

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon looks ahead to the UK-hosted conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief

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Statement

I'm sincerely looking forward to welcoming our partners and friends from around the world to London in early July for the United Kingdom-hosted Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

This will be the first international ministerial conference on this theme since 2020 and the first to take place in person since 2019.

Together with our international partners we share a collective commitment to freedom of religion or belief for everyone, everywhere.

This is an issue that we all should care about. Although the right to freedom of religion or belief is enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it is regrettable, indeed tragic, that too many people around the world continue to live in fear of persecution on the basis of what they choose to believe or not to believe, or indeed how they choose to practice those beliefs.

Being denied the fundamental human right of freedom of religion or belief can be devastating for individuals and communities.

At the conference we'll therefore hear from survivors directly on the impact that persecution has had upon them, on their lives, on their communities.

As individuals suffer from being denied this human right, societies, countries where survivors live suffer too. They become smaller, diminished culturally and spiritually by this lack of freedom. Therefore, let us strengthen all of our communities by driving forward the collective importance of not just promoting this important issue, but strengthening freedom of religion or belief for all.

This conference in London will bring together ministers, but also importantly other representatives from government, from faith and belief group leaders, and indeed importantly from civil society as well.

Alongside the official ministerial conference, an associated conference fringe will see a series of events organized directly by civil society.

These will be taking place around the United Kingdom and provide further

opportunities for all to join this important debate and discussion and learn from each other about this important issue.

I therefore hope that you will take this opportunity to really get involved and share our collective commitment to promoting and protecting, and indeed strengthening freedom of religion or belief for everyone across the world.