



**Rehman Chishti MP**

*Member of Parliament for Gillingham and Rainham*

House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 7075

Email: rehman.chishti.mp@parliament.uk

14 September 2020

*Dear Prime Minister*

**Letter of Resignation as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief ahead of the upcoming vote on the Internal Market Bill**

Like you, I am committed to delivering Brexit, having campaigned for it and as reflected by my voting record, which matches yours, since the 2016 referendum. You will also recall from our conversations that I resigned from all party and government positions in November 2018 over the draft Withdrawal Bill due to my concerns over the backstop.

I am a firm supporter of yours, having campaigned for you in the leadership contest, and having worked with you on community engagement, religious freedom, and on the cross-party campaign I led for our government to use the terminology "Daesh". While you have my support as the leader of the Conservative Party, I cannot support the Internal Market Bill in its current form.

Having read your letter to colleagues, as well as wider statements on the matter, I will not be able to support this Bill on a matter of principle. I have real concerns with the UK unilaterally breaking its legal commitments under the Withdrawal Agreement. During my 10 years in Parliament and before that as a Barrister, I have always acted in a manner which respects the rule of law. I feel strongly about keeping the commitments we make; if we give our word, then we must honour it. Voting for this Bill as it currently stands would be contrary to the values, I hold dearest.

Given our different views on the Internal Market Bill, I regret that I must step down from my role as your Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). It has been a real honour and pleasure to serve our country by carrying out this top Foreign Policy priority over the last year. I have enjoyed immensely working with key stakeholders in the UK, fellow Parliamentarians, and International Partners, including the International Religious Freedom Alliance, a 31 member state organisation, which appointed me as their co-Vice Chair in August. Among other things, the Alliance has had real success in getting governments around the world to release prisoners of conscience during COVID-19.

While I cannot continue to serve as your Special Envoy, I hope to continue contributing to this important work as a Parliamentarian. You will have seen my update note sent to your office in July. Further to that report, I am pleased to say that 17 of the 22 Truro Report recommendations have been progressed or implemented. I have also advised the Government on hosting the International Ministerial Conference on FoRB, and was working to deliver a UN Security Council resolution (Recommendation 20). Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this role over the last year.

You will continue to have my personal support in delivering the ambitious agenda set out at the General Election. I saw how your agenda connected with citizens while campaigning with many colleagues in seats across the country. It was under your strong leadership that our party won that historic election in 2019.

I am only too sorry that our difference on this matter means that I cannot vote for the Bill in its current form, on a matter of principle, and thereby will not be able to continue to serve as your Special Envoy.

Yours sincerely,

Rehman Chishti MP