The Government's obsession with "overhauling" our Human Rights Act risks undermining everyone's rights and our ability to hold the powerful to account

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Speaking on the release of the Government's plans to "overhaul" our Human Rights Act, Sanchita Hosali, Director of the British Institute of Human Rights said:

After months of sitting on the findings of Independent Human Rights Act Review the Government has released the report the same day as issuing yet more questions aimed at fulfilling the agenda to "overhaul" our law. At BIHR, we worked with 400 people in our own submission to the Review, and alongside so many others, sent a strong, clear message that our Human Rights Act is working well to safeguard everyone's rights and help people hold officials to account. Like parliamentarians at the Joint Committee on Human Rights we remain unconvinced that there is any case for change.

"Our Human Rights Act, a Bill of Rights in all but name, is both careful and considered, respecting the UK's political traditions where no one should be above the law, including the government, recognising the separate and important roles of parliament and the courts, all of which seeks to ensure democratic accountability.

"Our Human Rights Act is not simply a question of legal technicalities, it is about supporting ordinary people to be heard and to reach respectful, dignified decisions that matter in everyday life, whether that is in education or housing, health or care, the local council or a national regulator. Sadly, this lived experience is rarely part of the debate in the UK, conveniently ignored, and yet these are real life stories of how our Human Rights Act is working for people here at home. We hope the Justice Secretary will show himself to be different; rather than repeating references to an outdated immigration example involving a perpetrator of domestic abuse, Mr Raab could instead focus on hearing from the very many survivors of violence for whom our Human Rights Act offers the only means of getting accountability when they are failed by those who should protect them.

"Of course, all governments sometimes find human rights laws inconvenient, because ultimately these are rules that limit their power. What is happening here is something quite different. Just days after CEOs of more than 150 organisations from across the UK called on the Prime Minister to secure our Human Rights Act, those bound by these rules are the ones calling for change, changes to their accountability which they seek to direct. Our Human Rights Act embodies standards that we helped forge in the aftermath of World War II, values which must be more than a romanticised look to the past, values which unite us all now; our Human Rights Act must continue today, tomorrow, and every day."

ENDS

Notes

- For a BIHR spokesperson please contact Sanchita Hosali (Director) shosali@bihr.org.uk (020 3039 3648 including out of hours) or Carlyn Miller (Policy & Programmes Manager) cmiller@bihr.org.uk (020 3039 3652 10am-6pm)
- For over 50 years the British Institute of Human Rights, a UK-wide independent human rights charity supporting social change through the practical use of human rights law. For more information visit www.bihr.org.uk, Twitter: @BIHRhumanrights
- Visit our Why Our Human Rights Act Matters pages to see stories and evidence from people across the UK on how they are benefiting from the law: Why Our Human Rights Act Matters | British Institute of Human Rights (bihr.org.uk).

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