

C.I.D.A.C.

Commission of Inquiry into
Discrimination Against Christians



Frequently Asked Questions

General

Who has set up the Commission of Inquiry?

Voice for Justice UK.

What are the Commission of Inquiry's aims and objectives?

To hear, consider and investigate evidence from witnesses who, on account of their Christian faith, say they have faced discrimination, marginalization, injustice or stigma.

Where appropriate, to make recommendations as to what steps can be taken to remove or lessen such discrimination as may be identified.

At various points, to produce interim reports before publication of a final Report.

Who supports the Commission of Inquiry?

Major General (Retired) Tim Cross CBE, Professor Nigel Biggar CBE, Robin Aitken MBE, Guy Hordern MBE JP, Canon Dr Chris Sugden, Charles Colchester, Sarah Finch, Professor Roger Trigg, Patricia Morgan, Melanie Symonds, Gordon Pettie and Dr Gavin Ashenden.

For more information about our Patrons, visit [the Patrons page](#) of our website.

Why is there a need for a Commission of Inquiry?

In 2012, *Christians in Parliament*, an All-Party Parliamentary Group composed of MPs and Peers, published their report, [**Clearing the Ground Inquiry: Preliminary report into the freedom of Christians in the UK**](#). It was tasked with the question: “Are Christians marginalised in the UK?” The Inquiry’s key finding was: “Christians in the UK face problems in living out their faith and these problems have been mostly caused and exacerbated by social, cultural and legal changes over the past decade.”

There is a widespread perception that, since the 2012 Inquiry, conditions adversely affecting the ability of Christians to practice and manifest their faith in public have worsened.

The Commission of Inquiry is now tasked with identifying the nature, context and scale of discrimination faced by Christians.

Commissioners

Who are the Commissioners?

James Bogle, Simon Caldwell, Paul Diamond, Robert Harris, Will Jones, Gabriel Olearnik, Nina Power, Revd Lynda Rose, Dr Tony Rucinski, Ian Shelley and Peter D. Williams.

For more information about our Commissioners, visit [the Commissioners page](#) of our website.

Taking of Evidence

How will evidence be submitted?

The Inquiry may receive evidence orally and/or in writing.

Everyone who would like to give evidence will first be invited to give a brief written summary of what they would like to say.

What happens next?

The Commissioners will decide whether the brief, written summary is all they need, or whether they would like the witness to expand on it.

How will this expanded evidence be given?

The Commissioners may ask for a formal written statement and/or may ask the witness to give evidence in person at a hearing. The Commissioners may also ask for supporting documents.

What form will the hearing take?

The hearing may be public or private. The Commissioners will decide this by reference to all the surrounding circumstances, taking into account the expressed wishes of the witness and the need for protection of any individuals concerned.

Hearings

Can the general public be invited to the hearings?

Yes. A limited number of individuals from the general public are invited to attend hearings of the Inquiry.

Additionally, a limited number of VfJUK subscribers are also invited to attend. Invitations to subscribers are published in the regular VfJUK blog bulletins. If you wish to become a subscriber, [read here](#).

Who can come to hearings?

Attendance slots for the general public will be available on a “first come, first served” basis. To request an invitation to attend a hearing, e-mail the Commission Secretariat: edmund@cidac.org.uk.

Commissioners have discretion to exclude those who are, in the opinion of the Commissioners, disruptive or whose presence is not conducive to the proper functioning of the Inquiry.

Will hearings be recorded?

Where a hearing takes place in public, this will typically be videoed and shown online. In appropriate circumstances, however, the Commissioners may decide that certain aspects of the testimony, and/or the identity of the witness should be protected from public exposure.

Similar considerations apply if evidence is given in audio only form.

How will hearings be conducted?

The Inquiry will hear witness testimony by a number of means: live video, live audio only, in-camera (private) or by pre-written statements. The [Consent Form](#) provides more information about choosing between the various options. We advise that you also read the accompanying [Guide](#) to filling out this form.

Witnesses who give live video or live audio testimony will be interviewed before a Panel of Commissioners. There will also be a limited number of observers who will form the public gallery.

Where witnesses request that their identity be kept private, and the Inquiry agrees, the hearing will take place before the Inquiry Panel privately (in-camera). Witnesses who provide a pre-submitted witness statement must read the Inquiry's [Guidelines and Information](#).

Witnesses

I am not sure if my case qualifies to be heard, what should I do?

You are invited to contact the Commission Secretariat who may be e-mailed at edmund@cidac.org.uk to discuss your case further.

Does your Inquiry hear evidence from Christians of all denominations?

Yes, we are inter-denominational. The Inquiry will accept evidence from witnesses subscribing to the traditional tenets of Christian belief as set down in the Bible.

I am not a Christian believer, or I belong to a religion other than Christianity. Can I give evidence?

The Commissioners have discretion to hear evidence from people of other religions or none, who wish to testify about discrimination against or unjust treatment of Christians.

Can I leave out from my testimony certain names and other identifying information?

Yes. The Commissioners will need to hear all details of your story in order to decide what weight to give to your evidence. However, you can ask the Commissioners not to broadcast or publish names and/or sensitive information. For details about how we use your data, read our [Consent Form](#).

If I give evidence as a witness, could I be called before the Inquiry Panel to be interviewed further?

Yes. In some instances, after you have been called to give your testimony, the Inquiry may ask you to give further testimony in order for more information to be gathered.

Does the Inquiry offer legal advice?

No. Please note the Inquiry does not offer legal advice about your case or what the law might be in relation to your circumstances or those of others. If you have legal questions about your case, you should seek advice from a solicitor. We may, upon request, provide the name of a solicitor.

My case is currently being handled by my lawyer but I would still like to give my testimony to your Inquiry. Is this possible?

Yes, in principle but you should consult your lawyer first about whether you can give evidence without damaging your legal case. It may be that your testimony can be heard by the Inquiry, but your lawyer will advise you on the right timing. If your lawyer agrees that you can present your submission to the Inquiry, he or she may advise you to leave out certain names or other sensitive information from your evidence.

I would like to give witness evidence to your Inquiry but it does not relate specifically to “my case”. I am an expert (in one of the fields listed below) and believe I have good reason to act as a witness before the Inquiry.

Law

Education

Medicine

Church

Media

Government

Human resources and recruitment

Other

I want to give evidence to the Inquiry. What are my next steps?

If you have read through all the above questions, and are ready to proceed, you will be asked to provide basic details about yourself, and a brief, written summary of your case, and to consent to the use of your data. You will need to download the [Consent Form](#) and the accompanying [Guide](#).

Practice of the Christian religion in the UK and abroad

Practice of religion is protected under UK law, so why is there a need for this Inquiry?

Although freedom of religious belief and practice is protected by UK law, there are growing concerns as to how this works in practice.

What is the basic law on religious freedom in the UK?

First, Article 9 of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) recognises Freedom of *thought, conscience and religion*. This article is enshrined in the [Human Rights Act 1998](#). Article 9 states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

Second, “religion” is a protected characteristic under equality law. See the [Equality Act 2010](#). The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion but does not protect the expression and/or manifestation of religion.

Internationally, Article 18 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) contains provisions that essentially mirror what is within the European Convention and the Human Rights Act. The Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

Shouldn't the Inquiry be more worried about persecution against Christians abroad, rather than what happens in a western democracy like the UK?

A number of bodies are addressing issues relating to the persecution of Christians overseas. Discrimination can be an early warning sign of outright persecution. Hence, it is right for the Inquiry to consider whether there is currently discrimination of any kind against Christians in the UK.

Inquiry's Findings

When will the Inquiry's findings become public?

The Inquiry will operate for two years. The Inquiry will publish Interim Reports, with details of preliminary findings. There will be a final Report when the Inquiry concludes its work.

What is the Inquiry hoping to achieve?

The Inquiry's aim is to help strengthen mechanisms that work towards a fair and just society and a judicial system that works for everyone. Human rights, equality and fundamental freedoms are never to be taken for granted. To this end, the Inquiry, having heard the evidence, commits to undertake a thorough investigation of the issues raised. The Inquiry will publish its evidence and, where relevant, make appropriate recommendations. See our [Terms of Reference](#) for details of our remit.

Please note, if you would like to discuss in confidence any matters relating to confidentiality or the giving of your evidence, you may e-mail the Commission Secretariat: edmund@cidac.org.uk.

Privacy Policy on Data Protection

CIDAC advises that you read our [Privacy Policy on Data Protection](#).