

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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UNITED KINGDOM/ WORLD: APPG launches commentary on the current state of FoRB

APPG (01.03.2021) – <https://bit.ly/3qc06TC> – The All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief has today published its latest **Commentary on the Current State of International Freedom of Religion or Belief** (FoRB). This coincides with the current meeting of the UN Human Rights Council – the Commentary is partly intended to inform UK policy on FoRB as articulated at the HRC.

There is a particular emphasis on the impact that the global pandemic has had on FoRB. The Foreword, written by three eminent authorities on FoRB, states *“The Commentary recalls the UN Secretary General’s observation that there has been a*

'tsunami of hate and xenophobia'. Religion and belief communities have been blamed for the virus; made scapegoat for the outbreaks; castigated as irresponsible 'super-spreaders'; accused of being resistant to implement public health measures, of peddling 'phoney' remedies, of opposing vaccinations – etc, etc. Whilst freedom of conscience must of course be respected, many of these attacks, which have made some religion or belief groups the target of conspiracy theories and of hate speech have amounted to little more than self-serving attempts to deflect attention from the failure of the authorities in relation to these matters.'

There is also a focus on the issue of gender and FoRB – *"This year in particular, in which the UN Special Rapporteur has placed a special focus on the impact of gender on the enjoyment of the freedom of religion or belief, it is shocking to note the extent to which issues concerning gender discriminations have once again risen to the fore. The longstanding impacts of gender-based discrimination continue to be damningly negative, exacerbating the dehumanisation, inequalities and violations which were already being suffered."*

In July 2020, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) published the 2019 Human Rights and Democracy Report. The report *"provided an assessment of the global human rights situation, and set out the UK Government's thematic, consular, and programme work to advance human rights throughout the world. It focused on 30 countries where we are particularly concerned about human rights issues, and where we consider that the UK can make a real difference."*

This APPG commentary is primarily intended to offer the staff at the newly-reorganised Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) the reliable, detailed, evidence-based monitoring and analysis of FoRB violations that is essential for formulating, implementing and evaluating realistic policies and actions to address FoRB and interlinked human

rights violations. The Commentary includes 24 profiles of countries with significant FoRB violations.

The Commentary offers recommendations for action at the FCDO – including the proposals *“That the FCDO continues to affirm FoRB as a priority concern within its human rights agenda, and ensures that it is actively recognised as a key dimension of COVID-19 pandemic responses, and maintains its focus on gender and sexual violence in conflict; that at a time of reorganisation, and serious budget cuts, the FCDO takes every care to maximise the potential opportunities of its reorganisation by mainstreaming FoRB considerations into its new processes at every level.”*

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