



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



**Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon
Minister of State (Middle East,
North Africa, South Asia,
Commonwealth and the UN)**

**Prime Minister's Special
Representative on Preventing
Sexual Violence in Conflict**

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Tel: 020 7008 5000

**Email:
fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk**

www.gov.uk/fcdo

Our ref: MC2023/14638

23 August 2023

Iain Stewart MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Iain,

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 July, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Iran. I am replying as the Minister of State for the Middle East, responsible for Human Rights.

The tragic death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022 sparked a women-led grassroots movement in Iran, which proved one of the most significant moments in recent decades. For over five months, ordinary Iranians risked their lives to protest against the Iranian regime. As well as a clear demonstration that the Iranian people have had enough and demand a better future, each day served as a shocking reminder of the appalling violence and repression that has become commonplace in Iran.

The UK is also working with international partners to ensure Iran is held accountable on the world stage. We have raised the regime's violations of human rights across multilateral fora, including in the Security Council and UN General Assembly, where the UK co-sponsors the annual Iran human rights resolution. The UK worked closely with partners to ensure Iran was removed from the UN Commission on the Status of Women on 14 December. On 24 November, the UN Human Rights Council passed a Resolution at a Special Session on Iran, to establish a UN Fact Finding Mission into human rights violations during protests. This is an important, concrete step towards accountability for Iran's leadership. On 5 July, the UK initiated a joint statement against the death penalty in Iran, co-signed by 54 countries. The same day, I issued a statement reiterating calls our calls for a moratorium on executions.

The UK Government's position on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) remains

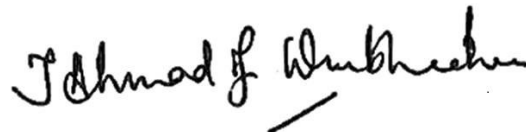
unchanged. As set out in the International Development Strategy, the Government is committed to providing women and girls with the freedom they need to succeed, unlocking their future potential, educating girls, supporting their empowerment, and protecting them against violence. I have spoken in support of our commitments on these issues, not only in Parliament but also internationally including at the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council.

Tackling gender inequality and standing up for the rights of women and girls around the world is a core part of this Government's mission. We reinforced our commitments in the Integrated Review and the 'Ending preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children by 2030' Approach Paper, which sets out our ambitious commitments and emphasises that good health is critical to the empowerment of women and girls.

With individual countries, whether Iran, Nigeria or elsewhere, we regularly raise specific issues with other governments, both in public and in private. For instance, I visited Iraq in February and engaged across multiple faiths including Christians, Yazidis and Islamic groups to champion their voices to promote freedom of religion or belief. I discussed freedom of religion or belief, and the need to promote respect for all religions, with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister in January.

We will continue to work with international partners towards a world where women, girls, the LGBT+ community, and all marginalised groups live with dignity, are free from stigma, violence and harmful social norms, have control over their bodies, and have the agency to access quality health services, free of discrimination, coercion and violence. Please be assured that I will continue to monitor and be engaged on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON

Minister of State

Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict