

JUSTICE PRESS RELEASE

JUSTICE
59 Carter Lane
London
EC4V 5AQ
(020) 7329 5100
www.justice.org.uk

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 FRIDAY 3 OCTOBER 2014

Today the Conservative Party has published its proposals on the future of human rights within the UK, *Protecting Human Rights in the UK*.

JUSTICE is concerned that the changes proposed would significantly undermine the ability of ordinary people in the UK to hold the Government and public authorities, including the police, our doctors and our armed forces, to account when they overstep their powers.

Andrea Coomber, Director, JUSTICE, said:

‘It’s deeply regrettable that Conservative Party members were not given the opportunity to discuss and debate these very serious proposals at their conference earlier this week. This does not reflect well on the leadership’s willingness to engage critically on the future of our constitution.

Conservative Party policy now says: ‘We support minimum human rights standards, but only if we define their content. We get first - and last - say on what rights mean and who enjoys them’.

If that applies to us, and our Parliament, then it applies the world over. Following our example, the Russians could – apparently legitimately – decide that free speech means something different in their context. Our PM may want exceptions for criminals, terrorists or travellers; the Russians might direct their courts to offer second class protection to dissidents or journalists.

A patchwork of national rules would mean no standard at all; every human being, subject only to the whims of national interest. This vision would reset the clock to 1945, before Eleanor Roosevelt, Churchill and Maxwell-Fyfe ever put pen to paper.

It would scupper our diplomats working right now to bring light to dark places and shame those who have gone before, holding out the UK as a beacon for the rule of law.

That may suit the interest of ill-behaved Governments but it isn’t good for the rest of us’

For further comment, please contact Angela Patrick on 020 7762 6415 (direct line) or apatrick@justice.org.uk.

Notes for editors

1. JUSTICE provided a full response to the Bill of Rights Commission appointed by the Coalition Government. It can be read here: [JUSTICE Response to the Commission on a Bill of Rights \(2011\)](#)
2. In 2007, a Constitutional Committee convened by JUSTICE published *A Bill of Rights for the UK: Informing the Debate*. Broadly, that Committee concluded that there was no evidence based case for reform of the substantive and procedural standards afforded by the Human Rights Act. This Report is available here: [A British Bill of Rights: Informing the Debate \(2007\)](#)
3. In 2010, JUSTICE produced detailed research on the difficult questions for our devolution settlement posed by a proposed “British Bill of Human Rights”. This research is available here: [Devolution and Human Rights \(2010\)](#)