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United Kingdom: Terrorism Bill dangerous and ill-conceived

"The UK government claims that the rules of the game have changed – but clearly playing games with the rules hasn't," said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International today in response to publication of the Terrorism Bill.

Tearing up rights and freedoms that date back to Magna Carta will only hand a victory to the criminals who carry out atrocities like those of 7 July. Effective counter-terrorism measures are essential, but the sweeping and vague provisions of the bill are dangerous and ill-conceived.

The package of measures put forward by the government represent the deliberate attrition of human rights. The government's broad and vaguely worded definition of terrorism could be used to prosecute even peaceful anti-nuclear campaigners, and leaves scope for political bias when deciding to prosecute.

Effective internment of up to 90 days undermines the rights to liberty and to a fair trial, including the presumption of innocence. It is also an excellent advertisement for terrorist recruitment.

"These measures, taken together with the government's planned deportation of people on security grounds to countries that use torture, rather than charge and try them here, will further alienate already vulnerable sections of society and will fuel mistrust and division," said Ms Khan.

"The UK should take a lead in reasserting, rather than undermining, the values of human dignity. Respect for human rights is an essential building block for security and effective counter-terrorism measures."

The organization today published a detailed briefing paper on the key provisions of the Terrorism Bill:
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR450382005>

Public Document

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