



Joint Committee on Human Rights

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From Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Chair

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
102 Petty France
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20 January 2015

Dear Michael,

I am writing following the visit last week of the Joint Committee on Human Rights to Edinburgh. The Committee took the opportunity to meet with the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee, the Scottish Human Rights Commission, representatives from NGOs, academics and lawyers to discuss, amongst other things, the Government's proposal to repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a Bill of Rights.

We are concerned to ensure that the voice of Scotland is fully heard as you consider how to take this proposal forward. It is not just that they need to have their say, we need to be able to hear from them to benefit from their views and experience.

It is now under 10 weeks till the commencement of purdah in respect of the Scottish Parliament election, when the Scottish Parliament will be dissolved. The Scottish Parliament has, through its European and External Relations Committee, considered the issue of the the potential implications for Scotland of the repeal of the Human Rights Act and its replacement with a British Bill of Rights in some considerable depth. Your consultation would undoubtedly benefit from their contribution. But bearing in mind the delay in publication of the consultation document it might be the case that they would not be able to comment as the consultation will overlap with purdah. This would clearly inhibit the possibility of taking note of, and learning from, the specific and different cultural traditions – particularly of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We note your previous promise to us to engage with the devolved administrations and consult with all citizens of the United Kingdom, in your letter dated 27 November. Accordingly, we would like to seek your assurances that no part of the consultation period will overlap with the period where purdah applies or the Scottish Parliament will be dissolved. I would ask for a response at your earliest opportunity as clearly this will be a matter of importance not only for Scotland but also for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Harriet Harman
Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights

cc. Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP

