



## Syrian Christians

Sir, Richard Spencer's report ("Syria's Christians driven to the edge", World, Oct 23) highlights how Christians living alongside Syria's Khabur River suffered under Islamic State.

However, the claim that fewer Christians than Muslims have been killed is unsubstantiated. It is widely accepted that Christians and other religious minorities have been specifically targeted by jihadists.

The only western government to have resettled significant numbers of Middle Eastern Christians is Australia, under a scheme prioritising victims of persecution set up by Tony Abbott. However, this has now ended.

The most up-to-date Home Office data show that the UK resettled 4,175 Syrian refugees in the year up to last October. Only 64 of these were Christians. Of the 383 Syrian refugees resettled in New Zealand last year, only six were Christians.

In the US this was even worse, with only 125 of the 15,479 Syrian refugees admitted last year being Christians. Much of the blame for this lies with the UN High Commission for Refugees, to whom the UK and New Zealand governments outsource their selection of refugees.

It should not be assumed that the threat to Christians has ended with the fall of Raqqa. Western governments need to take urgent action to address this issue.

PROFESSOR LORD ALTON OF LIVERPOOL, BARONESS NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE, chairman AMAR ICF, GENERAL LORD DANNATT, former chief of the general staff, LORD CAREY OF CLIFTON, former archbishop of Canterbury, LORD SHINKWIN, LORD FARMER, DR MARTIN PARSONS, head of research, Barnabas Fund International Headquarters, DR RUSSELL BLACKER, convener, Caucus for the Persecuted Church