

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION



WHAT DOES THE RIGHT SAY?

“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.

Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”



WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

- The 1100 Charter of Liberties protected Church ministers.
- In 1647 the Levellers demanded freedom of conscience after the English Civil War.
- After the horrors of the holocaust, ‘freedom of thought, conscience and religion’ was enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PLAIN ENGLISH?

- We have the right to hold certain beliefs.
- We have a right to show commitment to those beliefs through worship and teaching, in private and in public.
- Article 9 is a “qualified right”, which means it can be interfered with by the state in the interests of, for example, public safety.



THREE KEY THINGS THAT IT DOES FOR US

Landmark court cases:

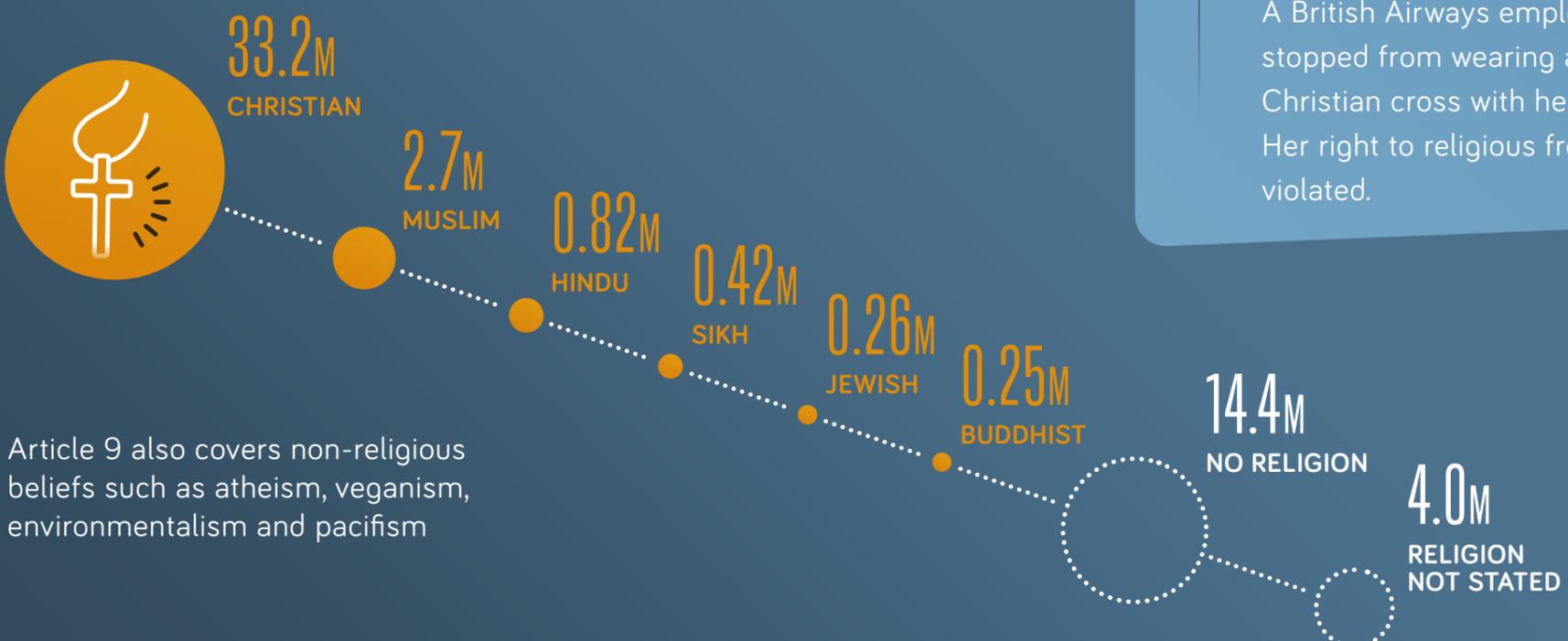
- 2010** **People can claim asylum to protect them from religious and political persecution** – MT, UK
A man practising the Ahmadi religion couldn’t be sent back to Pakistan as he would face persecution for his beliefs.
- 2011** **We can refuse to serve in the military because of our beliefs** – Bayatyan, Europe
A Jehovah's witness was convicted for refusing to serve in the army. This breached his right to conscientious objection.
- 2012** **Believers have the right to worship in private and in public** – Eweida, Europe
A British Airways employee was stopped from wearing a visible Christian cross with her uniform. Her right to religious freedom was violated.



WHY IS IT NEEDED NOW?

TWO THIRDS OF PEOPLE IDENTIFY WITH A RELIGION

People listing a religion in the 2011 Census, England and Wales



Article 9 also covers non-religious beliefs such as atheism, veganism, environmentalism and pacifism