

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: EUR 45/008/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 042
23 February 2004

United Kingdom: Scrap internment

As both Houses of Parliament in the UK prepare to debate and renew Part 4 of the Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (ATCSA) this week, Amnesty International's worldwide membership of 1.5 million has stepped up its lobbying of the UK government, urging them to repeal these controversial and abusive provisions. Amnesty International is urging members of both Houses of Parliament to vote to abolish internment and uphold the rule of law and human rights.

"The internment provisions, have come under fire from eminent religious leaders, members of the legal profession, and the Government's own review committee headed by Lord Newton."

"Extraordinarily, in the face of universal condemnation the UK Home Secretary has talked, not of repealing the internment provisions, but instead of widening them to cover UK nationals too."

"His proposals in this respect are an aberration of justice, the rule of law and human rights," Amnesty International stated.

Amnesty International is urging Members of both Houses of Parliament this week to put an end to a system that holds some individuals outside of the rule of law, urging that they vote against renewal of Part 4 of the ATCSA which permits indefinite detention of non-UK citizens without charge or trial, principally on the basis of secret evidence.

"Surely some lessons must be learnt from the treatment meted out to those individuals soon to be returned from Guantánamo Bay. Mr Blunkett has reportedly commented that none of those to be returned to the UK following two years' detention, 'will actually be a threat to the security of the British people'. Like those held under Part 4 of the ATCSA, these individuals have been incarcerated in a judicial vacuum for two years, unable to challenge their detention or assert their innocence."

"Part 4 should be repealed. It effectively allows non-nationals to be treated as if they have been 'charged' with a criminal offence, 'convicted' without a trial and 'sentenced' to an open-ended term of imprisonment," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International is also deeply concerned at the executive's and judiciary's willingness to rely on evidence extracted under torture.

"By indicating that they are prepared to rely on evidence extracted under torture, the UK legal process has effectively given a green light to torturers. Using evidence tainted by allegations of torture is

contrary to any notion of justice and respect for the law," Amnesty International stated.

"Instead of further undermining the rule of law and human rights, the UK authorities should address the concerns currently being expressed by many individuals and organizations from many different walks of life."

Background

Under the ATCSA, non-UK nationals, who cannot be deported from the country, can be certified as "suspected international terrorists" by the Secretary of State and immediately detained without charge or trial for an unspecified and potentially unlimited period of time, principally on the basis of secret evidence. As the end of 2003, the Home Secretary had certified 17 people as "suspected international terrorists" of whom 14 remain in detention under the ATCSA in high security establishments in the UK.

Earlier this month Amnesty International expressed extreme concern over the Home Secretary's suggestions for new measures in the name of "combatting terrorism". The organization pointed out that if implemented, these measures would dispense with justice, the rule of law and human rights in the UK (See *United Kingdom: Home Secretary's reported proposals - an aberration of justice, the rule of law and human rights* AI Index: EUR 45/004/2004).

In its latest report *UK: Justice Perverted under the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001* Amnesty International urged the UK authorities to repeal Part 4 of this legislation and ensure the same legal safeguards for all individuals regardless of their origin.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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