

Panel says judges have been too hard on U.K. Christians

by [Al Webb](#)

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LONDON (RNS) A government-funded watchdog panel said British judges have erred in supporting employers who try to fire Christian workers for wearing crosses or refusing to offer sex counseling to gay couples.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said Monday (July 11) that employers should ease up, saying current interpretations of the law are "insufficient to protect freedom of religion or belief."

The commission's ruling came barely a day after the Church of England's General Synod called on the British government to give Christians the legal protection to defend themselves against prosecution for faith-based decisions.

In a string of legal cases in recent years, Christians have faced labor and legal disciplinary action for wearing religious symbols such as crucifixes on the job or refusing services to gay couples because of religious beliefs.

Philip Giddings, chairman of the Church of England's public affairs council, told the Synod that government regulations should "take proper cognizance of the points we are making."

"We are not making this as a unique claim for Anglicans," Giddings said. "It applies to everyone."

Only seven months ago, the human rights commission had backed a gay couple in their suit against a hotel's Christian owners who had refused to allow them to share a single room.

In other recent cases, an airline check-in clerk was denied the right to wear a crucifix on her uniform, and a hospital nurse was barred

from a ward for insisting that she be allowed to wear her cross.