

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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**UN Human Rights Council
Twenty-ninth session
15 June – 3 July 2015**

Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

General Debate

Mr. President,

Following the United Kingdom's general election on 7 May 2015, the Conservative Party formed the Government. The Party's 2015 manifesto included commitments to "scrap the Human Rights Act and introduce a British Bill of Rights", and to "curtail the role of the European Court of Human Rights". The Government's program announced in the Queen's Speech on 27 May 2015 did not include specific legislative plans, but confirmed that the Government will "bring forward proposals for a British Bill of Rights".

The Human Rights Act allows persons to exercise their European Convention rights under UK law and in UK courts. The Act is simple and effective. It has a constant visible and invisible effect in improving human rights standards in everyday life in the UK.

Proposals to replace the Human Rights Act with a significantly different 'British Bill of Rights', are not merely cosmetic. They threaten to remove the Human Rights Act's fundamental protections and could lead to the UK's withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights altogether - an unprecedented step for a European democracy.

To suggest that it should be British courts and British politicians **alone** who decide the human rights standards applied in the UK sends a worrying message internationally that individual states can and should be the ultimate arbiter of human rights in their jurisdictions. This undermines the concept of universality whereby states agree to a common minimum standard of protection, and it runs contrary to the UK's own claim internationally that human rights should be upheld for all people everywhere.

The UK played a central part in its creation of the European Convention on Human Rights and was one of its first signatories. Rather than undermining the Convention and its domestic protections, the UK should renew its commitment to universality and to the protection of fundamental human rights throughout Europe

Thank you Mr. President.