On Human Rights Day, charities and civil society organisations from across the UK write to the Prime Minister and political leaders, calling on them to stand up for human rights and commit to meeting the UK's national and international obligations.

Monday 9 December, 2024

On the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR)
have coordinated an open letter to the Prime Minister and political leaders, signed by over 70 organisations from across all four nations of the UK.

The letter, published on BIHR's website, comes during the 75th
anniversary year of the Council of Europe – the organisation responsible for the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and of which the UK was a founding member. The letter recognises the formation of the Council of Europe and the ECHR as marking "a coming together of countries across Europe to solidify their commitment to the UDHR and to protecting universal human rights."

It goes on to celebrate the ways this same spirit of coming together is echoed "not just on the international stage but in all the many communities that form the beating heart of the UK." The signatories, among which are grassroots groups, UK-wide charities, policy organisations, legal firms and more, draw on everyday examples of human rights in action – such as in the cooperation between social worker and client or in family members' advocacy on behalf of their loves ones.

The letter also emphasises the need for those in positions of public power to play their role in upholding human rights, whether through raising awareness or improving accountability. Together, the organisations "call on political leaders to reaffirm the UK's commitment to its human rights obligations, both nationally and internationally, and to make their own commitments to supporting a culture of respect for human rights across the UK."

Speaking on the release of the open letter, BIHR's CEO, Sanchita Hosali, said:

"Human Rights Day is a moment for us to mark, not just the words on paper, but the actions made possible by our legal protections that empower people to drive forward real change in our towns, community centres, support groups, schools, housing, hospitals, care homes, refuges, social services and elsewhere. All the places where, to paraphrase the Universal Declaration's architect Eleanor Roosevelt, every one of us seeks equal justice, dignity, and respect.

Thankfully, this is the first Human Rights Day in several years we can mark without the threat of UK government policy to scrap our Human Rights Act, which built on the foundations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There is much to celebrate; but there is still much to do. Today we're calling on the Prime Minister, on government, and political leaders to be clear; the protection of human rights is part of the fabric of the UK, and commit to making this real in people's lives. If we truly want to be a country where milestones focus on living standards, safety, education, healthcare and homes then we also need to be a country that truly champions people's human rights."

-ENDS-

Notes

- The open letter, coordinated by the British Institute of Human Rights, will be sent to the Prime Minister and politicians and available publicly from Tuesday 10th December 2024: bihr.org.uk/HRDay24. It will also be available in Easy Read and video formats. To discuss prior access to the letter, please contact Sanchita Hosali, CEO, BIHR on ceo@bihr.org.uk or 020 3039 3646 (monitored voicemail).

- 10 December marks global Human Rights Day. On this day in 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) following WW2. In the preamble to the European Convention on Human Rights 1950, the Council of Europe reaffirms the UHDR aim of

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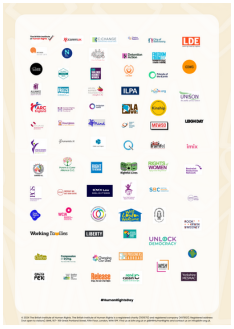

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securing universal and effective observance of human rights. The UK's Human Rights Act 1998 creates legal duties that bring these Convention rights into UK law and makes the enforceable here at home.

- The British Institute of Human Rights will also be hosting a Human Rights Day event in the House of Lords on 10th December from 11am – 12.30pm. The letter will be shared at the event and attendees will also hear speeches from Lord Ponsonby (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice) and community groups who have participated in BIHR's programme to co-design a human rights support solution to social justice issues. For more information on this programme, visit:

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- The British Institute of Human Rights is a registered charity working across the UK to achieve social change through human rights by working directly with people, communities and public bodies to change practice and amplify this evidence of human rights in action to influence policy.

- The Human Rights Day open letter has been signed by 73 organisations, including: SMK Law Solicitors; C-Change Scotland; Fair Justice System for Scotland Group, (FJSS Group); Hourglass (Safer Ageing); Civil Society Alliance; Unlock Democracy; Freedom from Torture; British Geriatrics Society; GM Freeze; Learning Disability England; Carers UK; Older People's Commissioner for Wales; UNISON - the public services union; Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE); Liberty ; Choice Support; Rightful Lives; Friends of the Earth; Clynfyw Care Farm; West London Welcome; After Exploitation; City of Sanctuary UK; The William Gomes Podcast; Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation-MEWSO; Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group; Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA); Global Link; Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS); IMIX; Right to Remain; African Rainbow Family; Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL); Scottish Recovery Consortium; Northern Ireland Refugees and Asylum Seekers Women Association (Bomoko NI); The Include Project ; Southeast and East Asian Centre (SEEAC); René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights; Dudley Voices for Choice (DVC); Changing Our Lives ; ECPAT UK (Every Child Protected Against Trafficking); Release; Access Social Care ; Care Rights UK; English PEN; End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW); Helen Bamber Foundation ; MESMAC; Welsh Centre for International Affairs; Compassion in Dying; Kinship; Quakers in Britain; Rights of Women; Rook Irwin Sweeney LLP; Working Families; Prisoners Abroad; Detention Action; Humanists UK; Welsh Refugee Council; Public Law Project; Mind; Parent and Carer Alliance CIC; Restraint Reduction Network; Asylum Aid; WISH; African Women Empowerment ; Juno Women's Aid ; Cwm Taf People First; Euro Youth Mental Health; Association for Real Change; Leigh Day; Human Rights Consortium Scotland; and Inclusion North

- The British Institute of Human Rights is a registered charity (1101575) and registered company (4978121). Registered address (not open to visitors): BIHR, c/o Nordens Farringdon Ltd., 8 Coldbath Square, London, EC1R 5HL. Find us at bihr.org.uk or email info@bihr.org.uk.

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Additional Assets:
Human Rights Day Civil Society Open Letter to the Prime Minister and Political Leaders
www,bihr.org.uk/HRD24

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
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