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UK: Extension of detention - internment in all but name

The proposal in the new Terrorism Bill to enable terrorism suspects to be held by the police for up to three months without charge is draconian and unnecessary, Amnesty International said today.

"While we need to look at the proposals in depth, what is immediately striking is the proposed extension of detention without charge," said Claudio Cordone, Senior Director for Regional Programmes.

"Such an extension could lead to abusive practices, including the detention of people without the intention or realistic prospect of bringing charges against them, in a way that would effectively amount to internment in all but name.

"Introducing measures that directly undermine justice is not the answer. Only a response based on human rights will truly deliver ongoing safety and security.

"If there is sufficient evidence to warrant incarcerating suspects for three months, that evidence should be taken before a court of law.

"In addition prolonged periods of pre-charge and pre-trial detention provide a context for abusive practices and lead to detainees making involuntary statements, including confessions, which would undermine their right to fair trial.

"There are other aspects of the Bill that deserve close scrutiny, such as the definition of certain offences. We call for a vigorous debate and scrutiny of all these proposals as they go through Parliament."

Public Document

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