

Today...

An open letter on Human Rights Day.

Dear Prime Minister and UK Political Leaders,

2020 has seen the world face the biggest crisis in generations. Tackling this global health emergency must uphold the dignity and worth of all individuals, without discrimination. Human rights must not be an afterthought in times of crisis; human rights were born of disaster and must guide the Covid-19 response and recovery.

The mother of the UK's Human Rights Act, the European Convention on Human Rights, emerged from WW2 exactly 70 years ago. These rights, which belong to us all, are part of our law – rights to life, liberty, freedom from harm, non-discrimination, family, well-being, and choice. These protections offer powerful, but under-used tools to guide the response to the pandemic. A human rights lens puts everyone in the picture, implores us to ensure that no one is left behind, and shines a spotlight on who is suffering, and on what must be changed to ensure people's rights are upheld.

Whilst the virus does not discriminate, we have all seen that its impact and responses do. Too many people have suffered disproportionately, including BAME communities, older people, disabled people, children, women, carers and many more. The UK's response to the pandemic must protect the equal human dignity of us all; our human rights legislation offers a way to navigate this maze, to balance risk with rights.

Today, we stand together, proud of our human rights standards in the UK but worried that political rhetoric is again turning towards questioning our laws, with increasing concerns that people's ability to seek accountability will be reduced. We call on the Prime Minister and our political leaders to stand with us and stand for our shared values. To stand with us for the equal dignity of all people, for respect, fairness, and decency. To stand with us for a proportionate response to these extraordinary times that focuses on protecting people's rights and the rule of law. To stand with us for our Human Rights Act.

Sincerely,

The British Institute of Human Rights

bihr.org.uk



The British Institute of Human Rights; Access Social Care; Advocacy Focus; AIRE Centre; All Wales People First; Alzheimer Scotland; Amnesty UK; Article 12 in Scotland; Article 39; Asylum Link Merseyside; AVA (Against Violence and Abuse); Birthrights; brap; Bristol Mind; British Association of Social Workers (BASW); Campaign for Freedom of Information; Carers UK; Centre for Women's Justice; Certitude London; Changing Our Lives; Child Rights Alliance for England; Children in Scotland; Sally Holland, Children's Commissioner for Wales; Childrens Law Centre; Choice Support; Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights; Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ); Compassion in Dying; Detention Action; Disability Wales; Discrimination Law Association; EachOther; End Violence Against Women; English Pen; Every Child Protected Against Trafficking; Friends, Families and Travellers; Garden Court Chambers; Grandparents Plus; Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland; (the ALLIANCE); HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network; Helen Bamber; HIV Scotland; Hourglass; Human Rights and Equality Group of the Law Society of Northern Ireland; Human Rights Consortium Scotland; Human Rights Watch; Humanist Society Scotland; Humanists UK; Inclusion London; INQUEST; Judith Trust; Juno Women's Aid; Just Fair; Just for Kids Law; JUSTICE; Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS); Law Centres Network; Learning Disability England; Legal Action Group; Legal Aid Practitioners Group (LAPG); Leigh Day; Liberty; Marie Curie; Mary Ward Legal Centre; Mental Health UK; Migrants Organise Ltd; Mind; National Alliance of Women's Organisations; National Care Forum; National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi); National Survivor User Network (NSUN); nia; Heléna Herklots CBE, Older People's Commissioner for Wales; POhWER; Prison Reform Trust; Public Law Project; Quakers in Britain; RAMFEL (Refugee & Migrant Forum of Essex and London); REDRESS; Refugee Action York; Refugee Council; Relatives & Residents Association; René Cassin; Restorative Justice for All International Institute; Rethink Mental Illness; Scottish Care; Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD); Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance; Scottish Pen; Shared Lives Plus; SMK Law Solicitors; Southall Black Sisters; Stonewall; Suffolk Law Centre; Tai Pawb; The British Geriatric Society; The Challenging Behaviour Foundation; The Law Society of Scotland; Tower Hamlets Law Centre; Turning Point; UNISON; Unlock Democracy; Voiceability; Voluntary Organisations Disability Group; Wish; Women's Aid; Women's Budget Group; York Human Rights City Network; Youth Access; tide – together in dementia; ForcesWatch; ROTA