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### **Persecution of Christians Worldwide:**

The persecution of Christians, or any other religious group, is entirely unacceptable. Everyone should be able to practice and profess their religious faith free from persecution.

According to Open Doors' 2024 World Watch list, some 4,998 Christians were reported to have been killed for faith related reasons in 2023. Shockingly, 90% of those killed were in Nigeria alone. Open Doors has also reported that 15,000 churches or public Christian properties were attacked in 2023, compared to approximately 2,100 in 2022.

These statistics are deeply concerning and the numbers of Christians facing persecution are staggering. I know the persecution of religious minorities due to their beliefs is happening in many parts of the world. Freedom of religion or belief is a core tenet of fundamental human rights and will always be at the heart of my outlook on the world.

I think the protection of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, should be at the centre of UK foreign policy. That means using the full range of the financial and political resources that we have to intervene in religious persecution of all kinds. It also means using all diplomatic tools available, including bilateral relations and multilateral forums such as the UN, to ensure that international law is adhered to where there are humanitarian issues and breaches of human rights.

There is a huge desire for the UK Government to play a role in promoting freedom of belief both domestically and globally through our diplomatic networks and other engagements, including sometimes difficult conversations with allies and friends. We have a crucial role in that as a leading member of the United Nations Security Council and many other bodies, including the Human Rights Council.

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