



Foreign &
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Minister of State

Lord Alton
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Dear David

Thank you for your two emails of 23 June about vulnerable religious minorities in Pakistan and the Middle East.

I understand the depth of feeling about the suffering of minority communities. It is our priority to provide assistance to all persecuted groups. We are working across the world to build consensus around the importance of freedom of religion or belief, as well as its promotion and protection.

You asked about the Government's development assistance to Pakistan, in light of the concerns raised by the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS). The UK Government continues to engage the Government of Pakistan on the need to uphold the rights of all of its citizens, regardless of faith. Supporting Pakistan to meet its international human rights obligations is part of the UK's ongoing dialogue with the Government of Pakistan. We continue to raise the issues of equality, non-discrimination and tolerance for all religious minorities. UK Aid programmes support the rights of all groups to follow their own religious faith and to live safe and secure lives. Our programmes in Pakistan wherever possible promote diversity and tolerance.

DFID has worked with faith groups for more than 30 years. Presently we support more than 25 UK faith groups such as Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and Cafod. However, UK funded aid is distributed on the basis of need, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress irrespective of religion, race or ethnicity. Deviating from this principle in order to help one group or another, irrespective of whether we share their beliefs, risks damaging our ability to effectively relieve suffering and promote peace around the world.

In response to allegations that aid does not reach the most vulnerable communities, I assure you that all our humanitarian partners are committed to ensuring aid reaches those most in need, including those from religious minorities. We require all organisations applying for DFID funding to demonstrate their capacity to deliver and to pass a due diligence assessment.