



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office



Department  
for International  
Development

14 August 2017

[Redacted]

Mr J A Sekulow and Mr R W Ash  
European Centre for Law and Justice

[Redacted]

*Dear Mr Sekulow and Mr Ash,*

Thank you for your letter of 24 July to the Prime Minister, requesting that the atrocities committed by Daesh against Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq and Syria be considered genocide, and that those responsible are held to account. I am replying as the Minister responsible for the Middle East.

I share your anger at the human suffering of Christians, Yazidis and other minorities in Iraq, Syria and the wider Middle East, many of whose communities have been devastated at the hands of Daesh. I want to see Christians and other minorities continuing to live, worship and prosper in the Middle East. We are doing all we can to make this happen - providing humanitarian assistance to all those who need it, including minority communities and consistently underlining with the region's political leaders the importance of upholding freedom of religion and belief.

It is the policy of the British Government that any judgment on whether genocide has occurred is a matter for judicial decision, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. However, it is clear there is a growing body of evidence that terrible crimes have been committed by Daesh, as described in the distressing accounts conveyed in your letter. Our approach remains to seek an end to all abuses and violations, irrespective of whether they fit the definition of specific international crimes.

The Government is committed to working with our international partners to ensure that Daesh is held to account. At the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016, the Foreign Secretary, alongside the Foreign Ministers from Belgium and Iraq, launched a global campaign to bring Daesh to justice. The campaign has three mutually reinforcing objectives:

1. To support national and international efforts to ensure Daesh and its followers are brought to justice;
2. To empower survivors of Daesh crimes; and

3. To ensure that where Daesh tries to stoke division, hatred and violence, our pursuit of justice unites our communities – local, national and international.

We believe it is essential that governments, as well as Non Government Organisations and international organisations, join together in this campaign. We are working with our international partners, in particular the Government of Iraq, to bring a proposal at the UN to put the campaign into action. We do not intend to impose anything on Iraq; any International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation would need to be invited by the Government of Iraq.

Turning to Syria, we continue, publicly and privately, to make the case for the situation to be referred to the ICC. Where efforts have been made previously to do so, for example in 2014, it was vetoed by Russia and China.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Alistair Burt*

**THE RT HON ALISTAIR BURT MP**  
**Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa**