



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon**  
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Our ref: MC2020/26803

26 January 2021

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 20 December to the Foreign Secretary about the appointment of Fiona Bruce, MP for Congleton, as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. I am replying as the Minister responsible for Human Rights.

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities. Human rights are universal and apply equally to all people. We are opposed to all forms of discrimination, and work to uphold the rights and freedoms of women and girls (including their sexual and reproductive health and rights), and of LGBT people in all circumstances.

We are deeply concerned about the severity and scale of violations and abuses of FoRB in many parts of the world. Religious intolerance and persecution are often at the heart of foreign and development policy challenges. Where FoRB is under attack, other human rights are often threatened too. That is why we ensure our human rights policy work considers the intersectionality of human rights, for example the importance of addressing the specific issues which may be experienced by women from religious minority communities.

As outlined in her speech at the Open Doors' World Watch List event on 13 January, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for FoRB is committed to defending FoRB for all. I will continue to work with her closely in my capacity as Minister for Human Rights to improve the lives of people persecuted for their religion, belief, or for having no religious belief.

*Yours sincerely,*

**LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON**  
Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth  
Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

