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From the Secretary of State

15 March 2010

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The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

De Tessa,

Thank you for your letter of 24 February on behalf of your constituents about EDM 877 concerning the persecution of Christians and the denial of religious liberty.

The Government shares your constituents' concern about those who are denied the right to freedom of religion or belief. We condemn all instances of violence and discrimination against individuals and groups because of their faith or belief, wherever they occur or whatever the religion of the individual or group concerned.

We strongly support the right to freedom of religion or belief as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the full implementation of the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

We are aware of the reports of the persecution of Christians in some countries. The FCO's overseas missions have a responsibility to monitor and raise human rights in their host countries and routinely raise our concerns with them, including freedom of religion or belief when appropriate. Our Embassies take action on individual cases where persecution or discrimination has occurred and lobby for changes in discriminatory practices and laws.

We continue to raise freedom of religion or belief in bilateral and EU human rights dialogues and we also work in the UN and with other international organisations to uphold universal standards. I hope this reassures you about the measures the UK takes, and will continue to take, to defend the rights of all people to hold or practice their religion or belief freely.

David
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DAVID MILIBAND