A Response to the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the former Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians, Final Report and Recommendations

Executive Summary

A comprehensive study of any phenomenon described as persecution of any human grouping would naturally take years of research to complete. And in the meantime, very real suffering continues to happen. As such, there will be emotive responses to any such study, not least when that study has been carried out in such a short period of time. Doctorates could be written on small facets of any such study, and there will always be 'what abouts' - questions coming from those feeling left out or misunderstood. Those working in the fields of human rights, of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), and of reconciliation, will be aware that nothing in these realms is ever simple. What this response is aiming to provide are helpful pointers, as the beginning of a conversation, from those working in this field – those who have the rather distressing job of monitoring human rights abuses, of seeking to encourage or enforce human rights in places where they are not respected or observed, and of those working toward reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Each of these contexts is complex, and unique. While there may be similar strands running through them, the details of dissimilarity must also be acknowledged.

This response seeks to draw out various points and explore some of their complexities, as an effort to gain greater insight that will enable each of these to be engaged with more productively. We explore what is meant by the terminology of 'persecution', and how that sits, or doesn't sit, within the framework of legislation and human rights. There is an exploration of statistics, both those quoted in the report, but also a discussion of discerning the criteria for methodology for gathering and analysis of those statistics. We also explore the religious literacy of those interpreting legislation around FoRB, but also human rights literacy among religious communities and their leaders. And we look at the context of our modern world, what it is that shapes attitudes to religion, Christianity in particular, but also the current context in which there is a growing lack of tolerance to religion – such as the growth in hate crime. How are these attitudes coloured by the UK's colonial history?

Within all of these is reflected a need for reconciliation – within our own communities in the UK currently, but also with the human rights abuses of our past. Is our lack of response to what is termed in the Truro report as 'Christian persecution' abroad due to a cultural and collective guilt? Or is it because we have not yet begun to engage with our history? Is the deporting of the Windrush generation a reflection of a continuing racist and colonial attitude that must be addressed?

And finally, we end with a section of recommendations, as well as an appendix – the outline of a pilot programme, *Encounters*, which USPG, the University of Birmingham, Islamic Relief, and the Council of the Anglican Provinces of Africa hope to offer UK government. It is hoped this response goes some way toward mitigating any 'what abouts' – and provides a useful means for taking the conversation forward.

<div align="right">The Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills</div>

Introduction

The Bishop of Truro's report on Christian Persecution endeavours to provide a means by which the voices of Christians undergoing threat to life and limb can be heard. It is grim reading, as would unfortunately also be the case for any similar study focusing on intentional violence committed against other religions or groups. This report comes at the request of the former Foreign Minister, Jeremy Hunt, which signals an acknowledgement of the part Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) plays in global development, security, and trade efforts, and the need to engage religious communities in their delivery. With a greater majority of the world's population recorded as holding to a faith, and the majority of those being Christian[1], it would be expected that the greater portion of those persecuted for their faith also be Christian[2]. Pew Research, one of the sources used in the Truro Report, states on their website: *'Due in part to the large number of Christian-majority countries, Christians were actually harassed mostly in Christian-majority countries. In some of these countries, the Christian majority was itself harassed, often by the government… In other Christian-majority countries, Christian minority denominations were targeted.'*[3]

The failure of the report to acknowledge the above issues has the potential to put into question the very real suffering so many undergo, particularly in the above-mentioned circumstances.

Rather than 'persecution', Pew Research uses the terms 'social harassment' and 'religious restriction', these are explained as the following:

- *The Government Restrictions Index (GRI) measures government laws, policies and actions that restrict religious beliefs and practices. The GRI is comprised of 20 measures of restrictions, including efforts by governments to ban particular faiths, prohibit conversions, limit preaching or give preferential treatment to one or more religious groups.*
- *The Social Hostilities Index (SHI) measures acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organizations or groups in society. This includes religion-related armed conflict or terrorism, mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons or other religion-related intimidation or abuse. The SHI includes 13 measures of social hostilities*.[4]

The methodology for these assessments is described[5] as being calculated from research by a number of international and human rights organisations, such as the United Nations, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group, and many more. All of these have years of experience within this sphere and have developed reliable indices for evaluation. According to figures on the Pew Research website, harassment of Christians formed about 35% of those harassed for their religion in 2012, as opposed to the 80% stated in the Truro report. Regrettably, this statistic provided in the report remains

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[1] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/ accessed 23 July 2019. Pew Research discloses its' methodology of self-analysis here: https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2017/04/04104608/Appendix-C-Methodology.pdf accessed 23 July 2019. A multiple of sources are used in order to ensure an assessment that would be as accurate as possible.

[2] 'Christians were harassed by governments or social groups in a total of 128 countries in 2015 – more countries than any other religious group, according to the report. But there also were 2.3 billion Christians in 2015, more than any other religious group. Large populations of Christians are present in all but a few parts of the world: Roughly two-thirds of the world's countries, for example, have Christian majorities.' https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/09/christians-faced-widespread-harassment-in-2015-but-mostly-in-christian-majority-countries/ accessed 23 July 2019

[3] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/09/christians-faced-widespread-harassment-in-2015-but-mostly-in-christian-majority-countries/ accessed 23 July 2019

[4] https://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high/ accessed 23 July 2019

[5] https://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/appendix-1-methodology/ accessed 23 July 2019

unsubstantiated. It is no longer quoted on the original website, and there is no account provided as to how this percentage was calculated. It is presumably from pre-2009, over ten years old, while the Pew Research calculations are more recent.[6]

That harassment, as understood by Pew Research, is on the increase, remains undisputed by this response. It must be acknowledged that a close second, by one point, to harassment of Christians, was that of harassment of Muslims. But harassment due to faith is not a competitive exercise.[7] The point of this response is to acknowledge the suffering of those persecuted for their faith. And while the Truro Report was intended to be a comprehensive and specific study of Christian suffering, there is no intention to suggest threat to Christians should be the only consideration for government when engaging in human rights concerns surrounding Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB).

In seeking FoRB for all, including for Christians, we need to face difficult questions which can only be answered in long-term serious engagement with others. These questions and seeking towards constructive answers need to be rooted in an evidence-based deep understanding of all the factors that contribute to violations of everyone's FoRB. Such questions include questions about FCO priorities, and how we find a wider perspective which brings all interlocutors committed to FoRB for all people around the table.

Defining Persecution

It is unfortunate that the report has ended up bonded to using the term of 'persecution' as its central theme – problematic in that it has not been clearly defined.[8] As mentioned above, Pew Research employs two precise terminologies within which it places its research: social harassment and religious restriction. Neither of these accord with a rather unclear understanding of the term 'persecution' implied within the report itself. Moreover, the report cites surveys that, similarly, do not adequately define what persecution might be. Persecution is rather largely defined by self-definition, if an individual believes that they are persecuted then they are, whether it is social harassment or governmental restriction or something else. The use of an amorphous and untheorized notion of self-definition is problematic for two reasons: firstly, because it groups a whole host of activities together and obscures the details of Christian experiences around the globe. Thus, in turn, it is difficult to identify hotspots and grave situations that demand immediate attention. Secondly, because some modern Christians define the experience of persecution as intrinsic to the Christian condition.[9] If Christians define themselves as persecuted regardless of historical circumstances, that self-reporting must be evaluated against independent criteria. These criteria are important because 'the language

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[6] https://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high/#about-the-study Accessed 23 July 2019; calculation from statistics available on the page

[7] In a debate in the House of Lords on the 24th of July 2019, the following exchange took place: The Lord Bishop of Ely - 'My Lords, we on this Bench welcome the report and look forward to working with the Government as they take forward its recommendations. With regard to the recommendation to name the phenomenon of Christian discrimination and persecution, does the Minister accept that there is nothing to be gained and everything to be lost by encouraging a competition for victim status, and that such energy would be better spent in further developing the framework of international human rights protection?'
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon – 'I totally agree with the right reverend Prelate.'
https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2019-07-24/debates/C543F060-04D4-4322-8887-15470922AC76/FCOSupportForPersecutedChristians accessed 2 August 2019

[8] It would ask a great deal of readers to suppose that a quotation from an article in the Times, which opens the report and lists 'bullying, arrests, expulsion and execution' as part of the Christian experience of persecution is an exhaustive or workable definition.

[9] Elizabeth A. Castelli, 'Persecution Complexes: Identity Politics and the "War on Christians",' *Differences* 18:3 (2007): 152-180; Alan Noble, "The Evangelical Persecution Complex,' *The Atlantic*, August 4, 2014 (https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/08/the-evangelical-persecution-complex/375506/)

and rhetoric of persecution when deployed in public debate have a distinctive power to clear the room of any other points of view'.[10]

While the Truro report should be commended for recognizing the 'multiple triggers and drivers' that propel persecution, those triggers need to be described and engaged with.[11] The isolation of the persecution of Christians as a 'single global phenomenon' should not be allowed to divorce the targeting of Christians from those factors that drive persecution of other groups[12] or gloss over the ways in which religious persecution might disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, such as women.[13]

Moreover, without an operative definition of persecution it is impossible to distinguish religious persecution from other factors that drive and motivate religious violence. Without a working definition of persecution it is impossible to distinguish between those being killed or persecuted for their faith, and those who experience violence who live in Christian regions or whose religious identity is incidental to their experience. If the goal of identifying and highlighting violence against Christians is to eliminate it, then accurately diagnosing the causes of that violence is a necessary first step.

Making the persecution of Christians a special case, as this report inevitably does, elides the manner in which, as a 'global phenomenon', the persecution of Christians is part of the larger problem of religious persecution.[14] As the APPG note in their response, citing academics Sir Malcom Evans, Dr Nazila Ghanea, and Dr Ahmed Shaheed, 'seeking to protect some from persecution necessarily requires seeking to protect all from persecution.'[15]

Contextualizing the persecution of Christians within the broader context of religious persecution in general, not only serves to more accurately reflect the state of global affairs, it enables us to address the specific causes of persecution in individual locations.

While the report provides a poignant account of what persecution means to Christian communities at risk, it also inadvertently highlights the disparity between the language of Christian identification with its history as the 'persecuted church' and all that connotes, and the language of human rights organisations, where legal definitions of human rights abuses are carefully worked out from a legal perspective. That some may consider this leads to unjust decisions is a point of question.

We propose rather that any working term distinguishes between those who are killed or experience violence as a result of their religious beliefs, and those who are victims of ethnic violence, tribal conflicts, racism, and other sociopolitical factors that vary from location to location. In the same way it is important to distinguish between hostility orchestrated by State actors, the actions of members of fringe groups (with an attentiveness to tacit State support), non-religiously motivated criminal conduct, and broader social climate-based factors that disadvantage members of specific groups. In

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[10] Elizabeth A. Castelli, 'The Ambivalent Legacy of Violence and Victimhood: Using Early Christian Martyrs to Think With,' *Spiritus* 6 (2006): 1-24 [19]

[11] Rt. Rev. Philip Mounstephen Bishop of Truro, *Bishop Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians*, (2019) 12.

[12] https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx

[13] Bethany Collier, 'Country of Origin and Women: researching gender and persecution in the context of asylum and human rights claims', Asylum Aid 2017 (https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/49997afd1a.pdf), Accessed July 10, 2019.

[14] *Bishop Truro's Independent Review*, 4.

[15] APPG Statement on Review of FCO's Support for Persecuted Christians, July 8th 2019 (https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/appg-statement-on-independent-review-of-the-fcos-work-to-support-persecuted-christians/), Accessed July 10, 2019. Citing Malcolm Evans, Nazila Ghanea, and Ahmed Shaheed, *The Sunday Telegraph,* February 10, 2019 (https://www.pressreader.com) Accessed July 10, 2019.

order to qualify as religious persecution, legislation or acts of violence must be motivated by the religious identity of those targeted.[16]

With this said we recognize four relevant complicating factors:

1) religious identity is often intertwined with other forms of identity such as ethnic group or race in ways that make it difficult to isolate religious identity
2) religious motives can serve as a 'cover' for economically motivated actions, such as a desire to acquire land or property
3) legislation that does not specifically name a particular group can nevertheless be designed to covertly target them
4) historical factors, such as the experience of coercive colonial missionary activity, can amplify hostility towards and suspicion of Christians in specific regions and should be a factor in considering potential responses.

Each of these factors needs to be taken into consideration when utilizing and labelling specific political situations as 'persecution'. Distinguishing between these phenomena is not intended to minimize the experiences of Christians, or members of any other religious groups but, rather, to facilitate the identification of strategies that can help eliminate a variety of different forms of identity-based discrimination and violence.

Legal clarification of the term 'persecution' can be problematic in that there are a variety of terms which cover similar, or even the same, phenomena. With regard to the Refugee Convention of 1951, UK law determines asylum claims using this terminology:

'To be granted asylum (to get refugee status), you have to demonstrate that you have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, you are outside your country of origin or normal residence, and you cannot get protection in your own country.'

'Persecution, in terms of claiming asylum, is serious, targeted mistreatment of an individual because of who they are, or what they do, what they believe, or what people think they are, do, or believe.'[17]

This reference goes on to explain that 'persecution' is not a term that is defined, even within the Refugee Convention, but is rather part of UK law due to an EU Qualification Directive. (The question remains as to what will happen to this directive following Brexit. And if we are focusing purely on Christian 'persecution', how will this be interpreted when it comes to asylum claims if the Directive no longer applies?)

Other terminology already exists within UK law which, while they may not provide the desired emotive response, do accord a practical, legal and prosecutable working definition. The Equality Act of 2010 speaks of discrimination, that '*you must not be discriminated against because you are (or are not) of a particular religion, you hold (or do not hold) a particular philosophical belief, someone thinks you are of a particular religion or hold a particular belief (this is known as discrimination by perception), you are connected to someone who has a religion or belief (this is known as discrimination by association).'*

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[16] Candida R. Moss, *The Myth of Persecution* (San Francisco, Calif: HarperOne, 2013), 249-59; Greg Carey, Review of *The Myth of Persecution*, *Christian Century* 130 (2013): 40;

[17] https://righttoremain.org.uk/whats-the-difference-between-discrimination-and-persecution/ accessed 2 August 2019

The Act goes on to define two types of discrimination: Direct discrimination, such as when someone is treated worse than another because of their religion or belief. It points out that this can occur when the two parties both hold the same religious or philosophical belief, but interpret it differently. And Indirect discrimination, such as when an organization has a particular working policy that applies to everyone but which puts some at a disadvantage because of their religion or belief. This type of discrimination can be allowed it if can be proven this policy is necessary for the business to operate efficiently and as intended, known as objective justification.[18]

The Crown Prosecution Service employs the term 'hate crime', used *'to describe a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity. These aspects of a person's identity are known as 'protected characteristics'. A hate crime can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property.'*[19]

The OSCE/ODIHR (Organisation for Security & Co-peration in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) defines hate crime more broadly, to include a range of acts which could be understood to include those the report considers to be persecution: '*Hate crimes are criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people. To be considered a hate crime, the offence must meet two criteria: First, the act must constitute an offence under criminal law; second, the act must have been motivated by bias.*

Bias motivations can be broadly defined as preconceived negative opinions, stereotypical assumptions, intolerance or hatred directed to a particular group that shares a common characteristic, such as race, ethnicity, language, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender or any other fundamental characteristic. People with disabilities may also be victims of hate crimes.

Hate crimes can include threats, property damage, assault, murder or any other criminal offence committed with a bias motivation. Hate crimes don't only affect individuals from specific groups. People or property merely associated with – or even perceived to be a member of – a group that shares a protected characteristic, such as human rights defenders, community centres or places of worship, can also be targets of hate crimes.'[20]

Not only is clarification of terms essential, as outlined above, with regard to finding ways forward to solutions to crisis situations, but if the recommendations in the report are to be taken forward in any effective way, with regard to legal sanctions or even the International Criminal Court, clarity of terms will be a must. It will also affect things like asylum claims, as mentioned, humanitarian response to refugees, foreign relations, as well as home affairs. Perhaps this is also an indication of a gap between the understanding of certain terms in religious communities and the language of human rights. How Christians understand themselves to be a 'persecuted church' may differ from that of the experience of Jews in our midst and their experience of Antisemitism through the centuries, or Muslims currently undergoing serious harassment and discrimination on the streets of the UK. Clarification of terms will benefit all of us.

Statistics

Clearly defining terminology in any study of a phenomenon, what are the parameters of the study, affects the methodology of gathering statistics surrounding it, as well as how those statistics are

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[18] https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination#act accessed 2 August 2019

[19] https://www.cps.gov.uk/hate-crime accessed 2 August 2019

[20] http://hatecrime.osce.org/what-hate-crime accessed 2 August 2019

interpreted. What is also needed is how that terminology and accompanying statistics are placed in the context of the wider picture, providing a more nuanced, and perhaps more accurate, perspective. John Kinahan, from Forum 18[21], writes: 'All statistics relating to contexts where serious human rights violations take place are necessarily questionable to a greater or lesser extent, as people are afraid to share their experiences and the authorities concerned are hostile to the public collection and evaluation of reliable data. Certain uses of statistics can also encourage a kind of competitive victimhood which can have no place in defense of the dignity of all human beings - which is what human rights, including FoRB, defends. This can make extended discussion of statistics a red herring diverting attention way from the core and vital point former UN FoRB Special Rapporteur Asma Jahangir made in relation to freedom of religion and belief and statistics: "When I am asked which community is persecuted most, I always reply *human beings*."'[22]

Some of the statistics from this report, and media headlines accompanying them, require qualification. For example, the statement that 'it is clear that the persecution of Christians today is worse than at any time in history' obscures two key details.[23] Firstly, that there are more Christians alive today than at any point in history. Secondly, that there are more Christians living in areas of the world where they are a religious minority than at any point in history. While basically correct, this statistic can be unnecessarily inflammatory. It implies a single cause for the persecution it asserts these minorities endure, without acknowledging each context to be unique, and with a variety of tensions and their causes.

As mentioned in the introduction, the claim of Christians being subjected to 80% of all religious persecution world wide has not been substantiated, nor the terms or methodology for this assertion clarified. It would perhaps at this point be helpful to point out some of the difficulties in coming up with such an assertion, aside from the need to clarify the term.

It is important to be aware of the problems surrounding even the best of methodologies. The OSCE/ODIHR has been working in this sphere for a long time. Much of the more recent statistics gathered around the term of hate crime are gathered by enforcement agencies within states. Each of those states will define such crime differently. Even if the difference is slight, it is still important to note the lack of consistency in gathering any such statistics. This is not to state that any such recording is unreliable, rather that reliability of their use depends upon acknowledging which areas are problematic. An OSCE/ODIHR report from 2018 states the following: *'Due to the lack of an explicit "hate crime definition" in criminal codes in a number of participating States, law enforcement professionals from different regions often have different understandings of the meaning of race, religion and belief, sex, gender and other fundamental characteristics. This is why it is important to assess not only the legislation, but also how it is understood and applied by the relevant authorities.'*[24]

While Freedom of Religion or Belief is enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[25], adoption of all or parts of the declaration has been mixed. Each state interprets it differently according to their own context. How those states determine criminality surrounding those rights will

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[21] http://www.forum18.org/

[22] correspondence

[23] John Pontifex et al, Persecuted and Forgotten? A report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2015-17, Executive Summary, 10 cited on p.17.

[24] *Guide to Addressing Hate Crime at the Regional Level*, Published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), 2018, pg 12

[25] 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.' https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ accessed 2 August 2019

understandably vary, as well as how they are understood by authorities and how any violations are recorded. *'National legislation defines the scope and the nature of protection from hate crimes, by determining which criminal acts are considered hate crimes and which fundamental characteristics are protected.'*[26]

There will be occasions when, apart from the state, non-governmental, civil society or charitable organisations, academia, media outlets, regional bodies, or global organisations such as the UNHCR will undertake to gather such information. And once again, the parameters of how that is recorded matters. What consistency is there between the date gathered by such a variety of interlocutors? What training has been provided to those on the ground doing the research?

The OSCE/ODIHR mentions 'bias motivations', traditionally listed as those biases within society which 'affect the security of individuals, their communities, and societies as a whole.'[27] These are race, ethnicity, language, religion, nationality, sexuality, disability, or any other characteristic which may be identified as 'other'. A comprehensive programme of recording hate crime within member countries has begun through the OSCE/ODIHR. Their website states clearly that recording entails statistical incident information and descriptive incident statistics, and is done by using '*official data reported by 39 states, including disaggregated official hate crime statistics for 23 countries. These are complemented by information on hate incidents in 47 participating States, as reported by 124 civil society groups, the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and OSCE field operations.'*[28]

OSCE/ODIHR is quick to point out that statistics recorded do not capture all types of hate crime, nor do they believe it valid to use these statistics in order to compare one state or region with another, or one bias motivation with another, such as anti-Christian bias with anti-Atheist bias. But what the data does indicate is general trends happening in each state or region, and ways in which those tensions can be alleviated. This data is invaluable in helping to build more just societies, where everyone, including minorities, are able to flourish.

As a comparison, and an indication of the differing ways in which threat to life and limb may be interpreted and recorded. Minority Rights Group International have a report, '*Peoples under Threat'*, using a ranking that *'highlights countries most at risk of genocide and mass killing. The ranking is created by compiling data on the known antecedents to genocide or mass political killing.'*[29] Such reports have been issued every year since 2006 using '*current indicators from authoritative sources'* and '*data showing how government crackdowns on freedom of speech and political opposition are now key factors in threat of mass killing and other violence.'*[30] Their interactive map indicates ranking of threat by nation and which minorities are under threat, as well as the methodology of indicators for various threats.[31] While their report does contain reference to threat due to religious affiliation, the larger threat seems to stem from ethnicity. This may or may not overlap with religious and linguistic identity.

Whatever the terminology that is used, whether it is persecution, hate crime, or threat, it is clear that the causes of violence upon persons and groups is complex, and demand context by context solutions.

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[26] Guide to Addressing Hate Crime at the Regional Level, Published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), 2018, pg 8
[27] http://hatecrime.osce.org/what-hate-crime accessed 2 August 2019
[28] http://hatecrime.osce.org/2017-data More information on methodology of the OSCE/ODIHR, as well as the type of training available those doing the recording is accessible on their website; accessed 2 August 2019
[29] https://peoplesunderthreat.org/ accessed 2 August 2019
[30] Ibid.
[31] http://peoplesunderthreat.org/notes-to-table/ accessed 2 August 2019

One of the biggest aids to this is clear and refined, as much as is possible, recording and interpreting of statistics and events.

Literacy

While the report made argument for increased religious literacy among government officers, it would also be important to advocate at this point for an increased literacy among religious leaders of the language and methodology used among those working in the areas of human rights and humanitarian provision. Alongside this is a need upon both government and religious communities for effective engagement with the balance needed between Freedom of Religion or Belief and other human rights as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Members of any group which considers to be at risk will understandably seek for their needs to be prioritised. But those making judgements with regard to legislation as well as allocation of available resources need to balance the needs of all who are at risk, 'without fear or favour'. This suggests a gap in communication and understanding between Christian and other religious or belief advocacy groups, and those of humanitarian aid provision or who monitor human rights abuse. There is a need for greater literacy on both parts. It must be acknowledged that leaders of minority groups at risk, in regions where there is regular discourse with NGOs and aid providers, tend to be more articulate in the language of human rights than perhaps their counterparts in the UK. The work of organisations such as USPG, having global outreach within a variety of ethnic as well as religious communities, has made effort to bring religious leaders and scholars from other parts of the world into the UK in order to bring a measure of human rights awareness as well as a means of facing a colonial and exploitive past. As this response reviews recommendations for the next steps, we will be advocating that literacy is lacking in both the area of religion, but also that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The gap in understanding within communities of religion or belief of legally recognised terminologies and the considerations of standard internationally recognised statistics must be acknowledged. While in parts of the world where religious leaders and activists regularly interact with international aid organisations, literacy in this area may be quite high, along with an ability to translate this terminology into a language that would be understood within the local context. But perhaps this literacy will be weak within religious communities in the UK, where the language of faith interaction with government will be very different from that of international aid.

Context

It is important at this point to sit this report first within the context of the UK, and the message it will send out to the wider public. A BBC analysis of recent hate crime statistics[32] examines Home Office statistics as recorded by police in England and Wales. Religiously motivated hate crime has increased by 40%, between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. The biggest portion of that was directed at Muslims, 52%. However, three-quarters of all hate crime was racially motivated.

In the EU-funded report, *Hate Crime Recording and Data Collection Practice Across the EU*, which provides a table of recorded hate crime across Europe, religious hate crime in England and Wales from the years 2011-2016 amounts to less than 10% of that of racially-motivated hate crime.[33] The report does itself point out that England and Wales reporting indicates a steep rise in the numbers of hate

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[32] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45874265 accessed 2 August 2019
[33] *Hate Crime Recording and Data Collection Practice Across the EU*, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-hate-crime-recording_en.pdf Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018; pg 91

crime, but also makes the claim that police have also improved the manner in which reporting and recording take place. This does not, however, affect the outcome which indicates that racially-motivated hate crime outstrips that of religious hate crime. There will, however, be an amount of crossover between race and religion in these cases, but not significantly. Setting the report on Christian persecution in the context of England and the UK, it simply does not send a positive message to our local communities struggling with these issues. Some means must be found of acknowledging the log in our own eye if we are going to point fingers at others. This is why, in a later part of this response, we are recommending a focus on reconciliation, rehabilitation, and forgiveness, prior to, or at least alongside, any punitive action.

As spelled out in the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief, contexts where serious human rights violations take place are not good contexts for genuine dialogue and reconciliation. Progress of human rights must work in parallel with any work in reconciliation. As stated in the guidelines, paragraph 61: *'The EU considers these efforts as complementary to the full and effective promotion of the right to freedom of religion or belief, and in engaging, the EU will strive for consistent references to "freedom of religion or belief" and for upholding in all texts a human rights focus based on universal standards related to freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms. Religious tolerance as well as inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue must be promoted in a human rights perspective, ensuring respect of freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression and other human rights and fundamental freedoms.'*[34]

One of the challenges of recent equalities legislation is that in law their complexity is worked through in case law, at least with in the UK, but also in other states. It is about a balance of rights that need to be gradually worked out on a case by case basis. As equalities legislation is fairly new, this is something that will take time. And each nation will have to find that balance within the laws of their own state.

This case law will be of considerable aid in working through the complexity of pinpointing provocations behind threat and violence, and the multiple identities involved. By identities is intended the various vulnerable groups subject to discrimination and threat, whether it be ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, disability, gender related, or more. How each of these vulnerable groups are identified will vary from state to state. But it also needs to take into account the histories and tensions within existing majorities, such as those frictions which have led to the growth in populism. It is within this context the balance between Freedom of Religion or Belief and other rights named by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be set, working through the intricacies in case law. Whether or not an issue comes to court, the same procedure needs to be applied of hearing all sides of a case, or particular situation, and discerning an outcome that will satisfy the needs of all parties and the good of society. It could be held that this is a foundation for reconciling communities, and possibly nations.

Colonial past

The Truro report cited an embarrassment on the part of the British public with regard to support for those of Christian faith abroad, part of it stemming from shame of an exploitative and violent colonial past. Part of the problem is the British tendency to keep threat at bay – conflict happens somewhere else to other people, adding to a sense of complacency and reducing the complexities. The part played by UK foreign policies and intervention, and in trade, such as arms sales, contributing to that threat is seldom addressed. And for religious communities, particularly churches, there is a tendency to be suspicious of entering into the politics of addressing our own culpability.

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[34] https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/137585.pdf accessed 13 September 2019

One of the strengths of post-Holocaust Germany was the manner in which a nation came to terms with atrocities committed in their name. A programme of self-examination, education, reparations, and an amount of punitive actions against the worst of the perpetrators enabled a country on its knees to develop into a healthy democracy and economy. Unification with East Germany, which had not undergone the same period of introspection, brought with it a populace vulnerable to neo-Nazi tendencies and prejudices of the past. Post-genocide Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda continue to struggle with a second generation who refuse to engage with the history of a previous generation, and deny any such atrocities ever happened. To be fair, it is a hard history to take in and to accept culpability. But in those areas where a process of reconciliation has taken place, such as that of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, there is a glimmer of hope, especially for those communities where former enemies must learn how to live side by side once again. There are setbacks, of course, and it is a lengthy process. It is not a case of going through a course and then all is fine. It is a process that takes a lifetime, sometimes several lifetimes. We know that the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors still suffer the trauma of their parents' and grandparents' generation.[35]

If we are to develop an effective foreign policy that takes into account the current threat and violence religious communities are undergoing, we also must face our own legacy of colonialism and continued interventions. The Christian concepts of shame and guilt, seeking forgiveness and making reparation demand active involvement in the issues rather than hiding away, denying or forgetting. Far from embarrassment, we need to acknowledge past and current sins. If we seek punitive action upon other nations, we must also be ready to find ourselves indicted. How have the actions of UK foreign policy and intervention, and the Christian churches, made the lives of Christians in other parts of the world more difficult? But also, what actions have been helpful?

Reconciliation

There are stages to reconciliation. The first is to listen, to enable stories to be told in a safe space. Sometimes this needs to happen before bringing the involved parties together. But at some point, the parties involved need to be able to hear from one another. This should in no way imply equality of claim – that decision is more properly for a court of law. And it may be that punitive action has already taken place. What we are talking about here is what happens afterward, when prison sentences have been served, reparations made – how do people now live alongside one another? If one party refuses to participate, it is still important to listen to the stories of those who are willing.

The second stage is to acknowledge the pain. This doesn't mean agreement, nor apportioning blame on any party. It means acknowledging that individuals and groups on all sides have experienced an amount of pain, a pain that needs to be faced and addressed, however uncomfortable that may be. The third comes when one or more of the parties is able to acknowledge their part in the pain of the other. And finally, in the fourth stage, forgiveness may or may not happen. But some means of moving forward, or of living together needs to be agreed. It must be emphasised this is not something that is achieved at any given time. It is a continuous process.[36]

More often than not, group persecution comes as a result of both a build up of fear, and of political manipulation of that fear. This is part of a pattern identified by the UN Office for Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect in their document, Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, and followed by a Global Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that

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[35] https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/281945/a-traumatic-legacy accessed 3 August 2019
[36] These stages have been taken from *The Book of Forgiving*, by Desmond & Mpho Tutu, Harper Collins, 2014

could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.[37] Common factors that have led to genocide and atrocities such at the Holocaust, and the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia, were the scapegoating of groups, political and media commentary that lay the blame of society's ills upon a certain group. One of the ways of breaking that cycle of dehumanisation is to bring people together, to view one another as a fellow human being.

Jo Berry's father was killed in the Brighton bomb by the IRA. The person responsible was Patrick McGee.[38] She tells of the need she felt to understand why he got involved, and to be able to see him as a human being. In that process she gained an insight into the human story behind the action. Jo writes: *'Now I don't talk about forgiveness. To say "I forgive you" is almost condescending – it locks you into an 'us and them' scenario keeping me right and you wrong. That attitude won't change anything. But I can experience empathy, and in that moment there is no judgement. Sometimes when I've met with Patrick, I've had such a clear understanding of his life that there's nothing to forgive. I wanted to meet Patrick to put a face to the enemy, and see him as a real human being.'*

If we are truly coming from a Christian perspective, we are compelled to understand the reasons behind the actions. This is vital work for both the survivors of atrocities as well as the perpetrators. The report's recommendations speak of punitive actions in the way of sanctions, but little in the way of understanding the context of any given set of atrocities. What is the back story? The recent BBC portrayal, *Left Behind*,[39] examines some of the background behind the growth in far right violence. Much of it is rooted in the scapegoating of other vulnerable groups for circumstances beyond the control of each of them, set in motion by government policy or social change.

When proposing that aspects of foreign policy engage with religious issues, there also needs to be a readiness to engage with complex theological, spiritual, and historical conflict and injustices. What vulnerable groups are our Home Office or foreign policy unwittingly scapegoating or disparaging? Hate crime has risen sharply, particularly following any act of terror, whether within the UK or abroad – but spikes in hate crime have also occurred following remarks from politicians or public figures which ridicule any particular group. The current hostile environment and immigration policy affects issues such as criminalising rescue at sea, funding for detention centres in North Africa, funding European countries to police our own border security such as in Calais and Dunkirk. A more humanitarian approach is not about the UK being a push over, but rather about behaving in a collaborative rather than hostile manner. Providing the tools for partnership and reconciliation facilitates a more effective and fruitful method of diplomacy, one that fosters improved relations, and with that better trade and collaboration on issues such as security, development, and humanitarian aid.

None of this negates the very real suffering vulnerable groups are undergoing. Rather these processes enable effective solutions to be found.

At a recent launch of CREID (Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development) the facilitator and coordinator of *Carefronting Nigeria*, Peterx Maji, shared his experiences of working with former members of Boko Haram as well as survivors of their acts of brutality and sexual violence. He spoke movingly of working with some of the Chibok girls and their families, to find healing from the extreme trauma they had been subjected to. He concluded with this statement: *'The only way to break the*

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[37] https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/ accessed 2 August 2019
[38] https://www.theforgivenessproject.com/jo-berry-patrick-magee accessed 3 August 2019
[39] https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07f4j35 accessed 3 August 2019

cycle of revenge is with love and forgiveness. It is not easy, but it is easier than to keep on fighting a war. It is a process, one that never ends. You have to keep working at it.'[40]

A 2017 report from International Alert, Redressing the Balance, cites a staggering statistic, gleaned from The Global Peace Index[41], which states that for the year 2016, $10 Billion (appx £8B) was spent globally on peacebuilding, $142.6 Billion (appx £115B) on development aid. That sounds good. However, $1.72 Trillion (appx £1.4Trillion) was spent on military, and $1.04 Trillion (appx £8B) in economic losses from conflict. We spend much, much more on war than we do on peace. And yet the human cost in loss of life, environmental impact and cultural heritage is immeasurable. War is a costly business.

Recommendations

The aspiration to make Freedom of Religion and Belief central to the structure, policies and international operations of the FCO is commendable, and as stated held in balance alongside other rights as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The possibility of developing a Diplomatic Code is also to be commended.

It would be too extensive to attempt comment on each of the recommendations in the report, other than to recommend viewing them through the lens of the points that have already been made. What we would add in the way of recommendation is a programme of literacy, of reconciliation, and of collaboration. Each of these is held in the programme, *Encounters*, outlined in the accompanying appendix.

But one question does bear asking, and that is regarding sanctions and the practicality of imposing them uniformly. There would remain a temptation to offer up more vulnerable nations as sacrificial lambs to those nations which pose financial risk to trade if sanctions were to be imposed. How realistic a consistent policy would be in this regard remains doubtful.

Encounters

The *Encounters* programme recognises the complexities that need to be understood by both religious leaders and organisations working in development/humanitarian contexts. *Encounters* would seek to enable better communication between the work the FCO is already doing abroad with religious communities, and how those actions are perceived by their partner religious communities within the UK. As mentioned previously, USPG, alongside partner organisations involved with *Encounters*, have developed a pilot programme of exchange with religious leaders in the developing world. The focus of these programmes has provided opportunity to listen and learn from partners in those areas. But it is recognised that there is a need for greater literacy among communities of faith in the language of development and human rights, just as there is a need for development organisations and government to gain greater religious literacy.

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[40] The launch took place on 11 June 2019 at the QEII Centre in London. The Chibok girls are both Christian and Muslim girls kidnapped from their school in Chibok, Nigeria on the 14th of April 2014. 276 girls were kidnapped for the purpose of becoming brides and bearing children for Boko Haram. Kidnappings of young girls continue to this day.

[41] Source of this set of statistics is the Global Peace Index 2017, Institute for Economics and Peace; OECD Development Assistance Committee 2016 data; from the publication by International Alert, *Redressing the Balance*, published September 2017; pg.20

What we are proposing is to scrutinise the intersection of wider human rights with Freedom of Religion or Belief through a deeper understanding of the history of human rights, the UDHR, development, legislation, and FoRB for religious leaders and communities. Literacy is lacking in both the area of religion as well as that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and how to engage with and understand governmental and intergovernmental institutions.

Encounters also seeks to work with partners from abroad, as modelled by USPG, and engage with a process of reconciliation with the colonial past and its legacy abroad and at home. USPG, a Christian mission organisation, at one point held plantations in Barbados. And the Bishop of Exeter at that time personally own slaves. Church bells were pealed when Wilberforce's anti-slave trade bills were defeated in Parliament, as proceeds from the slave trade went into parish and church coffers.[42] Sir Lionel Lyde, commissioned a second church to be built in the parish of Ayot St Lawrence in 1778, using the proceeds from the slave trade he was heavily involved in. One account of ship logs places a ship belonging to Lyde sailing along the coast of Angola searching out the 'blackest and most beautiful' slaves, mostly women and girls between the ages of 10-16 to be shipped to plantations in the West Indies.[43] The legacy of those times continues to hang heavily on much of the world, especially the Commonwealth. And it is that history that colours much of our current landscape, particularly around racism, as exemplified by difficulties facing the Windrush generation and their children.

This is only one small example of the complexity of Britain's place in the history of global conflicts and tensions. Through the *Encounters* process, a group of global advisors will develop – whether intentionally or informally – which will enable a multi-faceted and sophisticated level of engagement. If well-resourced, this group would have the potential to be a valuable asset in discerning global trends, predicting tensions, and strengthening ties that facilitate development programmes - as well as fostering better foreign relations. The EU Commission is already making inroads in this area. On behalf of the EEAS (European External Action Service, the Lokahi Foundation gathered faith leaders and activists for the purposes of a Global Exchange.[44] An extension of this programme is to be announced and launched on the 6th of September this year. The involvement of facilitating and resourcing religious activists from across the globe for this programme has been considerable.

What makes *Encounters* different from other programmes is that it starts with experienced practitioners already working in the field and brings them together to share expertise, learn from and support one another. This is a rigorous programme with the potential to go much deeper into the issues being faced. It is more than a mere introduction to religions, but about deeper encounter with religious belief as a lived experienced, and how practice, belief, and expression affect daily lives, with one another, with their nation, and with the world. But it also delivers a tool kit for negotiating the intersection between those beliefs and practices, and the exigency of other human rights. It is our contention that travelling into contexts, to listen to people on the ground, provides an essential and dynamic means of effective learning and engagement, rather than sitting in a classroom in London.

Conclusion: Continuing the Conversation, and Theological Exploration

This response has in no way intended to lessen the impact violence and threat of violence have had upon Christians living in various parts of the world, particularly where they live as a minority. Rather the intent is to place each of these within their own unique context in order that solution may be

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[42] *The Church: Enslaver or Liberator?* Richard Reddie, Last updated 2011-02-17
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/church_and_slavery_article_01.shtml accessed 4 August 2019
[43] Parish historical research notes from the rector, the Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills
[44] https://www.lokahi.org.uk/ accessed 1 August 2019

found. We would advocate that diplomacy, dialogue, and reconciliation be used as tools before, or at least alongside, that of any punitive action. For this to happen, there needs must be greater literacy of religion and belief among state and civil actors, and greater literacy of wider human rights among religious leaders. From the UK perspective, confronting our historical and current culpability in exploitation, as a nation and as religious institutions, is a vital first step in being able to advocate for Freedom of Religion or Belief and other human rights across the globe.

What is the understanding, or lack thereof, within communities of religion or belief of the intersection between wider human rights as spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and those of Freedom of Religion or Belief? How is balance of human rights achieved or discerned? How are these rights worked out through legislation and case law? Within humanitarian aid organisations in provision of aid, reparation of infrastructure, or security support? What are the meeting points between wider human rights and those of FoRB, and what are the areas of tension or conflict? The red line will be different for each religious group, intra-faith as much as interfaith, according to their theology, practice, or culture. This is why a call for theological exploration of human rights, as outlined in the UDHR and other documents, is yet another vital step in this process, alongside that of religious literacy.

This is the most effective process for ending the suffering of Christians, and people of all beliefs, who are living as minorities, or majorities, and for them to live in peace with dignity and respect. We would welcome further discussion with the Bishop of Truro, the team who worked on the report, and with the FCO in taking *Encounters*, and other programmes, forward.

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