

31<sup>st</sup> May 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the crimes of Daesh (so-called Islamic State) in the Middle East.

The atrocities committed by Daesh against Christians and other minorities, as well as the majority Muslim population in Iraq and Syria, must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. Britain has been at the forefront of efforts to rally wider international support against Daesh. Work with international partners must continue, both to assist the victims and bring those responsible to justice.

Although Ministers believe genocide has taken place, the Government is clear that genocide is a matter of legal rather than political opinion and any determination on whether genocide has occurred is a matter for the international judicial system. The UK seeks an end to all violations of International Humanitarian Law and to prevent their further escalation, irrespective of the definition of specific international crimes. Britain is supporting the gathering and preservation of evidence that could be used in future to hold Daesh to account. British and international justice have a long reach and a long memory, and will track down those who commit these atrocities and hold them to account, no matter how long it takes.

Ultimately, the best way of preventing future atrocities against Christians is to defeat Daesh and its violent ideology. That is why the UK is playing a leading role in a Global Coalition of 66 countries to respond to Daesh's inhumanity. The Coalition is attacking Daesh militarily, squeezing its finances, disrupting the flow of fighters, challenging its poisonous ideology and working to stabilise liberated areas.

Britain is using its aid budget to alleviate the immediate humanitarian suffering and has now pledged a total of over £2.3 billion, the UK's largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis. The funding is providing support, such as food, medical care and relief items, to over a million people including Christians affected by the fighting in Syria and refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**

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