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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
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Minister of State

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Jo Swinson MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

24 March 2019

Dear Jo

Thank you for your letter of 15 March on behalf of a number of your constituents regarding Premier Radio's "Stop Christophobia" campaign and the Foreign Secretary's independent, global review into the persecution of Christians.

The Foreign Secretary has asked Philip Mounstephen, Bishop of Truro, to examine how the British Government can better respond to the plight of persecuted Christians around the world. We cannot pre-judge the outcome of the review, but the Foreign Secretary has asked the Bishop to make ambitious policy and operational recommendations to improve our support to Christian communities. Bishop Mounstephen will provide an initial report by Easter and a final report by summer. We will ask him to consider Premier Radio's recommendations as part of his work.

In the meantime, I would like to reiterate the British Government's strong commitment to promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and tackling religious persecution. Since my appointment as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on FoRB, the UK has committed over £1 million for projects on FoRB in Iraq, Malaysia, Burma and Sudan. Last year, I launched a £12 million Department for International Development programme to support persecuted religious communities to find innovative approaches to defending their rights. Since the start of the conflict in Syria the Government has committed £2.8 billion of aid – our largest ever humanitarian response to a crisis, which helps all Syrians, including religious minorities.

Through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's diplomatic network, we lobby governments for changes in laws and practices that discriminate against individuals on the basis of their religion or belief, and we continue to raise cases of persecution. Over recent months, ministers and diplomats have raised religious freedom issues in many countries including Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria and Sudan.

The British Government, and I personally, remain committed to standing up for Freedom of Religion or Belief all over the world. We will continue to work with faith leaders and civil society organisations to tackle discrimination, and see what more we can do for persecuted Christians. Thank you for your support for this issue.

Yours sincerely,
Tariq

LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON

Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN

Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief