealth?

Answered by: Baroness Sugg

My Lords, I certainly agree that we need to ensure that our international aid reaches those people who need it most. To that end, the Foreign Secretary has commissioned an independent report to fully understand the scope of the issue, and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Truro will be writing recommendations on how we can better address this issue.

[Shizam Riasat](#)

04 Jun 2019 | HL15820

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human rights and freedom of religion or belief implications of the case of the 16 year old Pakistani Christian girl Sheeza Riasat who was abducted from her parents' home near Gujranwala, Pakistan on 12 February and forcibly converted and married; and what representations they have made to the government of Pakistan about that case.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Government is concerned about the case of Sheeza Riasat. The Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan.

We welcome the recent decision by the Pakistan Senate to pass the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill 2019. The Bill was recently introduced to the National Assembly.

The UK regularly raises concerns about the protection of vulnerable groups, including religious minorities, women and children, with the Pakistani Government. Officials at the British High Commission in Islamabad have raised the issue of forced marriage with the National Commission for Human Rights.

During my visit to Pakistan on 18 and 19 February, I met faith leaders to discuss issues faced by religious minorities, including the issue of forced marriage. I also raised our concerns about child protection, the treatment of minority communities and the issue of forced marriage with Pakistan's Federal Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, during the same visit.

We will continue to urge the Government of Pakistan to take the steps necessary to comply in full with its human rights obligations to vulnerable groups, including religious minorities and women and girls, and to uphold the rule of law.

[Nigeria: Churches](#)

30 May 2019 | HL15824

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that 900 churches in Nigeria have been destroyed by Boko Haram; and what assessment they have made of whether such activity is part of a campaign to eradicate Christianity in the north of that country.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are aware of the statement by the Christian Association of Nigeria in January 2017 which claimed that 900 churches have been destroyed by Boko Haram since 2009. We are unable to substantiate these numbers given the challenges of obtaining precise data in north east

Nigeria. Boko Haram is a terrorist organisation with a vile ideology and history of attacking civilians, both Christian and Muslim. The majority of Boko Haram's victims have been Muslims. The UK condemns attacks on civilians, including on the basis of their religious belief. The Foreign Secretary discussed the issue of freedom of religious belief and UK support to combat extremists with the Nigerian Vice President during his visit to Nigeria in April. He also met with a wide range of religious leaders to discuss how the UK can support their work to promote interfaith dialogue and long-term peace, and visited North East Nigeria.

China: Christianity

28 May 2019 | HL15776

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the situation of Chinese Christians following reports that the government of China has labelled the expansion of Christianity a "grave harm to Chinese national security".

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. Our analysis is that restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in China have recently increased, with the authorities tightening their control over how certain religions are practiced.

Accordingly, I highlighted these restrictions – including on Christians across China – at the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council in March 2019. I also set out the Government's position when answering an Oral Question in the House of Lords; 4 April 2019, Oral Question, House of Lords, column 226. We further raised similar concerns during China's Universal Periodic Review in November 2018.

Additionally, on 30 January 2019, the Foreign Secretary, together with the Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, Bishop of Truro, launched an Independent Review of Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) support for persecuted Christians, including Christians in China. The Foreign Secretary has asked the Bishop to make ambitious FCO structural, policy and practice recommendations, which will be published as a Command Paper at the end of June.

We are also aware of credible reports of the closure or demolition of unregistered churches in some areas of China, the removal of crosses from buildings, and that individuals are being harassed or detained for their religious beliefs across China. Senior officials raised these concerns with Chinese authorities earlier this year, and will continue to do so.

Egypt: Religious Freedom

15 May 2019 | 252501

Asked by: Nigel Dodds

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Egyptian counterpart on the effect of laws restricting the construction of churches on religious freedom.

Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We continue to be concerned about restrictions on the construction of places of worship in Egypt. All religious minorities ought to be able practise their faith without constraints or discrimination. The 2016 Church Building Law represents a step forward in this area, increasing the number of registered churches in Egypt.

We welcome other positive developments concerning religious freedom, including President Sisi's calls for peaceful coexistence and the Government of Egypt's expression of support for the rights of Christians and for religious tolerance. The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, reaffirmed our mutual commitment to freedom of religion or belief during his visit to Cairo in November.

India: Christianity

15 May 2019 | 251284

Asked by: Lyn Brown

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the safety of Christians in India during the current elections from reported actions by (a) Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and (b) other Hindu nationalist groups.

Answering member: Mark Field | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

India has a strong democratic framework and constitutionally enshrined protections for freedom of religious belief. However it faces numerous challenges enforcing these, including for some Christians and other religious minorities, due to its size and social and economic development. We maintain a continuous assessment of the human rights situation across India. The situation for Christians is varied depending on location, socio-economic background, and the proportion of religious minorities.

We engage with India on the full range of human rights matters, both bilaterally and through the EU. We work with Union and State Governments, and with non-governmental organisations, to build capacity and share expertise to promote human rights for all. We have raised Christian persecution with the Indian Government. Most recently, on 25 March 2019, the British High Commission highlighted the importance of tackling Christian persecution with India's Ministry of External Affairs.

The British High Commission in New Delhi, and our Deputy High Commissions across India, also run projects promoting minority rights and regularly meet with religious representatives. Most recently, the High Commissioner met senior Christian leaders on 2 and 17 April, and the Chair of the National Human Rights Commission on 25 April, to discuss the situation for Christians across India

5. Other Parliamentary material

5.1 Written Statements

[Independent Review of Foreign and Commonwealth Office support for persecuted Christians](#)

08 July 2019 | HCWS1698

Jeremy Hunt | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I have today deposited in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament the Independent Review of Foreign and Commonwealth Office support for persecuted Christians, conducted by the Anglican Bishop of Truro, the Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen.

The Review is the conclusion of a project that began in December 2018, when I asked Bishop Mounstephen to carry out this important research with the full support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

The UK has always been a leading champion of human rights. 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 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 has 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. Lord Ahmad has also worked with British diplomatic missions - including at the United Nations in Geneva and New York - to defend FoRB. Furthermore, he has overseen the provision of significant funding through various projects and programmes, including over £250 million to support people who were driven from their homes by Daesh's persecution.

Today, about 245 million Christians worldwide are believed to face persecution for their faith. The evidence suggests the problem is getting worse. The number of countries where Christians face religiously-motivated harassment rose from 128 in 2015 to 144 a year later, according to the Pew Research Centre.

The Review builds on the Bishop's Interim Report published in May 2019, which examined the scale and character of religious persecution. It includes further findings and recommendations about how the FCO might improve its response.

The Review draws on information from: non-governmental organisations; Church leaders; reporting from the FCO's diplomatic missions; interviews with FCO staff and analysts; FCO written sources (including reporting from the network, research papers and policy notes); interviews with retired members of the FCO and with those who have suffered directly from discrimination or persecution. I offer my particular thanks to those who bravely shared their harrowing experiences.

I welcome Bishop Mounstephen's report and its recommendations. We are working across government to agree a formal collective response.

The Review will also be available on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website, and further information is available on the Review's website at <https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/interim-report/>.

5.2 Debates

[Religious Persecution](#)

11 July 2019 | 798 cc1933-1974

[Nigeria: Armed Violence \(Rural Communities\)](#)

27 November 2018 | 650 cc45-66WH

[Christians Overseas](#)

22 May 2018 | 641 cc338-356WH

[Persecution of Christians: Role of UK Embassies](#)

04 July 2017 | 626 cc1-25WH

5.3 Petitions

[Persecution of Christians](#)

17 July 2017 | 627 cc5-6P

5.4 Early Day Motions

[UN INTERNATIONAL DAY COMMEMORATING THE VICTIMS OF ACTS OF VIOLENCE BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF](#)

EDM 2453 (session 2017-19)

Fiona Bruce

5 June 2019

That this House welcomes the establishment by the UN General Assembly of the UN International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief on 22 August each year; is deeply concerned that acts of violence based on religion or belief are increasing all over the world and often flourish with impunity; notes the concerning findings of the interim report of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians; recognises the dire situation of religious minorities in many parts of the world; calls on the Government to mark the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief and use the initiative to develop and implement a comprehensive action plan, across Departments to address

religious persecution whenever and wherever it occurs; and further calls on the Government to use all its diplomatic powers to combat religious persecution around the world and bring impunity for such atrocities to an end.

EDWARDES COLLEGE, PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN

EDM 2414 (session 2017-19)

Jim Shannon

22 May 2019

That this House expresses concern that Edwardes College Peshawar, Pakistan, which is owned by the Church of Pakistan with official recognition by the High Court Peshawar, is being forced by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor and the Provincial Government into handing over administrative control; expresses further concern regarding the alleged continual interference in college affairs and the unacceptable pressure on management which usurps authority; notes that the College Principal and his family are feeling harassed; further notes the effect of these actions on the wellbeing of Christians in Pakistan as people are concerned for their safety; and requests that the Prime Minister of Pakistan ensures that the Governor and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are restrained from taking illegal administrative control over the college and further provides security to prevent the harassment of the college Principal and his family as well as the broader Christian community in Pakistan.

EASTER SUNDAY ATTACKS IN SRI LANKA

EDM 2310 (session 2017-19)

Jim Shannon

23 April 2019

That this House condemns the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka which killed 321 people and injured hundreds more; offers sympathies to all those killed or injured in the attack and their families and friends; recognises that many of those killed were Christians gathering peacefully for prayer; condemns all attacks on the right to freedom of religion of belief; stands in solidarity with the Sri Lankan people and all people everywhere who have suffered at the hands of terrorists; and offers its support to the Sri Lankan Government to defeat terrorism and to protect the right to freedom of religion of belief.

SRI LANKA EASTER SUNDAY BOMBINGS

EDM 2308 (session 2017-19)

Virenda Sharma

23 April 2019

This House utterly and totally condemns the heinous attacks on Christians at prayer on their most holy day in Sri Lanka; supports the Sri Lankan Government in its attempts to catch those responsible; urges the UK Government to lend all the support that it can to Sri Lanka in trying to apprehend the perpetrators; stands with those killed and injured on Sunday and their families in support of their right to freedom

of religion; and calls on people of all religions to stand together against violence and persecution.

ATTACKS ON CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT (No. 2)

EDM 1956 (session 2017-19)

Jim Shanon

8 January 2019

That this House condemns the latest attacks on Christians at their church in Egypt; sends sincere sympathies to the family of the bomb disposal expert who was killed whilst defusing the bomb; assures the Egyptian Government of UK support to defeat terrorism; and reiterates support for Christians in Egypt and their right to worship God in safety.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AT CHRISTMAS

EDM 1917 (session 2017-19)

Jim Shannon

11 December 2018

That this House expresses sincere thankfulness that we live in a country which allows us to celebrate the birth of Jesus and Christmas; considers those states in which to even whisper the name of Jesus would mean death; prays for those who can only celebrate Christmas in their heart; and affirms the dedication of this House to seek to influence by any diplomatic means possible, any state which continues to permit the persecution of Christians based solely on their love of Jesus.

ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL DAY COMMEMORATING THE VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

EDM 1478 (session 2017-19)

Fiona Bruce

3 July 2018

That this House is concerned about growing religious persecution of minority groups worldwide, which may amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes or even genocide; calls on the Government to better track such violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief and to consider developing strategic action plans to address such incidents before they reach the threshold of mass atrocities; and further calls on the Government to support a proposal for the establishment of an annual International Day Commemorating the Victims and Survivors of Religious Persecution, and to support the tabling of a UN General Assembly resolution for this, the proposed date being the 3 August each year, being the day when Daesh unleashed its genocidal campaign against the Yazidis in Sinjar, followed by a similar campaign against Christians and other religious minorities in the region and so engage the UN and its member states to strengthen their efforts to address religious persecution around the world.

KILLING OF CHRISTIAN MINORITIES IN MYANMAR'S KACHIN PROVINCE

EDM 1408 (session 2017-19)

Ben Lake

15 June 2018

That this House condemns severely the persecution and systemic killing of Christian minorities in Myanmar's Kachin province by the Myanmar military and government militias; calls on Aung San Suu Kyi to pursue a ceasefire and ensure the safety of those threatened with persecution and displacement, which since April 2018 has seen over 6,800 people flee Kachin; denounces the Myanmar security forces and the Kachin Independence Army for the role they have played in the violence, and asserts that both sides should look to come to a peaceful resolution as soon as possible; calls on the international community to assist to mediate the situation; and demands the allowing of human rights and groups to enter the province so as to help those in need.

TERRORIST ATTACK ON A CHURCH IN QUETTA, PAKISTAN

EDM 1190 (session 2017-19)

Jim Shannon

23 April 2018

That this House condemns the terrorist attack on Christians as they were coming out of a church service in the Essa Nagri, Quetta, Pakistan, on Sunday 15 April 2018, when two innocent worshippers were murdered and five seriously injured; notes that responsibility for this terrorist act was claimed by ISIS; passes condolences to the grieved families of the victims; and urges the Government of Pakistan to ensure the speedy arrest and trial of those terrorists.

TREATMENT OF PATRAS AND SAJID MASIH BY PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES

EDM 1074 (session 2017-19)

Jim Shannon

14 March 2018

That this House is deeply shocked by the severe physical beating of a Pakistani Christian teenager Patras Masih, and his cousin Sajid Masih, by the Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) officers, who were supposed to be carrying out forensic checks of their mobile phones, after an alleged act of blasphemy; is appalled that both were put under pressure to commit sexual acts with each other; notes that Sajid Masih was so traumatised by this immoral suggestion he chose to jump out of a fourth floor window, rather than agree to this heinous act; and is disappointed that the Pakistani Government has promised an enquiry by the FIA about the conduct of the other FIA officers and instead suggests an independent judicial enquiry into the whole episode and particularly the facts leading up to Sajid Masih's desperate act, as described by him in his hospital bed video statement.

ATTACK ON CHRISTIANS IN THE METHODIST CHURCH, PAKISTAN

EDM 752 (session 2017-19)

Jim Shannon

9 January 2018

That this House condemns the terrorist attack on Christians in the Bethel Memorial Methodist Church, Quetta, Pakistan, on 17 December 2017, when nine innocent worshippers were murdered and over 50 seriously injured; notes that the quick action by the security forces prevented several more casualties; and urges the Government of Pakistan to ensure the safety of Christians and their right to freedom of worship.

6. Further reading

[**Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians: Final Report and Recommendations**](#), July 2019

[**Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians: Interim report**](#), May 2019

Backbench Business Committee weekly meeting
Tuesday 2 July 2019 | HC 9999
Published 2 July 2019
[**Evidence given by Members of Parliament**](#) (Question 1)

[**Open Doors USA**](#) (Website)

[**Release International**](#) (Website)

[**Barnabas Fund**](#) (Website)

[**Christian Solidarity Worldwide**](#) (Website)

[**International Christian Concern**](#) (Website)

[**All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief**](#) (Website)

[**All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief**](#) (Membership)

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