

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

11 January 2021

We are writing to express our concerns at your recent appointment of Fiona Bruce MP as your Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief and ask you to urgently reconsider it for the following reasons:

Ms Bruce is a longstanding opponent of freedom of religion or belief for the non-religious. She has dedicated much time and effort to ensure teaching of non-religious worldviews is excluded in English schools. This is in defiance of court rulings that inclusive teaching is required to ensure freedom of religion or belief, and in contravention to the approach of several international agreements to which the UK is a signatory¹, which emphasises that such teaching is an essential part of freedom of religion or belief.

Beyond this, her views and actions on wider and related human rights, such as the human rights and right to freedom of religion or belief of women and LGBT+ people, are incompatible with this post. She is Chair of the 'Pro-Life' APPG and has worked for years to restrict abortion rights, which stands in stark contrast with the Government's own policy on the human rights of women. Ms Bruce has voted against extending civil rights to same-sex couples on numerous occasions, including their right to same-sex marriage. It is clear that she does not view freedom of religion or belief as part of a wider package of human rights that are universal, indivisible, and interrelated: a crucial minimum for anyone who aspires to represent the UK.

While we acknowledge Ms Bruce's personal right to such actions and opinions in a free and fair country, we do not consider they are aligned with the UK's commitments on freedom of religion or belief. Global stakeholders will recognise this and her appointment will undermine the UK's ability to advocate for human rights generally and freedom of religion or belief specifically. Accordingly we seek your urgent reassurance that your envoy will promote the interests of those who identify with humanist values, usually non-religious, and address the anxieties this appointment brings LGBT+ people given her record and who would like it confirmed for example that her views on conversion therapy mirror your own. If Ms Bruce is unable to articulate your own publicly expressed views on these matters you will surely want to reconsider this appointment altogether.

¹ Such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Toledo, *Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*, 2007. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/29154>

Yours sincerely,

Crispin Blunt MP
Baroness Bakewell
Tommy Sheppard MP
Clive Lewis MP
Andy Slaughter MP
Dame Angela Eagle MP
Dr Caroline Lucas MP
Rachel Hopkins MP
Hannah Bardell MP
Viscount Ridley
Baroness Barker
Lord Desai
Lord Warner
Lord Haworth
Lord Rooker
Baroness Whitaker
Baroness Murphy
Baroness Taylor of Bolton
Lord Judd
Lord Taverne QC
Baroness Burt of Solihull