



Craig Whittaker MP

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Response to Persecution and Displacement of Christians (Open Doors Campaign) – January 2017

Thank you for contacting me about the persecution and displacement of Christians.

When Christians are being persecuted and displaced for their beliefs in other parts of the world we must speak out and stand with those who bravely practice their faith. The UK is committed to upholding the right to freedom of religion or belief around the world, and societies which protect this right are more tolerant and ultimately more likely to be prosperous and stable.

The UK continues to champion freedom of religion through the multilateral system, which is a vital avenue for the pursuit of progress on this issue. This includes supporting a resolution on freedom of religion in both the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, and the appointment of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, who is tasked with monitoring these issues worldwide. Bilateral engagement with governments across the world is also encouraged.

The UK is also collaborating with human rights and faith-based organisations across the world through project work; particularly those which bridge sectarian divides and promote dialogue and understanding between religions. I can assure you that the Government is also committed to tackling forced displacement by emphasising the need to safeguard human rights and protect civilians.

Forced displacement is arguably the defining humanitarian and development challenge of our generation. There are currently 40.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs), and almost 21.3 million refugees. I am pleased that the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 secured consensus on the need for a new approach to protracted crises, including situations of long-term displacement of large numbers of people - going beyond people's basic needs and investing in education, jobs and livelihoods.

I look forward to attending the event on 11 January to hear more about this serious issue.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP