

UK Appoints New PM Envoy for Freedom of Religion & Belief

The Prime Minister has today appointed Rehman Chishti MP as his new Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. In his new position, Rehman Chishti will bring together efforts across the UK Government, with faith actors and civil society to promote the UK's firm stance on religious tolerance abroad. The Special Envoy will continue to lead the implementation of the recommendations from the recent independent review into FCO support for persecuted Christians led by the Bishop of Truro. He will also advocate for the rights of all individuals here in the UK and around the world who are being discriminated against and persecuted for their faith or belief.

Rehman Chishti's appointment means that the Government will now have a dedicated person on the issue of religious freedom. The Envoy role was previously held by FCO Minister Lord (Tariq) Ahmad who will continue to champion human rights in his Ministerial capacity. This appointment will therefore increase the number of people working on the issue of religious freedom across government. Rehman has a strong track record for engaging and interacting with individuals, faith leaders and organisations here in the UK and abroad, and in promoting religious freedom and championing the cause of those being persecuted for their faith. Rehman was previously the Vice Chairman of the Conservative party covering faith and communities.

The Prime Minister has proclaimed the UK a champion of religious and other freedoms, and committed the UK to working with partners and friends around the world to ensure that everyone, everywhere is able to enjoy these freedoms.

The Prime Minister said:

People across the world deserve the chance to practise their beliefs freely. I'm delighted to appoint Rehman as my new Special Envoy and look forward to him building on the important work we have already done on this issue. The UK will always be a passionate advocate for greater tolerance, respect and understanding internationally.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said:

A staggering 83% of the world's population live in nations where religious freedom is threatened or banned. It is an area where the UK can and must make a difference. I'm delighted to be working with Rehman to enhance the UK's support for those suffering persecution based on their faith, and standing up for this essential freedom.

Rehman Chishti MP said:

I am delighted to have been appointed as the PM's Special Envoy. I have championed freedom of religion and beliefs for much of my life. I shall use the UK Government's global network to take real action to support those persecuted for their faith or belief, and promote greater understanding and respect between faiths.

As someone whose family came to the UK when I was six years old, and my father had taken up a role as an Imam, my family and I have always been able to openly and freely practise our faith. I want to ensure every citizen around the world is able to enjoy this basic right. Freedom of Religion, practice and belief is one of the foundations of a free society.

I pay tribute to Lord Ahmad for all his work on this area over recent years

Further information