



JUSTICE

59 Carter Lane
London
EC4V 5AQ
DX 323 Chancery Lane
(020) 7329 5100
(020) 7329 5055
admin@justice.org.uk
www.justice.org.uk

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Dear Members of the House of Lords,

Re: Coroners and Justice Bill – justice for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity

You may be aware that amendments have been tabled for Committee stage of the Coroners and Justice Bill regarding the jurisdiction of the UK courts to try suspects for international crimes including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. These amendments are numbered **175** and **176** in the marshalled list of amendments as at 5 June 2009 and have been tabled by Baroness D'Souza, Lord Carlile of Berriew, and in the case of amendment 175, Lord Falconer of Thoroton.

These amendments would bring the UK into line with its international obligations in two respects – firstly, by allowing prosecution of suspects who committed these crimes since they became international crimes. The current lack of full retrospective jurisdiction has been problematic: for example, it has allowed four individuals suspected of involvement in the Rwandan genocide, who cannot be extradited to Rwanda, to escape prosecution in the UK.

Secondly, the amendments would allow prosecution of people who are present in the UK, rather than only those who are resident here or have UK nationality. Prosecution would not be obligatory – and the consent of the Attorney General would still be required – but would be available where a suspect visits the UK.

JUSTICE fully supports these amendments. It is unacceptable that those who may have committed some of the most appalling crimes known to the law may be able freely to visit the UK and even settle here and enjoy impunity living in our society. For good reasons, it will not always be possible to extradite these suspects to stand trial abroad; in those circumstances, it should be possible to try them here.

We therefore urge Members of the House of Lords to support amendments 175 and 176. We attach a copy of two briefings on the amendments from genocide prevention organisation The Aegis Trust, for further information.

Yours faithfully,

Sally Ireland
Senior Legal Officer (Criminal Justice)
Email: sireland@justice.org.uk Tel: (020) 7762 6414

Chairman of Council **Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws QC** *Director* **Roger Smith**

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