

Speaking in response to the publication of an excerpt from a Home Office “reasons for refusal” letter sent to a Christian convert who had applied for asylum The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler said:

“I am extremely concerned that a Government department could determine the future of another human being based on such a profound misunderstanding of the texts and practices of faith communities. To use extracts from the Book of Revelation to argue that Christianity is a violent religion is like arguing that a Government report on the impact of Climate Change is advocating drought and flooding.

“It is good that the Home Office has recognised that this decision is inconsistent with its policies and that its staff need better training. But the fact that these comments were made at all suggests that the problem goes deeper than a lack of religious literacy among individual civil servants and indicates that the management structures and ethos of the Home Office, when dealing with cases with a religious dimension, need serious overhaul. ”

“I look forward to hearing what changes in training and practice follow from this worrying example.

“The Church of England has regularly raised the issue of the religious literacy of staff at all levels within the Home Office. This fresh case shows just how radically the Home Office needs to change in its understanding of all religious beliefs.”

Notes for editors

- The Bishop of Durham leads for the Bishops in the House of Lords on matters relating to immigration, asylum and refugees.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/response-home-office-letter-regarding-iranian-asylum-seeker>