

JUSTICE PRESS RELEASE

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Europe must reject UK proposal to amend the Human Rights Convention

JUSTICE joins other leading international NGOs to call on other countries to reject the UK's attempted amendments to the Convention which could undermine the ability of the European Court of Human Rights to afford fair, appropriate individual remedies for human rights violations in Europe.

Next Thursday delegations from the 47 States of the Council of Europe will meet on the Brighton waterfront in a high-level international conference to discuss the future of the European Court of Human Rights. This important two-day series of negotiations has been highlighted in recent press reports as an opportunity to curtail the reach of the Court.

In a joint statement published today, we recognise that the Brighton conference provides a valuable opportunity for individual States to commit to do more to secure the protection of human rights at home. Unfortunately, a few UK proposals which would marginalise the role of the European Court of Human Rights have dominated discussion thus far.

In the last days of negotiation, we stress the renewed commitment in the draft to States' improving practice at home. A few potentially damaging proposals should not be allowed to damage this important process, which so far has worked to increase the effectiveness and authority of the European Court of Human Rights.

Angela Patrick, JUSTICE's Director of Human Rights Policy said:

States should treat with extreme caution the UK proposals to amend the Convention at Brighton. For half a century, the Strasbourg Court has helped individuals secure remedies when local courts – including in the UK – have gotten it wrong on rights.

Attempting to change its role from human rights guardian to an arms-length advisor would neuter its capacity to continue to set authoritative human rights standards for all, Europe-wide.

For further comment, please contact Angela Patrick, JUSTICE's Human Rights Policy Director, on 020 7762 6415 (direct line) or apatrick@justice.org.uk.

Notes for editors

1. The Joint NGO submission is available here: <http://www.justice.org.uk/resources.php/321/justice-urges-caution-as-europe-descends-on-brighton-to-discuss-the-role-of-strasbourg>. The organisations which have signed up to the joint response include: JUSTICE, Amnesty International, Interrights, and EHRAC.
2. The Brighton Conference will take place between Thursday 19 April – Friday 20 April 2012. Further details are available online: http://www.coe.int/t/dqi/brighton-conference/default_en.asp

3. An early draft of the Brighton Declaration (which will be negotiated in Brighton) was been leaked and published online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/interactive/2012/feb/28/echr-reform-uk-draft>. The text has been presented as an official Committee of Ministers document. This and subsequent drafts will only be made publicly available if agreed in the negotiation process.