



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

4 March 2021

*Yours Sincerely,*

I want to thank you, the Bishop of Truro and your co-signatories for your letter of 27 January, and apologise for the delay in responding. As a strong defender of the rules-based international order, the UK is fully committed to upholding the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

On the particular issue of the situation in Xinjiang, I want to emphasise that what is happening there is utterly abhorrent, and I have said that myself publicly. The UK has taken a leading international role in holding China to account for the gross human rights violations being committed in Xinjiang, and the Foreign Secretary has made clear his views, including most recently at the Human Rights Council. In January, the Foreign Secretary announced a package of measures to help ensure that British organisations are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in that region. More recently he has called for urgent and unfettered access for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, or another independent fact-finding mission, to Xinjiang.

The Government understands the strength of feeling on this issue. We believe it remains entirely legitimate for Parliament to take a position on proposed trade agreements where there are credible reports of genocide, or indeed human rights violations on a lower level or scale, in the territory of a prospective Free Trade Agreement counter-party. It is important that Parliament is able to hold the Government to account for its trade policy.

This is what is envisaged by the amendment tabled by the Chairman of the Justice Select Committee and passed by the House of Commons on 9 February. The Neill Amendment guarantees a clear role for Parliamentarians on the issue of genocide in the context of trade agreements, while placing a specific duty on Government to act where the responsible Committee has published its concerns. This approach will allow Parliament to act quickly and decisively, and it underscores the Government's commitment to working closely with Parliament on this important issue.

Finally, I would like to thank the Bishop of Truro for the 2019 Review he did for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in relation to support for persecuted Christians, and all signatories of your letter for your unceasing commitment to atrocity prevention.

*Mark Williams*

*Gordon*

*Bob*

His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos OBE