

# JUSTICE PRESS RELEASE

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## A bill of rights for the UK?

JUSTICE today contributes to the debate on the future of the Human Rights Act by stating seven conditions that are vital to any reform. Without these, it would be better to remain with the Human Rights Act.

All three major political parties have in some shape or form, and with varying degrees of commitment, advocated for a UK bill of rights. The Conservatives in their election manifesto have proposed a bill of rights to replace the Human Rights Act. Labour, whilst not specifically mentioning a bill of rights in their manifesto, introduced a green paper in 2009 which suggested a bill of rights and responsibilities to build upon the Human Rights Act. The Liberal Democrats are committed to a written constitution which may include a bill of rights.

Roger Smith, Director of JUSTICE, said:

**The idea of a UK bill of rights is fraught with difficulty and, unless it coherently deals with a range of key issues, the idea would be better dropped. Any reform of the Human Rights Act must build on the European Convention on Human Rights and the core provisions of the Human Rights Act. It must recognise the consequences of devolution. Above all, anything calling itself a bill of rights must have a significant degree of cross-party support: a bill of rights is too big an idea to be a political football.**

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Note to editors:

1. The minimum conditions were drafted in consultation with JUSTICE's membership.
2. The seven minimum conditions are set out at the end of this press release, with the full text, including some description of each condition, attached.

## Minimum conditions

1. Any bill of rights must be based on a broad consensus, not just of lawyers and politicians but also the public at large.
2. The process of agreeing a UK bill of rights, and its content, must reflect the increasingly devolved nature of the United Kingdom.
3. A UK bill of rights must guarantee, and should extend beyond, the rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights.
4. Any domestic bill of rights should be compatible with the international obligations of the UK.
5. The key enforcement mechanisms of the HRA should be re-enacted.
6. Any statement of responsibilities or duties must not detract from the protection of human rights.
7. The scope for reform should not be oversold.

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