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In response to a Freedom of Information request from Barnabas Fund, the UK Home Office have just released figures on Syrian refugees resettled in the UK for the first quarter of this year (1 January–31 March 2018). Appalling as previous figures were, these are much worse.

The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) recommended 1,358 Syrian refugees for resettlement in the UK of which only 4 were Christians, representing a tiny fraction of just 0.29%. No Yazidis at all were recommended by the UN.

The Home Office agreed to resettle 1,112 of these (82%), all of whom were Muslims, and refused all recommendations of Christians.

As Barnabas Fund recently reported (<https://www.barnabasfund.org/en/news/only-25-out-of-7000-syrian-refugees-recommended-for-resettlement-in-uk-were-christian-and-just>), of the 7,060 Syrian refugees the UNHCR recommended to the UK in 2017 only 25 were Christians (0.35%). However, the Home Office only accepted 11 of these – meaning that Christians made up only 0.23% of Syrian refugees resettled in the UK last year.

For the last 18 months, Barnabas Fund (<https://www.barnabasfund.org/en/news/UK-government-discriminates-against-Christian-refugees-from-Syria>) has had to go to considerable lengths to obtain these figures in the face of what appeared to be a sustained attempt by Home Office officials to avoid their release. After prolonged delays, we finally had to take the extreme step of obtaining an order from the Information Commissioner's Office threatening the Home Office with contempt of court proceedings in the High Court. Even subsequent to this action, the figures were only released just before the deadline, when we asked the immigration minister personally order their disclosure.



Barnabas Fund has helped Syrian Christian families who are unable to return home to resettle in Australia and other countries

Now that Home Office officials are finally complying with the Freedom of Information Act, by releasing the information as they are legally required to do, it is high time for the government to take action. The UK has a legal obligation to ensure it does not turn a blind eye to either direct or indirect discrimination by the UN.

It is widely accepted that Christians, who constituted around 10% of Syria's pre-war population, were specifically targeted by jihadi rebels and continue to be at risk. Yet out of more than 1,000 Syrian refugees resettled in the UK this year there was not a single Christian. As last year's statistics more than amply demonstrate, this is not a statistical blip. It shows a pattern of underrepresentation and significant *prima facie* evidence of discrimination that the government has a legal duty to take concrete steps to address.

Syria