



'Being allowed to wear a crucifix at work is a vital freedom': Cameron backs law giving right to display religious symbols

- **Prime Minister said he supported Nadia Eweida who was barred from wearing a cross by British Airways**

David Cameron has promised to change the law if necessary to allow Christians to wear crosses at work. The Prime Minister told MPs yesterday that the Government would back the right to display discreetly a symbol of faith in the workplace, despite legal rulings to the contrary. He said he supported Nadia Eweida, who is fighting a case at the European Court of Human Rights after being barred from wearing a cross by British Airways.



Support: The Prime Minister said that he backed Nadia Eweida who was barred from wearing a cross by British Airways

Miss Eweida, 61, a Pentecostal Christian of Twickenham, south-west London, was sent home after refusing to remove or hide a necklace with a cross.

An employment tribunal ruled she had not suffered religious discrimination, but the airline changed its uniform policy after the case to allow all religious symbols, including crosses. Miss Eweida has pursued the case, however, to try to establish in law the rights of other religious people.

She and Shirley Chaplin, a nurse who was barred from working on wards by Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Trust after refusing to hide the cross she wore on a necklace, claim they were discriminated against by their employers.

The Government is opposing their appeal.

In the Commons yesterday, former shadow home secretary David Davis described Miss Eweida's treatment as a 'disgraceful piece of political correctness'.



The Prime Minister told MPs he fully supported the right of people to wear religious symbols at work

He said he was surprised Government lawyers were resisting her appeal, telling Mr Cameron he could not believe it would support religious suppression in the workplace. The Prime Minister told MPs he fully supported the right to wear religious symbols at work.

He said: 'I think it is an absolutely vital freedom.'

Mr Cameron insisted the Government would change the law if necessary to make sure employees can wear religious symbols at work.

'What we will do is that if it turns out that the law has the intention of banning the display of religious symbols in the workplace, as has come out in this case, then we will change the law and make clear that people can wear religious symbols at work,' he said.

The women's cases will be held in Strasbourg in early September.

Miss Eweida said: 'Of course, it is excellent news that the Prime Minister says he will change the law, but why doesn't he get on with it?'

'Up till now the Home Office has said it would be too cumbersome for employers to have to look after all their employees' religious requirements.

'If Mr Cameron means what he says about overruling them, then he should not wait for the European court to decide but change the law now.'

Liberal Democrat Business Secretary Vince Cable said: 'As her local MP, I've supported Nadia's right to wear a cross throughout her campaign.

'I wrote to the Home Secretary 18 months ago urging her change the law.

'So I am delighted by the Prime Minister's announcement that the law will be changed to allow people of all religious faiths to be able to wear symbols of their religion.'