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I rang a friend on Tuesday, someone living in Pakistan, to express my deep sorrow about the attacks in Lahore on Easter Sunday, which killed more than 70 people and injured a further 300. The group responsible for the attacks, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, has said it was deliberately targeting Christians gathering to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, though many of the victims were also Muslims.

Lahore is a place I know well. Two years ago, I visited the city to meet Christian leaders and to pray with them. The stories I heard troubled me deeply. There was a real feeling that the Christians of Pakistan were under intense pressure, fearing to worship, even fearing for their lives. Last Sunday's murderous actions do nothing to dispel that feeling.

Pakistan was founded on a vision of a country at peace with itself and at peace with its minorities. Indeed, the white on the national flag represents the place of minorities within the country. The security and flourishing of minorities was a foundational principle. This founding vision is now under grave threat.

The friend I spoke to earlier this week, who lives daily with intimidation and pressure, listened politely; he thanked me for my words of sorrow for the victims and condemnation of such dreadful atrocities. But then he said: "Justin, condemnation is not enough, we must go beyond condemnation to something better."

Beyond condemnation? What could that mean?

Around the world, people of all major religions, including large parts of the Christian family, live as minorities. In some places, they live as equals, valued as citizens and play a full part in the life of their communities and countries. But in many parts of the world, unknown to most of us, Christians find themselves under attack, without legal rights, with believers being murdered and their places of worship destroyed.

This is happening in northern Nigeria, parts of Kenya, large swathes of the Middle East, South Asia and right down into South-East Asia. Every day I receive reports of great suffering from a different province within the Anglican Communion. The torrent of tragedy feels overwhelming; I find myself lapsing into the old clichés: "Something must be done", "We condemn these attacks unequivocally".

It is, of course, important that religious and political leaders condemn unequivocally the persecution of Christians and other minorities around the world. But it is also vital that concrete action is taken; that, as my friend argued, we move beyond condemnation to something better.

This must involve states and communities understanding their legal obligation to uphold the right to freedom of religion and belief. This right — which includes the freedom to practise no religion and the right to change one's religion — is underpinned by law at the national and international level.

Furthermore, there is an urgent diplomatic task to ensure that no country, anywhere in the world, accidentally or deliberately, supports the persecution of anyone for their religious belief — or, for that matter, their lack of it. Religious literacy is key: governments, security and military leaders, and diplomats need to be aware of the force and impact of religious belief.

Diaspora communities play an important role in how we go beyond words of condemnation and support religious minorities facing persecution. The Pakistani diaspora in the UK, for example, is part of a network of relationships that enable the shifting and challenging of some attitudes in Pakistan. These relationships can be built on by the diplomatic and business communities, for example by more closely aligning aid and trade policy with the strengthening of the human rights and religious freedom agenda. Academic research shows that societies that guarantee religious freedom are generally more prosperous and stable.

But the task of upholding religious freedom does not fall to politicians and diplomats alone. Mainstream religious leaders (and I include myself in this) must up their game, setting an example of dialogue and communication with each other.

In Britain, this begins with how we treat and value religious and ethnic minorities in our communities, not least those who have and will come as refugees fleeing religious and sectarian persecution in Syria, Iraq and other places of conflict.

Furthermore, the treatment of minorities in all major religions must be scrutinised. Religious leaders must hold each other to account, as well as be held to account, for how we treat minorities, particularly minorities within our own religious or ethnic groups. The tragic murder of the shopkeeper Asad Shah in Glasgow last week is a stark reminder of how important that accountability is.

This requires honest and robust relationships between religious leaders, not platitudes, however well-intentioned. Such relationships involve encouraging each other to actively protect minorities and to challenge those who seek to exploit differences.

To go back to my friend in Pakistan, we must go beyond condemnation, and going beyond condemnation means that religious violence must be combatted by those who lead religious traditions. For it is only in that way that Christians — and indeed those of all religions— will be safe to practise their faith.

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