



## **General Election 2019 – A Human Rights Manifesto**

Amnesty International believes that fair and stable societies are possible only when the human rights of all are respected.

We are calling on whoever forms the next government to commit to protecting and promoting human rights in the UK and internationally.

### **Bring Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe home**

- Make securing Nazanin's freedom an urgent priority, with a clear strategy to negotiate her release
- Secure a UK diplomatic visit to Evin prison to check on Nazanin's conditions and treatment

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is a British-Iranian mother who has spent more than 1000 days in an Iranian prison after being convicted of spying in 2016. The Iranian authorities have no evidence to support this claim.

Since she has committed no crime, Amnesty International considers Nazanin a prisoner of conscience – someone who's imprisoned just for using their human rights like free speech and freedom of association. Nazanin's health and well-being is of significant concern, following a recent forcible transfer to a psychiatric hospital for six days, where she was kept in solitary confinement and chained to her bed.

The UK Government has called for Nazanin's freedom, and she was given diplomatic protection on 7 March 2019. Her case must remain a priority for the next government, with all possible steps taken to ensure her immediate and unconditional release.

### **Families Together**

- Extend family reunion rights to child refugees in the UK, so that children have the right to bring their parents and siblings here to join them
- Allow adult refugees to sponsor their elderly parents and children up to the age of 25

The next Government must accept the UK's shared responsibility in responding to the global refugee crisis and commit to welcoming and supporting those fleeing conflict and persecution. This includes enabling more refugee families to be reunited in safety. The UK remains the only country in Europe not to afford child refugee family reunion rights.



## **Promoting the rights of women and girls**

- Ensure all survivors of domestic abuse are able to access safety, regardless of their immigration status and conditions of status relating to access to public funds
- Establish a ring-fenced budget adequate to respond to domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and girls, and ensure specialist 'by and for' services are able to successfully bid for funds through local authority commissioning systems
- Ratify and fully implement the Istanbul Convention, which is the international Gold Standard for combatting and preventing violence against women and domestic violence
- Stand up to those responsible for the global backlash against women's rights, including women's reproductive rights; and call for the reversal of the Mexico City Policy

While the efforts of successive governments have boosted the profile of gender equality issues across Whitehall, significant gaps and challenges remain, especially for the most marginalised women.

For example, the previous Government's Domestic Abuse Bill fails to meet the needs of migrant women, who are at risk of immigration enforcement and struggle to access refuge and support services. Migrant women should be asked if they are safe, not where they are from.

Globally there has been an ongoing backlash against women's human rights, particularly in terms of sexual and reproductive rights. This includes the reintroduction and extension of the Mexico City Policy, popularly known as Global Gag Rule, by President Trump in January 2017. The policy blocks US funding for any non-US NGOs that provide abortion services, counselling or referrals related to abortion and applies to all US funding for global public health programmes, about USD 8.8 billion per year. It is documented that when the policy has been implemented in the past it has led to a reduction in vital services and a chilling effect on providers, potentially resulting in higher maternal mortality, reduced access to contraception, and reduced access to other health services such as vaccinations, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis.

## **A foreign policy which champions human rights and human rights defenders**

- Prioritise support and protection for human rights defenders, including access to funding, emergency protection, greater promotion and recognition
- Require all UK embassies to develop, implement and evaluate a human rights strategy, in consultation with local human rights experts and defenders
- Confirm that funding for human rights work abroad will be maintained or otherwise increased, and that the UK's financial and political resources currently devoted to human rights work through the EU will be ring-fenced



Championing human rights should be at the heart of UK foreign policy and the UK should prioritise working with and in support of human rights defenders (HRDs) in all its human rights work. HRDs are ordinary people doing extraordinary things - lawyers, journalists, activists – defending the environment, uncovering corruption, promoting the rights of women and girls. However, around the world they are facing unprecedented levels of repression and abuse.

## **Reform the UK's arms control system**

- Strengthen the arms export control system to ensure the UK complies fully with its human rights obligations, including a new presumption of denial for arms export licences to countries of serious human rights concern
- Retain full alignment with all relevant EU mechanisms vital to maintaining human rights protections over the trade and use of military, security and police equipment
- Commit to strengthening the Arms Trade Treaty and its effective implementation, as well as supporting new UN processes to ban the trade in goods that could be used for torture

Successive UK governments were instrumental in delivering the first ever global treaty to curb irresponsible arms sales - the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). However, the Government's continued arms sales to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners during the conflict in Yemen has undermined these efforts. Extensive evidence exists that the Saudi-led coalition has violated international humanitarian law in the conflict in Yemen on numerous occasions, indiscriminately targeting civilian objects, disproportionately harming civilians and even using banned cluster bombs. The current UK system is clearly not fit for purpose.

## **Defend and promote UK human rights protections**

- Reaffirm the UK's commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights
- Commit to preserving the Human Rights Act
- No further roll back of rights as a result of the Brexit process

The Human Rights Act 1998 is a landmark piece of legislation that has had an enormously positive impact for all of us - empowering individuals to speak up and challenge authorities and encouraging a rights-respecting culture amongst decision makers. Any attempt to repeal or weaken the Human Rights Act would undermine the fundamental rights and protections of everyone in the UK. Similarly, any weakening of the UK's relationship with the European Court of Human Rights, or withdrawing from the Convention altogether, would be an unprecedented regressive move for a democratic nation.



It is vital that human rights are prioritised and protected throughout and beyond any process of leaving the EU. The decision to exclude the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the General Principles from the body of retained EU law has already created substantive gaps in rights protections, for example the free-standing right to non-discrimination, and the right to human dignity. It means ordinary people have lost a powerful remedy against abuse. Cases where individuals rightly won pension equality for LGBT people in 2017 would no longer be possible.

## **Migrant Rights**

- End indefinite immigration detention
- Bring in independent oversight of detention powers
- Ensure that detention is no longer used as a matter of routine, recognising the mental and physical trauma it causes to detainees and their family members
- End excessive fees for citizenship applications so that no one is unjustly deprived of their right to citizenship

The UK's immigration system must prioritise respect for people's fundamental rights and freedoms. This means ending the unjust system that puts refugees and migrants at risk from detention, deportation and destitution

## **Trade**

- All future trade deals to be properly scrutinised and approved by Parliament to ensure they respect fundamental human rights standards, including on workers' rights, women's rights, LGBT rights, media freedom and the treatment of human rights defenders

UK trade policy should be aligned with the UK's commitment to protect and promote human rights, labour standards and equalities at home and abroad.

The EU's framework for assessing the impacts of trade agreements has specific requirements to take into account human rights, environmental and economic perspectives. Negotiating outside the EU is likely to mean that the UK comes under increased pressure to accept conditions demanded by other states, including those that seek to benefit from lower standards in areas ranging from food and product safety to workers' rights, which could negatively impact UK citizens.