

**Debate Pack**

23 January 2024

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By Philip Loft (subject  
specialist),  
Tim Robinson (compiler)

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# Religious persecution and the World Watch List 2024

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# 1 Summary

On Thursday 25 January 2024, Fiona Bruce MP will lead a general debate in Westminster Hall on “Religious persecution and the World Watch List 2024”. Fiona Bruce MP was appointed as the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2020. The topic for debate was chosen by the Backbench Business Committee.

# 2 Background

## The World Watch list 2024

The [World Watch list](#) is an annual report published by Open Doors, an NGO which supports Christians worldwide, and lists the fifty countries in which Christians face the “most extreme persecution”. A [parliamentary launch](#) for the [latest report](#), which covers 2023, was held on 17 January 2024.

There is no internationally agreed definition of persecution. Open Doors’ methodology defines persecution as:

Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians.

This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalisation, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The report also assesses incidents of violence and acts affecting private, family, community, national and church life, and ranks each country based on the number and nature of reported incidents. The [report for 2023](#) said that:

- Around 365 million Christians are subject to “high levels of persecution and discrimination”. This [compared to 340 million in 2021](#) (PDF).
- 1 in 7 Christians are persecuted worldwide, including 1 in 5 in Africa and 1 in 7 in Asia. This compared to [1 in 8 worldwide in 2021](#) (PDF).
- 4,998 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons. [90% of those killed were in Nigeria](#), where attacks on Christians have become more common since 2020 as [part of a wider rise in political violence against civilians](#). Open Doors estimates the number of Christians

killed for faith-related reasons worldwide was 5,621 in 2023, 5,898 in 2022, and 4,761 in 2021.

- 14,766 Churches and Christian properties were attacked.
- North Korea, Somalia, Libya, Eritrea, and Yemen had the highest rates of reported persecution against Christians.

North Korea has been consistently ranked as having one of the highest rates of persecution [since the World Watch List was first conducted in 1983](#). The number of countries ranked as conducting “extreme” or “very high” persecution has risen from 23 in 2015 to 55 in 2023.

Open Doors UK has also published an [Advocacy report](#) (PDF) in 2024, which makes several recommendations on UK Government action, including:

1. Prioritising freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and making it central to engagement with other countries and in international organisations.
2. Committing resources to fragile states to support FoRB.
3. Targeting programmes to address gender-specific persecution.
4. Ensuring Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies are not used to persecute religious groups, and to establish global standards to this end.

## Government actions on FoRB

The UK Government says promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is [a priority in its human rights work](#) internationally.

The Commons Library research briefing, [The UK and global Freedom of Religion or Belief](#), September 2023, sets out UK Government and policy to promote and protect FoRB. This includes:

1. The prioritisation of FoRB in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office’s work (section 4.1).
2. The role of the Special Envoy for FoRB (section 4.2).
3. UK aid spending on FoRB (section 4.3).
4. UK diplomatic activity, including through the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (section 4.4).
5. Sanctions against those who abuse human rights (section 4.5).

6. Analysis and reports on the effectiveness of UK work on FoRB, including by the [Government-commissioned Bishop of Truro report on Christian persecution in 2020](#) and the [Independent Commission for Aid Impact on UK aid and human rights overseas in 2023](#) (section 4.6).

Fiona Bruce MP has also introduced a Private Member's Bill, [International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill 2022-23](#) (Bill 373). This would put the role of Special Envoy for International Freedom of Religion or Belief onto a statutory footing and require the Government to provide staffing and other facilities to support the office.

Henrietta Blyth, CEO of Open Doors UK, has called upon the Government [to place the office on a statutory footing](#). The [Bishop of Truro's report in 2020](#) also called for the role to be put on a permanent footing.

The [Government has said it is "committed" to the role](#) but has not issued any statement on whether it should be put on a statutory basis.

### 3

## Press and media 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 accuracy of external content.

### [As Global Christian Persecution Rages, New Effort Seeks to 'Awaken the Church'](#)

Christian Broadcasting Network  
Billy Hallowell  
21 January 2024

### ['We Have to Kill Those Who Preach Christianity': The Persecution of Christians, December 2023 \(Christmas Edition\)](#)

The Gatestone Institute  
Raymond Ibrahim  
21 January 2024

### [What about countries outside the World Watch List 2024 top 50?](#)

Open Doors (blog)  
17 January 2024

### [The 50 Countries Where It's Hardest to Follow Jesus in 2024](#)

Christianity Today  
Jayson Casper  
17 January 2024

### [Record number of attacks on Christian property worldwide, says charity](#)

Church Times  
Rebecca Paveley  
17 January 2024

### ["Do or Die for Christ": A Glimpse of the Persecuted Church](#)

Firebrand  
David F. Watson  
9 January 2024

### [Securing Religious Freedom: Why British Leadership on FoRB Should Be Written into Law](#)

Henry Jackson Society  
Marc Sidwell  
17 October 2023

**The Persecution Of Christians Keeps Surging Around The World**

Religion Unplugged

Richard Ostling

10 January 2023

**Persecution of Christians passes 'threshold of genocide' says report**

The Tablet

Patrick Hudson

19 November 2022

## 4

# Government statements on Gov.uk

### [Freedom of religion or belief remains a UK priority: UK statement at the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2023](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
6 October 2023

At the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2023, the UK reiterated its commitment to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB).

### [UN HRC52: Statement on Freedom of Religion and Belief](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
14 March 2023

During the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the UK delivered a statement on Freedom of Religion and Belief on 13 March 2023.

### [About the London 2022 International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
July 2022

To strengthen international efforts to ensure freedom of religion or belief, the UK government hosted an International Ministerial Conference in central London on 5 and 6 July.

### [Freedom of religion or belief: understanding this human right](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
12 May 2022

This page explains what freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is and why it matters to people around the world.

### [UK approach to preventing mass atrocities](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
16 July 2019

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) leads on mass atrocity prevention policy within the UK Government, with other parts of Whitehall in support.

## 5

## PQs

### Nigeria: Religious Freedom

19 Jan 2024 | 9863

**Asked by: Patrick Grady**

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what support his Department is providing to organisations promoting freedom of religion or belief in Nigeria.

**Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

Rising insecurity in Nigeria has affected all faith and non-faith communities, including Christians. UK Government officials and I regularly raise freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), including the impact of insecurity on communities and the need to bring perpetrators to justice, with the Nigerian Government. The UK supports Nigeria to deliver on its constitutional commitment to FoRB through our development programming and security cooperation. We have funded peacebuilding projects to build dialogue between religious groups and, through the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria programme, will help Nigeria to tackle the causes of intercommunal conflict.

### Cuba: Support for Christians

11 Jan 2024 | 743 c441

**Asked by: Fiona Bruce**

I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. The Open Doors 2024 world watchlist will be launched in the Palace of Westminster on 17 January, and I urge all colleagues to attend. I anticipate that once again it will, sadly, indicate a deteriorating picture of freedom for Christians around the world as autocratic regimes seek to suppress dissenting voices.

On Cuba, I thank the Church Commissioner for sharing my concerns about reports on the worsening situation, particularly for religious leaders there. As he mentioned, many are subject to harassment, fines, forced exile, detention and ill-treatment in prison. Will he join me in calling for the release of religious prisoner of conscience Pastor Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo?

**Answered by: Andrew Selous | Church Commissioners**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the case of Pastor Lorenzo is all too indicative of a worsening climate of freedom of religion or belief in Cuba.

The Church of England calls on the Cuban Government to release Pastor Lorenzo immediately, along with all those others detained in relation to the 11 July protests. The international community must continue to follow this case



closely and hold Cuba to account bilaterally and multilaterally. My hon. Friend has put Pastor Lorenzo's name on the record in this House. I also endorse everything she said about the Open Doors event in the House next Wednesday.

### **Pakistan: Blasphemy**

**29 Dec 2023 | HL1149**

#### **Asked by: Lord Jackson of Peterborough**

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had recently with the government of Pakistan on that country's blasphemy laws insofar as they affect Christians and converts to Christianity, and the impact of that legislation on Pakistan's international treaty obligations.

#### **Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We regularly raise our concern over the (mis)use of Pakistan's blasphemy laws privately at the highest levels. We continue to press for due process and adherence to international obligations to prevent wrongful convictions, and speedy and fair trials for those accused. We also urge the Pakistani authorities to ensure the safety of those released. I raised the use of blasphemy laws to target marginalised religious communities, including Christians, with then-Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on 27 June. The High Commissioner also raised this issue with the Caretaker Minister for Human Rights Khalil George on 12 October.

### **Pakistan**

**12 Dec 2023 | 742 c731**

#### **Asked by: Sir Edward Leigh**

At the age of 14, Maira Shahbaz was abducted, forced into a marriage and raped. She escaped and has been sitting in one room with her entire family, terrified. She is now 18. I have lost track of the number of meetings I have had with successive Home Secretaries and the letters I have written. Nothing has happened to get this girl out, yet at the same time 100,000 fit young men are pouring across the channel in search of a better job. For God's sake, can we not show some Christian compassion? What more can the Foreign Office do in Pakistan to try to stop these forced conversions and forced marriages?

#### **Answered by: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We continue to press these individual cases with the Pakistani Government. The former Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (James Cleverly) raised human rights, including the persecution of minorities, with caretaker Prime Minister Kakar on 25 September. Lord Ahmad raised the need to protect minority communities with caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani on 13 September and again in a letter on 5 October. We continue to raise in

Islamabad the issue of forced marriage and conversion with the Pakistani authorities.

### **Engagements**

**22 Nov 2023 | 741 c322**

#### **Asked by: Fiona Bruce**

Today is Red Wednesday when we remember millions of Christians and others worldwide who are persecuted for their faith—people such as Margaret Attah, a nurse and a lovely young mother of four, who is here today from Nigeria. She hid behind the altar as her church service was attacked. One hundred were injured and 41 killed that day simply for being in church. Margaret lost both legs and an eye. Thousands more suffer similarly in Nigeria each year. Does the Prime Minister agree that the best way that we can honour Red Wednesday today is to commit to quickly implementing the good words of the new International Development White Paper, which was published yesterday, to ensure that UK development policies going forward are inclusive of those marginalised for their religion or beliefs?

#### **Answered by: Rishi Sunak | Prime Minister**

I thank my hon. Friend for her continuing dedication as my special envoy on this vital issue. Red Wednesday is an important moment to demonstrate our solidarity with Christians and all those persecuted around the world for their religion or belief. Marking this event annually was just one of the recommendations in the Bishop of Truro's report. I am pleased that today we will light up Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office buildings in the UK in red in support. I am also pleased to say that we have taken forward all 22 recommendations in a way that we believe is making a real change for those persecuted for their religion or belief.

### **Iran: Christianity**

**26 Oct 2023 | 203471**

#### **Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support persecuted Christians in Iran.

#### **Answering member: David Rutley | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK is an active member of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, which is currently chaired by the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Fiona Bruce MP. In July 2022, we hosted the last International Ministerial Conference on FoRB in London, during which the situation of religious minorities in Iran was discussed as a priority. Iran has a record of discrimination, harassment and targeting of minority religious and ethnic communities. We raise these issues at all appropriate

opportunities with Iran and in international fora, and we continue to work with the international community to press Iran to improve its dire human rights record.

### **Africa: Christianity**

**26 Oct 2023 | 203663**

#### **Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent of the persecution of Christians in Africa.

#### **Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all. We monitor the situation for religious and non-religious communities globally and recognise the persecution of Christians and other groups on account of their faith or beliefs, including in Africa. We work multilaterally and bilaterally to promote FoRB, and it remains an important priority for our work in Africa. The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for FoRB, the Honourable member for Congleton, plays an active role in supporting this work and spoke at the launch of Aid to the Church in Need's Africa focussed report in Parliament on 24 October.

### **Religious Freedom**

**14 Jul 2023 | 193114**

#### **Asked by: Julian Knight**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to help (a) tackle religious persecution and (b) protect religious freedom.

#### **Answering member: Andrew Selous | Church Commissioners**

Last month the Bishop of Truro, the Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of a joint UK / UAE Government resolution highlighting threats to Freedom of Religion or Belief. The steps taken by the UK Government followed a review authored by the Bishop at the invitation of the then Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, the implementation of which has since become Government Policy. In a vote, the Security Council adopted the proposal, which will see the UN Secretary General produce an oral report on Freedom of Religion or Belief related threats to international peace and security. The initial deadline is 14th June 2024, with the intention of such a statement becoming an annual event.

Religious persecution and freedom of religion were on the agenda at the gathering of the global Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference in 2022. At the Conference a range of 'calls', or priorities for the Church

worldwide, were made to tackle these issues. The documents relating to Freedom of Religion and religious persecution can be found under the Inter-Faith, Christian Unity and Human Dignity sections,

here: <https://www.lambethconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/The-Lambeth-Calls-English-2023.pdf>

The Church of England remains closely involved with the work of the FCDO in supporting the work of His Majesty's Ambassadors and diplomats and the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief. More information about the work of the International Panel can be found here: <https://www.ippforb.com/about/>

### **North Korea: Christianity**

**22 Jun 2023 | 189768**

#### **Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment for the implications of its policies of recent reports of the sentencing of a young child to life imprisonment in a prison camp in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea due to their parents being in possession of a bible; and if he will make a statement.

#### **Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK is aware of the appalling human rights situation in North Korea. The right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all is an FCDO policy priority and a key strand of our DPRK human rights strategy. We regularly raise this with the North Korean authorities and at the UN, including at the 20 March 2023 UN Arria-formula open meeting, where the UK and partners highlighted the DPRK's appalling human rights record. The UK cosponsored the resolution on DPRK Human Rights, adopted by consensus at the UN Human Rights Council on 4 April 2023. As Lord Ahmad made clear: we call on the DPRK to engage constructively with the UN Special Rapporteur Elizabeth Salmón and to bring about permanent change and improvement for people of North Korea.

### **Persecution of Christians across the Globe Independent Review**

**19 Jun 2023 | 189138**

#### **Asked by: Sir Desmond Swayne**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has taken steps to press the UN Security Council to (a) review and (b) report on how the UN could better respond to violations of freedom of religion or belief (i) during conflicts and (ii) in non-conflict situations since the Bishop of Truro's 2019 Independent Review for the UK Foreign Secretary of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Support for Persecuted Christians.

**Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The Bishop of Truro's review provided recommendations for a Government response to support members of all faiths, beliefs, and those of no religious belief. We have taken forward the 22 recommendations in a way that makes a real change for everyone persecuted because of their religion or belief.

We continue to work with UN and other multilateral fora to promote Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all. FoRB was a key strand of our successful campaign to be re-elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the term January 2021 to December 2023. In March 2021, Lord Ahmad hosted a meeting at the UN Security Council to raise awareness of persecution of religious minorities in conflict zones such as Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. On 14 June 2023, the UN Security Council adopted unanimously a UK-UAE co-penned resolution on Tolerance and International Peace and Security, including wording on FoRB.

**[Persecution of Christians across the Globe Independent Review](#)**

**26 Apr 2023 | 181471**

**Asked by: Dr Matthew Offord**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the Truro Review is implemented in full.

**Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We welcome the findings of the Independent Review of our work to take forward the Truro recommendations. We continue to ensure that progress made is embedded and that Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is central to our wider human rights work. Since the Truro Review, we have hosted the International Ministerial conference on FoRB, working with the PM's Special Envoy for FoRB, and announced £500,000 of new funding to support FoRB defenders and to provide legal expertise to countries where FoRB is under pressure. We continue to work with UN, G7, and other multilateral fora to promote FoRB and Ministers and officials regularly raise specific cases of concern.

**[Iran: Human Rights](#)**

**19 Apr 2023 | 180263**

**Asked by: Carla Lockhart**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to (a) support persecuted Christians in Iran, and (b) combat gender specific persecution of women in that country.

**Answering member: David Rutley | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK supports the fundamental rights of women, and religious minority groups, including Christians, in Iran by ensuring the Iranian regime is held to account. We do this in part through our sanctions designations: HMG has announced seven rounds of Iran human rights sanctions since October 2022. We also work with our international partners in multilateral fora, for example by removing Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women. We also raise human rights directly with the Iranian authorities at all appropriate opportunities, including through our Ambassador in Tehran, to ensure the regime is in no doubt about the political price it is paying for its actions.

**Religious Freedom**

**06 Apr 2023 | HL6795**

**Asked by: Lord Jackson of Peterborough**

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards fulfilling recommendation six of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review into the support for persecuted Christians to make the Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief a permanent role.

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

The FCDO welcomes the findings of the Independent Review of our work to take forward the Bishop of Truro's recommendations, which noted that establishing the role of the position of Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) was at an advanced stage of delivery. The Special Envoy, Fiona Bruce MP, works with the Minister for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, and through the Foreign Secretary to the Prime Minister. We continue to ensure that progress made on the Truro recommendations is embedded and that FoRB is central to our wider human rights work.

**Afghanistan: Refugees**

**04 Apr 2023 | HL6660**

**Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether Afghan refugees from Christian, Ahmadi, Baha'i, and atheist backgrounds have their freedom of religion or belief protected in (1) Afghanistan and (2) Iran.

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

In Afghanistan, since the Taliban took control, the marginalisation of minorities has increased. Religious minorities are often victims of targeted

attacks. FCDO officials regularly press the Taliban to protect religious minorities.

Iran hosts around 4.5 million Afghans from different backgrounds almost all of whom live side by side with Iranians in their host communities. Nonetheless, Iran has a track record of systematic discrimination, harassment, and targeting of minority religious and ethnic communities. We continue to raise human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, with Iran at all appropriate opportunities. The UK is committed to working with our partners to hold Iran to account for its dire human rights record.

### **Christianity: Women**

**28 Sep 2022 | 49147**

#### **Asked by: Jim Shannon**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report by Aid to the Church in Need entitled Hear Her Cries; and what progress his Department has made on studying its contents.

#### **Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We have taken note of Aid to the Church in Need's report entitled "Hear Her Cries"; and we recognise that women and girls from religious or belief minority communities can suffer disproportionately because of both their gender and faith. Our human rights policy work considers the multiple ways in which human rights interact, for example the importance of addressing issues such as child, early and forced marriage and forced conversion experienced by some women and girls from religious or belief minority communities.

## 6 Other Parliamentary material

### 6.1 Statements

#### [Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report for 2022](#)

13 Jul 2023 | House of Lords | HLWS927

Lords statement on the Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report for 2022

#### [Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report for 2022](#)

13 Jul 2023 | House of Commons | HCWS944

Written statement on the Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report for 2022

#### [International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief: London 2022](#)

15 Jul 2022 | House of Lords | HLWS204

Lords statement on the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief: London 2022

#### [International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief: London 2022](#)

15 Jul 2022 | House of Commons | HCWS205

Written statement on the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief: London 2022

### 6.2 Debates

#### [Freedom of Religion and Belief](#)

19 Sep 2023 | House of Commons | 737 cc453-476WH

Motion that this House has considered freedom of religion and belief. Agreed to on question.

#### [Religious Minorities in Nigeria](#)

18 Apr 2023 | House of Commons | 731 cc37-58WH

Motion that this House has considered religious minorities in Nigeria. Agreed to on question.

#### [Human Rights and Religious Minorities: Sudan](#)

23 Feb 2023 | House of Commons | 728 cc193-169WH

Motion that this House has considered human rights and religious minorities in Sudan. Agreed to on question.



### Persecution of Christians

**17 Nov 2022 | House of Commons | 722 c380WH**

Motion that this House has considered persecution of Christians and freedom of religion or belief. Agreed to on question.

### Blasphemy Laws and Allegations: Commonwealth Countries

**11 Oct 2022 | House of Commons | 720 cc1-20WH**

Motion that this House has considered blasphemy laws and allegations in Commonwealth countries. Agreed to on question.

### Freedom of Religion or Belief: International Conference

**28 Jun 2022 | House of Commons | 717 cc17-40WH**

Motion, That this House has considered the UK-hosted International Conference on the Freedom of Religion or Belief. Motion lapsed.

### Christians and Religious Minorities: India

**24 Feb 2022 | House of Commons | 709 cc223-246WH**

Motion that this House has considered the matter of the persecution of Christians and religious minorities in India. Sitting adjourned without Question put.

## 6.3

## Early Day Motions

### Persecution in Pakistan

**EDM: 50 (session 2023-24)**

**Jim Shannon**

**13 November 2023**

That this House is deeply concerned by the ongoing attacks, discrimination and persecution faced by Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan; recognises that these communities are integral members of the Pakistani society and have made significant contributions to its culture, history, and economy; notes with concern the rising incidents of forced conversions, kidnappings, property confiscations and violence against Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadis and Christians, which infringe on their fundamental rights to freedom of religion, belief and security; condemns any form of religious intolerance and violence; urges the Government of Pakistan to uphold its international obligations to protect the rights of all religious minorities within its borders; calls on the Government of Pakistan to intensify efforts to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of its religious minority communities; calls on the UK Government to engage with the counterparts in Pakistan on these issues to strengthen human rights monitoring in the region.

### Violence in Pakistan

**EDM: 1593 (session 2022-23)**

**Jim Shannon**

**11 September 2023**

That this House is concerned that at least five churches were burned in Pakistan's Punjab province on 16 August 2023 following allegations of blasphemy made against two members of the Christian community; is alarmed that at least 91 homes were destroyed during the violence; notes reports that hundreds of additional homes were looted; acknowledges that Pakistan's Government has committed to protect the religious minorities and pay compensation to the victims; is greatly troubled over recent attacks on Ahmadi mosques and Hindu temples; and urges action to be taken so that the perpetrators of the recent attacks are held accountable.

### Freedom of religion or belief in Iran

**EDM: 914 (session 2022-23)**

**Alexander Stafford**

**28 February 2023**

That this House deplores the ongoing human rights violations being perpetrated by the Islamic Republic of Iran; notes that these violations come in a context of more general restrictions on the right to freedom of religion or belief for many religious minorities in Iran, including Christians and the Baha'i, and also Sufi and Sunni Muslims; mourns the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini after her arrest for wearing the hijab "improperly" and her reported beating by members of the so-called morality police; considers the enforcement of religious dress codes for all Iranian women, regardless of their beliefs, to be a violation of the freedom of religion or belief of women from religious minorities in Iran, and also of Muslim women who do not wish to conform to mandatory hijab; highlights that these restrictions are in violation of Iran's obligations as a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); urges the Government of Iran to amend its constitution and relevant legislation to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief for all Iranians, as envisaged by Article 18 of the ICCPR; and calls on the UK Government to continue to defend freedom of religion or belief, in its fullest meaning, and to support the mandate of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran and of the UN's Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Human Rights in Iran.

### Killing of Christian worshippers at St Francis Catholic Church in Owo town, Ondo State, Nigeria

**EDM: 130 (session 2022-23)**

**Jim Shannon**

**6 June 2022**

That this House condemns the killing of Christian worshippers by terrorist gunmen at St Francis Catholic Church in Owo town, Ondo State, Nigeria on Sunday 5 June 2022; offers condolences and sympathies to the friends and family of the 40 worshippers killed during the attack; urges the Buhari

Government to take effective action against the Jihadist ideology destroying lives in Nigeria; and calls on the Government to raise security concerns and threats to freedom of religion or belief with its Nigerian counterparts.

## 7

# Commons Library briefings

[The UK and Global Freedom of Religion or Belief](#), Commons Library research briefing, CBP-9849, 14 September 2023

[General debate on freedom of religion or belief](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP 2023-0182, 8 September 2023

[Religious minorities in Nigeria](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP 2023-0081, 12 April 2023

[The Commonwealth and Human Rights](#), Commons Library research briefing, CBP-9492, 7 March 2023

[Christian persecution: Freedom of religion or belief](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP 2022-0200, 14 November 2022

[Use of blasphemy laws and allegations in Commonwealth countries](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP 2022-0160, 3 October 2022

[The UK-hosted International Conference on the Freedom of Religion or Belief](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP 2022-0119, 23 June 2022

[Gender-specific religious persecution](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP 2022-0057, 14 March 2022

[Persecution of Christians and religious minorities in India](#), Commons Library debate pack, CDP 2022-0042, 22 February 2022

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