

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

### News Flash

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## **UK: Extension of pre-charge detention amounts to internment**

Amnesty International today condemned the UK government's proposal to extend the period for which people can be detained under terrorism legislation by the police to 56 days.

"The UK government's proposal to lock people up for 56 days without charge or trial amounts to internment and is an assault on human rights and freedoms," said Nicola Duckworth Director of the Europe and Central Asia Programme at Amnesty International.

"The UK government appears to have forgotten the lesson of Northern Ireland in the 70s where internment had devastating consequences for those affected and a disastrous impact on human rights protection, the rule of law and society as a whole.

Reintroducing internment today by further extending pre-charge detention is likely to have a similar effect as it had in Northern Ireland. It will further alienate affected communities, leading people to mistrust the authorities and make them less likely to want to cooperate with the police".

Amnesty International recognizes that the UK authorities have a primary duty to take necessary measures to combat terrorism. However, those measures must be consistent with fundamental human rights and the rule of law.

"Our worldwide research over the years has also shown that prolonged pre-charge detention creates a climate for abusive practices that can result in detainees making involuntary statements, including forced confessions and therefore undermines confidence in the judicial system," said Nicola Duckworth. "Our concerns are not allayed by the government's proposals for judicial and parliamentary scrutiny of this extension."

Amnesty International calls on the UK government to see sense and retract this regressive and counterproductive proposal. The organization urges all members of UK Parliament to uphold human rights and the rule of law and reject any new terrorism measures which further erode the protection of human rights for all in the UK.

### **Background**

Amnesty International has unreservedly opposed the already existing police power of detention for up to 28 days. The organization considered that the previous limit of 14 days was already too long.

Anybody held on suspicion of having committed an extremely serious offence such as murder under the ordinary UK criminal law, may be held without charge for a maximum period of four days. The period for which police are allowed to detain people under current terrorism legislation is -- at 28 days -- already seven times as long.

Prolonged detention without charge or trial undermines fair trial rights, including the right to be promptly informed of any charges, the rights to be free from arbitrary detention, torture or other ill-treatment and the presumption of innocence. It could also have the unintended effect of increasing the likelihood of statements obtained from the suspect being deemed inadmissible at trial precisely because of the oppressive nature of the conditions in which they were obtained.

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