

DIRECTOR
Shami Chakrabarti

21 Tabard Street
London SE1 4LA

TELEPHONE 020 7403 3888
FACSIMILE 020 7407 5354
EMAIL info@liberty-human-rights.org.uk

Rt Hon the Lord Falconer of Thoroton
Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs and Lord Chancellor
Department for Constitutional Affairs
Selborne House
54-60 Victoria Street
London, SW1E 6QW

31 May 2006

Dear Lord Falconer,

Human Rights Act

This letter is sent by Liberty on behalf of the organisations listed below.

We are writing in response to the press coverage and political statements about the Human Rights Act over recent weeks. We are deeply concerned about the misrepresentation of the Act as a charter for criminals and terrorists and as a threat to public safety.

We understand that, as minister with Cabinet responsibility for human rights, you have been tasked to 'devise a strategy, working with the judiciary, which maintains the effectiveness of the Human Rights Act and improves the public's confidence in the legislation'. Improving the public's understanding of and confidence in the Act has never been more important than in the current climate and we are writing to offer you our support, as appropriate, in achieving this objective.

On Wednesday of last week we had a very helpful meeting with Rt Hon Baroness Ashton. We were pleased to hear that the Government is focusing, first, on the question of whether training is needed to ensure that those working in the probation and allied services are aware of the importance that human rights law places on protecting public safety. We were also delighted to hear that there are no plans within Government to undermine the protection provided by the Human Rights Act.

It is reassuring that the Government has not responded to recent press coverage with hasty and ill-informed legislation. We do, however, consider that positive steps need to be taken within Government to address the damage that has already been done to the public's perception of human rights. As a priority, we urge you and your colleagues in the DCA publicly to correct the many misrepresentations of the Act in the press as well as in statements by your Cabinet colleagues and members of the Opposition. Alongside this, we urge you to undertake a programme of public education to demonstrate the importance of human rights to ordinary citizens and the vital role they play in improving the quality of public services.

Yours sincerely,

Amnesty International UK
The British Institute of Human Rights
Children in Wales
Children's Rights Alliance for England

Frances Butler
Francesca Klug
JUSTICE
Liberty