

“Dear Prime Minister and Political Leaders,

Every year on 10 December, the world marks Human Rights Day, commemorating the day when, in 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognising the dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This is the foundation of our Human Rights Act; this is why it matters. Our law here at home, setting out each person’s protections, and the responsibilities of government and those with public power to realise that vision of the UDHR; for us all to live in equal dignity.

Our politicians often proudly recall the UK’s role in setting down human rights law in the aftermath of World War II, standing shoulder to shoulder with nations to affirm our commitment to ensuring that human rights should be protected by the rule of law, that a common understanding of these rights should be shared by every person and part of society. Now, in the midst of this modern era global crisis, human rights must inform both our responses to the pandemic and our recovery from it. No one has escaped the impact of this virus. And sadly, we have witnessed the disproportionate and discriminatory effects of Covid-19 and government measures among too many, including among black and minoritised communities, for disabled people, and people who live in care homes, alongside significant educational impacts for children and young people, deepening poverty, increased reporting of domestic abuse, and even more difficulty accessing justice. There is much more than we can do justice to in such a short space, but which has been documented by parliamentary committee inquiries and research from our national human rights institutions, academics and across civil society. If recovery is to be resilient and just it must be focused on upholding our human rights.

And yet, here in the UK, rather than renewed commitment to upholding rights we face a hostile environment for human rights. Rather than addressing the inequalities fuelled and exacerbated by the pandemic, we are facing a political climate filled with threats to “overhaul” the very protections we all need upheld. The loud calls to tamper with our Human Rights Act, by those with the very responsibility to uphold them, does little to reassure us, and the many people we support and represent.

Human Rights Day should be an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of human rights in rebuilding the world we want. We call on the UK Government, and all political leaders, to share our commitment to universal human rights, as set out in our Human Rights Act. As civil society groups working hard to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, we want a world in which our political leaders move from the romanticisation of being human rights pioneers in 1948 and commit to our Human Rights Act protections being a part of everyone’s life, every day, today and tomorrow.”

Yours sincerely

The British Institute of Human Rights, together with...



OUR HUMAN RIGHTS ACT MATTERS

Access Social Care Action against Medical Accidents Active Prospects AdviceUK Advocacy Focus Age Connect Wales AIRE Centre All Wales People First Alzheimer Scotland Amnesty International UK Article 12 in Scotland Article 39 Asylum Link Merseyside AVA Bild Birthrights Bond British Association of Social Workers British Geriatrics Society Campaign for Freedom of Information Centre for Women’s Justice Certitude Changing Our Lives Cheshire Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) Child Poverty Action Group Children England Children in Scotland Children’s Commissioner for Wales Children’s Rights Alliance for England Choice support Citizens Advice York Cloverleaf Advocacy Clynfyw Community Interest Company Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (Scotland) Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) Communicourt Dates-n-Mates Deafness Support Network Detention Action Dial West Cheshire Dimensions UK Disability Information Bureau (DIB) Disability Positive Disability Wales EachOther ECPAT UK English PEN Essex Carers Network CIC Face Equality International Fair Trials Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd Faiths Forum for London Freedom from Torture Friends, Families and Travellers Garden Court Chambers Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network Helen Bamber Foundation Group Here NI Hindu Forum of Britain Hopscotch Women’s Centre Hourglass (Safer Ageing) Human Rights Consortium Scotland Human Rights Watch Humanist Society Scotland Humanists UK Inclusion East CIC Inclusion Gloucestershire Inclusion London Inclusion North CIC INQUEST International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants Juno Women’s Aid Just Fair Just for Kids Law Kinship Latin American Women’s Rights Service Law Centres Network Learning Disability England Learning Disability Wales Leep1 CIC Legal Aid Practitioners Group Legal Action Leigh Day LGBT Foundation Liberty Migrants Organise Migrants’ Rights Network Mind My Life My Choice National AIDS Trust National Alliance of Women’s Organisations National Autistic Society National Care Forum National Council for Voluntary Organisations National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) National Union of Students NICVA Northamptonshire Rights and Equality Council NSUN Older People’s Commissioner for Wales Oxford Human Capital Inct/aGlobalPing Angels Oxford Human Rights Hub People First Dorset Peoples Choice Group POHWER Prison Reform Trust Prisoners’ Advice Service Pro-Active Community Public Law Project Quakers in Britain REDRESS Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex & London Release René Cassin Reporters Without Borders Restraint Reduction Network Rethink Mental Illness Rightful Lives Rights and Security International Rights of Women Royal Mencap Society Runnymede Trust Scottish Care Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance SCVO Shared Lives Plus Silverline Memories SMK LAW Southall Black Sisters Suffolk Law Centre Sunderland People First The Challenging Behaviour Foundation The Equality Trust The Howard League The Judith Trust The National Care Forum The Relatives & Residents Association The Rock Trust The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities’ (SCLD) Together (Scottish Alliance for Children’s Rights) Together Matters Tower Hamlets Law Centre Unlock Democracy User Voice Voluntary Organisations Disability Group Wales Council for Voluntary Action Warrington Speak Up Wish Women in Prison Women’s Aid Federation of England Yorkshire MESMAC Zahid Mubarek Trust