

New sanctions regime among push to boost protection for persecuted religious groups

The review, published in July 2019, made 22 recommendations to improve the lives of persecuted members of all faiths, beliefs, and those of no belief. Implementation has already begun on half the recommendations, while work is ongoing to deliver the rest

Rehman Chishti MP, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, leads on the implementation of the Truro review and championing freedom of religion or belief for the Government internationally.

One of the main recommendations of the Truro review was in relation to sanctions, with the report suggesting the Government needed to be prepared to impose sanctions against perpetrators of freedom of religion or belief abuses.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announced on Monday that the first wave of designations under the UK's new, ground-breaking Global Human Rights sanctions regime will sanction those involved in religious persecution, including two Myanmar generals, Min Aung Hlaing and Soe Win.

The pair were designated for their involvement in the systematic killing, rape, sexual violence and enforced labour against the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Everyone, no matter their faith or belief, deserves to be able to live a free and safe life, wherever they are in the world.

Our new global human rights regime will allow the UK to protect people of all religions, faiths and no belief against serious human rights violations and abuses, and ensure the perpetrators are sent a clear message that the UK will not tolerate their atrocious actions.

Rehman Chishti MP, who was appointed the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief in September 2019 as a result of the recommendations, this week reinforced the Foreign Office's commitment to implementing all of the recommendations of the Truro review.

Mr Chishti said:

This Government aspires to be the global champion for freedom of

religion or belief for all. I want every citizen around the world to enjoy this basic right. The freedom to practice faith or belief without discrimination is one of the foundations of a free society.

During my time in office, I have taken forward 11 of the 22 Truro review recommendations, including overseeing the UK joining the International Religious Freedom Alliance, which allows like-minded member states to work together to promote freedom of religion or belief internationally, reinforcing the UK's commitment to be a global leader in championing freedom of religion or belief.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for Human Rights at the FCO and DFID, added:

There is a critical intersection of religious rights with broader security issues like gender-based violence, including trafficking and forced marriage.

We know that free societies are more stable, more prosperous and more resilient against violent extremism, and our work on freedom of religion or belief, alongside our ongoing human rights work, is key to improving the livelihoods of millions across the world.

Last year, the Bishop of Truro, Rt. Rev. Philip Mounstephen published his final report of his independent review of the Foreign Office's support to persecuted Christians around the world, incorporating 22 recommendations for the FCO's consideration.

In line with the Foreign Office's longstanding policy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the vast majority of recommendations supported members of all faiths, beliefs, and no belief, not just Christians.

Since the review, the Foreign Office has continued to work with international partners, including through the International Religious Freedom Alliance, to reduce religious persecution worldwide.

As well as the implementation of freedom of religion or belief-related sanctions, the Foreign Office last year launched the John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion or Belief. The £200,000 fund was made available to those with an interest in exploring the best ways that the UK Government can tackle the problem of persecution as it affects particular countries or groups.

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