



16 April 2019

Dear Bishop Philip

We are pleased to offer this joint letter to accompany the Submission of the Church of England and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to the Independent Review of FCO support for persecuted Christians.

Christians form an important part of the social fabric in almost every country of the world. Yet in many places, our Christian sisters and brothers face persecution of an intensity and extent unprecedented in many centuries.

Throughout recent years we have often travelled to the Middle East, the birthplace of our religion and one of those focal points of this persecution. There we have met with those who are suffering because of their faith. They have told us of having to flee their homes, being stripped of all they own and seeing family members killed.

This Submission is shaped by their voices and by our commitment to make them heard.

We must remember, too, that these threats to freedom of religion or belief are not restricted to Christians alone. Rather, it is a widespread experience of the followers of other faiths. Many are deprived of this basic expression of their human dignity. Similar threats are also faced by atheists and agnostics who seek to uphold crucial decisions of conscience.

Pope Francis has underscored this message when meeting representatives of the Yazidi people last year: 'It is unacceptable that human beings should be persecuted and killed due to their religious membership! Every person has the right to profess his or her own religious creed freely and without constraint.'

We ask Her Majesty's Government to take note of the practical recommendations offered by our Churches in this Submission and to take meaningful action not only in protecting Christians facing persecution but also in promoting freedom of religion and belief more widely.

The UK has a great capacity to increase its support and protection for those who suffer violations of this most fundamental human right. As we know from the cry of our own communities around the world, this action is needed now.

With every good wish, yours sincerely

✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

The Most Revd and Rt Hon. Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury