AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
UNITED KINGDOM SECTION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UNITED KINGDOM SECTION (AIUK SECTION) to be held from 10am to 11am on Saturday, 10 October 2020 at the Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA.

The business of the AGM will be to:

1. receive the report of the Directors and audited accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019;
2. receive the report of the Standing Orders Committee;
3. consider and, if thought fit, pass the resolutions printed below, which shall be proposed as Special and Ordinary Resolutions;
4. receive the report of the Nominations Committee;
5. approve the re-appointment of BDO LLP as external auditors and authorise the Directors to approve their remuneration;
6. receive the budgetary estimates of the Directors for the current and ensuing financial periods; and
7. to note the uncontested election of the AGM Chair for 2021, member of the Standing Orders Committee and member of the Members and Directors Appeals Committee.

Due to government COVID-19 guidance on social distancing and gatherings, this AGM will be conducted as a closed meeting, in order to protect staff and members. All AIUK Section members are entitled to vote at the AGM by appointing a proxy to vote on their behalf. Members may appoint the AGM Chair or the Board Chair to act as their proxy.

A form to nominate a proxy and to vote on the AGM resolutions is enclosed with this notice, along with a Freepost return envelope. The form is also available to download from **amnesty.org.uk/agm**, or you can email **agm@amnesty.org.uk** for a copy (electronic only). Completed forms must be returned to our Scrutineers by 9am on Thursday 8 October 2020.
If you prefer to submit your proxy form and to vote online, please go to **amnesty.org.uk/vote**. You will need to enter your Voter Reference Number and PIN. If your session times out or you receive a prompt, enter the Control Number 916131. Voting opens on 21 August and closes at 9am on 8 October.

S1 is submitted as a Special Resolution and is intended to make certain amendments to the Articles of Association of AIUK Section. Summary and background notes have been provided for each resolution in order to provide supplementary explanation. These do not form part of the substantive text to be considered.

By order of the Board of Amnesty International United Kingdom Section.
Registered Office: The Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA

Michelle O'Keeffe

Michelle O'Keeffe,
Company Secretary,
18 August 2020

FINANCIAL RESOLUTIONS

F1 - FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2019

Summary: A routine resolution to receive the financial statements and reports.

Proposer: AIUK Section Board

Resolution text: This AGM to receive the Report of the Directors and the audited accounts of AIUK Section for the year ended 31 December 2019.

Proposer Background Note: Receiving the financial reports is a formal part of every AGM. As soon as the audited financial statements have been reviewed by the Board, they will be posted online at www.amnesty.org.uk/agm.

F2 - APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Summary: A routine resolution to reappoint BDO LLP as auditors and to authorise the Board to determine their remuneration.

Proposer: AIUK Section Board

Resolution Text: This AGM to reappoint BDO LLP as Auditor of the Company, to hold office until the conclusion of the next General Meeting at which accounts are laid before the Company, and to authorise the Directors to approve the Auditor's remuneration.

Proposer Background Note: AIUK Section is required by law to appoint auditors at each AGM. The Board recommends that BDO LLP be re-appointed, with the audit fee at an amount to be agreed by the Board.

SPECIAL RESOLUTION

S1 - SPECIAL RESOLUTION TO CREATE TWO RESERVED SEATS FOR YOUTH MEMBERS ON THE BOARD.

Summary: To amend the Articles of Association to create two reserved seats on the Board of Directors for members aged 16 to 25 years old, to ensure the representation of young people.

Proposer: Glasgow University Amnesty International Society

Resolution Text: The AGM hereby resolves by way of Special Resolution that the Articles of Association of AIUK are altered by:
Deleting Article 36.1 and replacing with the following wording 'Up to 12 Elected Directors of which two shall be persons nominated by Local Groups, two shall be persons nominated by Networks, one shall be a Country Co-Ordinator, one shall be aged between 16 to 17 years on the Declaration Date and one shall be aged between 18 to 23 years on the Declaration Date provided always that no person may fill a place in more than one capacity';
Deleting the number '18' and replaced with the number '16' in Article 37.1 so that the article reads: 'unless they have attained the age of 16 years; or'

Proposer Background note: AIUK is currently failing to meet the principles and commitments set out in the Amnesty International Global Youth Strategy for 2017-2020.

In the Amnesty UK Section, youth members aged 14-25 represent 22% of the membership. Currently there are no reserved board positions available to youth members aged 16 to 25 as there are for Networks, Local Groups and Country Co-Ordinators.

Article 2.2 of the Global Youth Strategy states that 'Young people will participate in making and influencing decisions across the organisation, including human rights work and other decision-making processes'. The AIUK board resides as a key organisational structure at the heart of such decisions, hence the current lack of youth engagement at this level restricts the representation of young people within AIUK.

The Global Youth Strategy aims to provide a cohesive international approach to Amnesty's engagement with youth activists, setting key directions for the whole movement. It seeks to ensure young people are involved and represented across the organisation.

According to article 2.2e of the Global Youth Strategy, 'Amnesty International will increase the number of young people participating in decision-making bodies at all levels of the organization by election or co-option from 4% in 2015 to 15% by 2020'. Currently there is one AIUK Board member who is 25 and under, amounting to 6.6% of the AIUK Section Board. In accordance with the Global Youth Strategy, two reserved positions would consistently ensure young people are significantly represented at the highest level of the organisation and will remain to be in the future.

Of Amnesty International Sections globally, Togo, French-speaking Canada, Venezuela, Hong Kong, Nepal, New Zealand, France, Hungary, Norway and Morocco all have two youth members on their Boards, with Chile having three.

The implementation of comprehensive application and internal processes alongside amendments to the AIUK Articles of Association would actualise the principle of Article 2.2i of the Global Youth Strategy. Article 2.2i of the Global Youth Strategy states that 'Decision makers at all necessary levels will allocate adequate financial and staff resources as required to remove barriers to young people's participation in decision-making at all levels of Amnesty International'.

Both the AIUK Impact of the Movement Strategy and the AIUK National Youth Strategy reinforce the will within Amnesty UK to ensure youth members are represented at all levels of the organisation. Together they reaffirm that young people are integral to human rights change.

Board Background Note:
The Board supports this resolution

<u>Work to date</u>
An efficient and effective Board of Directors is a key requirement of good governance. It is essential to get the right balance of skills and experience on the Board. At the same time, it is also important to have a Board which is a diverse and inclusive representation of the Amnesty movement.

The Section Board has a maximum of 15 Directors. Of these, three are co-opted,

which means they are not elected by the membership but are appointed by the Board to provide specific skills. For example, the Treasurer is currently a co-opted Board position.

The remaining 12 Directors are elected. The Nominations Sub-Committee provides an annual written report to the membership setting out the skills and experience it believes should be sought in the election of Directors. For example, this year, the Board required skills in human resources and recruitment, fundraising and other forms of income generation, and experience of other charities or NGOs.

Of the 12 elected Directors, there are currently five reserved seats: two nominated by Local Groups, two nominated by Networks, and one reserved for a Country Co-Ordinator. This leaves seven unreserved seats on the Board. The proposed changes will result in seven reserved seats and five that are unreserved.

The Student Action Network can currently nominate an individual to one of the two Network reserved seats; Youth Groups do not currently have the status of a Network and so do not have this ability. A Student Group or Youth Group may nominate one of their own for election to an unreserved seat on the Board. In all cases, the current minimum age of eligibility to stand for the Board is 18 years of age by the deadline date for nominations.

Amnesty's existing plans
The Nominations Committee are actively working on improving diversity and inclusion in all governance roles including, but not limited to, youth participation.

The Board has recently committed to offering shadowing roles on the Board to individuals aged 16 to 18, which would enable them to attend and participate in meetings over a one-or two-year period.

At the time of writing, an AIUK Youth Strategy was in the final stages of development and due to come to the Board for consideration in September.

Resource implications
None, other than staff and Board time to support and mentor the youth members of the Board.

ORDINARY RESOLUTIONS

01 - DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MINORITY GROUPS IN THE UK

Summary: In partnership with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK, AIUK should campaign against practices which discriminate against Ahmadi Muslims and other religious minority groups in the UK

Proposer: Glasgow Day-time Group

Resolution Text: This AGM instructs the Board to raise awareness of practices which discriminate and denigrate Ahmadiyya Muslims and other minority groups in the UK, in particular to:

- Reaffirm the core values of freedom of religion and belief
- Take action against UK funding of anything that encourages hatred and religious discrimination.
- Work with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK and other faith groups

to run a mixture of programmes and events including awareness raising and lobbying of relevant government departments.

Proposer Background Note: AIUK recently held a very successful conference on 'The Adverse Impact of Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan' in partnership with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK. Many of the speakers highlighted practices which discriminate against Ahmadis and other minority groups in the UK, in addition to contributing to the persecution of minority groups in Pakistan.

The conference agreed on further steps to be taken, highlighting the specific issues mentioned in the resolution. It also highlighted the work done by the APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group) for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK.

The APPG for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community U.K brings together parliamentarians from all parties who are keen to support the work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The community is one of Britain's oldest established Muslim communities, having been in the UK since 1913. It built London's first mosque (in Southfields) and in Morden it built the largest mosque in Western Europe. It has more than 130 branches across the UK and is the largest organised Muslim community in the UK.

The group seeks to make all parliamentarians aware of the extensive positive work done by the Ahmadiyya community and speak up on issues of persecution and extremism that Ahmadi Muslims face abroad and in the UK. It also speaks up on human rights more widely, in particular freedom of religion, to engender greater societal peace.

The APPG is chaired by Siobhain McDonagh MP and has 50 parliamentarians as members with the Secretariat provided by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK.

The APPG holds regular meetings, holds events and presses the governments for action.

Board Background Note:
The Board looks forward to the discussion of this resolution.

<u>Work to date</u>
AIUK's Country Co-ordinators have engaged in a programme of work focussing on the Ahmadiyya community since the 2018 Annual General Meeting adopted a similar decision. This work included raising awareness, addressing letters to advocacy targets and a successful conference. As noted in the AGM Decisions Implementation Report presented to the 2020 Annual General Meeting, this work has now concluded, although relevant Country Co-ordinators will continue to raise related issues as part of their work covering issues in South Asia.

<u>Amnesty's existing plans</u>
Amnesty International UK is currently planning to recruit staffing resource to support enhanced work on racism and discrimination in the context of new global and UK strategic plans that are expected to call for an increased focus on how discrimination undermines the realisation of human rights. At present, it is too early to establish whether international and global strategic plans would support a focus on the Ahmadiyya community.

Resource implications
The resource implications for the implementation of this decision are not currently known and scoping work would be required to assess the potential cost or displacement of other planned activity. However, our initial assessment is that the implications could be significant.

O2 THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN THE SYRIAN CITY OF AFRIN AND SURROUNDING REFUGEE CAMPS.

Summary: Addressing the catastrophic humanitarian situation of the local population within the Afrin region, including those who have been displaced into refugee camps.

Proposer: St Albans Group

Resolution Text: This AGM instructs AIUK Section to urge the International Secretariat to commit resources and budget to a campaign to publicise the humanitarian crisis of the local population within the Afrin region of Syria and in the surrounding refugee camps. We also request the Board of AIUK to commit resources to this campaign.

This AGM requests that this campaign includes pressure on the International Community to call for the cessation of all hostilities and of Human Rights violations aimed at bringing about demographic and cultural change in the Afrin region.

Proposer Background Note:
Turkey and armed factions under the name of 'Syrian National Army' (previously the Free Syrian Army (FSA), positioned as the official army of the opposition during Syrian civil war) took control of the Syrian city of Afrin on 18/03/2018, and since this date there have been systematic crimes and violations that can be described as crimes against humanity according to International and humanitarian law.

Hostilities by the militias backed and protected by Turkey include cutting and burning fruit and forest trees, and stealing agricultural harvests and crops, thus removing livelihoods. Other hostile actions have included bulldozing graves, stealing antiquities, and restricting public freedoms. Kurds are displaced by using these indirect means, and by bringing in settlers such as militants with their families which also reduces the percentage of Kurds in the region who today number less than 20% of the previous population.

Kurdish residents displaced from Afrin (currently more than 350,000 people) are prevented from returning, and most currently live in refugee camps and shanty housing that lack the minimum requirements of life.

Throughout the Syrian civil war (March 2011 – 20/01/2018), the Afrin region of Syria was controlled by the Ba'ath rule of Syria, and was subject to militias linked to the Democratic Union Party in Syria until the Turkish military invasion that brought in armed militias funded by Turkey.

Afrin region is closed to the media and NGOs, however, details on the situation and the crimes against humanity are documented in reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (28.02.2019, 15.08.2019 and 02.03.2020), as well as in hundreds of reports, files, and testimonies of victims that are available

to human rights activists and civil organisations.

Indeed, AI and AIUK have been vocal on the issues in August 2018 and June 2019. We understand that plans for AIUK work for 2020 on Syria include ongoing engagement/advocacy with the UK government, and workshops planned in 2020 (focusing on strategic litigation of the Assad regime for gross human rights abuses, media work, and fundraising capacity) for AIUK Syrian human rights and survivor civil society organisations and Syrian activists.

However, in the light of the increasingly urgent humanitarian crisis in the Afrin region we urge AI to allocate resources and budget to a campaign to publicise the situation and to call on the International Community to ensure Turkey and its allies cease all hostilities and Human Rights violations in the region.

Board Background Note:
The Board looks forward to the discussion of this resolution but notes that it will not be able to take action independently from the IS.

<u>Work to date</u>
Both the International Secretariat and the UK Section have committed resources to researching, exposing and addressing human rights abuses that have taken place in the context of armed conflict in Syria. This has included work to highlight the situation in Afrin.

This work included the publication of research in 2018 that highlighted Turkey's responsibilities as an occupying power and human rights abuses committed by its allied militia, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, property confiscation, looting and the militarisation of protected civilian establishments, such as schools. The research also highlighted abuses by the Syrian government and YPG, principally the prevention of freedom of movement. The situation in Afrin was noted in the 2019 annual report entry for Syrian and research has highlighted the repression of freedom of expression within Turkey in the context of its occupation of Syrian territory.

AIUK's work has amplified the International Secretariat's research through press, parliamentary and government relations work, as well as through other awareness-raising activities. We have also supported the capacity-building of Syrian civil society and human rights organisations, including their search for accountability.

Amnesty International, as a movement, has a restrictive policy on calls for cessation of hostilities. Such calls require an International Board decision after consultation with the wider movement. We are not aware of any previous call by Amnesty International for a cessation of hostilities.

<u>Amnesty's existing plans</u>
The International Secretariat will continue to monitor and call attention to violations of international humanitarian law in Syria, including Afrin. A further significant public output was planned for autumn 2020 but it is not known whether the COVID-19 epidemic will have impacted on these plans. Research on the Syrian conflict is likely to remain a priority. AIUK will continue to publicise International Secretariat research and provide ongoing support

for those civil society groups with whom we have an established relationship.

Resource implications
The resources required to request that the International Secretariat undertake a campaign on Afrin are minimal. AIUK would not be able to campaign on Afrin in the absence of IS research and co-ordination, which is likely to require significant resources from the International Secretariat. If research and campaign plans are forthcoming, it may be possible to take this work forward using existing staffing and activist resources.

O3 - HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF LIVES IN INDIAN ADMINISTERED KASHMIR.

Summary: This resolution supports the democratic and human rights of the people of Kashmir and urges Amnesty to actively campaign for sending a fact finding mission to the region, for the repeal of the AFSA & PSA and to campaign for respect of article 2 of the UDHR.

Proposer: Norwich Amnesty Group

Resolution Text:
1 AIUK to lobby the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to send a cross party delegation of members of the UK parliament to Indian administered Kashmir on a fact-finding mission.
2 AIUK to demand that the International Secretariat campaign for repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which gives impunity to the armed forces, and of the Public Safety Act (PSA) which allows detention without trial.
3 AIUK to request International Secretariat to designate the victims of mass rape of twin villages of Kunan and Poshpora in North Kashmir as Individuals at Risk case
4 AIUK to engage with the UK Kashmiri diaspora, seeking support for these instructions.

Proposer Background Note:
August 5, 2019 Jammu and Kashmir's 'special status', guaranteed under the Indian Constitution was revoked by a unilateral action. The rights of residents of Kashmir were curtailed amounting to an illegal annexation by India of the UN-recognised disputed territory.

Following the annexation, the entire political leadership was jailed and in a military siege one hundred thousand troops were deployed. A strict curfew was enforced accompanied by a total communication blockade. There were reports of mass arrests, torture, killings, harassment and intimidation. The ill and the infirm are still unable to access health care and there are shortages of medicines. Thousands have lost their businesses because of internet shut down and the local economy has come to a halt. Educational institutions have remained closed for seven months.

Religious freedom in Kashmir has been curtailed. The central mosque of the region- the Jamia Masjid Srinagar - was kept under complete lockdown for 19 consecutive weeks.

Today, Kashmir is the world's most militarised zone. 800,000 troops operate to suppress the population, armed with the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which allows them to act with impunity, and the Public Safety Act which allows detention without trial. Torture is used as a matter of policy by

the Indian State and has been secretly carried out on tens of thousands of civilians in a systematic manner in which all the institutions of the State - legislative, executive, judicial and military- are complicit.

According to applied research, 2,700 unknown, unmarked, and mass graves, containing 2,943 plus bodies, were unearthed across 55 villages in the Bandipora, Baramulla, and Kupwara districts of Kashmir between 2006 and 2009. Between 2011 and 2016, additional unmarked graves have been identified by local organizations, bringing the total to approximately 6700.

Sexualised violence in Kashmir is widespread. In 1991, soldiers of the Fourth Rajputana Rifles and the Sixty-Eighth Mountain Brigade cordoned off the villages of Kunan and Poshpora and forcibly removed the male villagers from their homes, detaining them in two houses. While army personnel interrogated and tortured the men, groups of soldiers raided village homes and gang raped between 23 and 100 women. The soldiers left after forcing villagers to sign “No Objection” certificates. The victims of Kunan and Poshpora still face exclusion and the courts are not hearing the case.

Board Background Note:
The Board looks forward to the discussion of this resolution but notes that it will not be able to take action independently from the IS.

Work to date
Amnesty International has long highlighted the human rights abuses that take place in the territory of Jammu and Kashmir, including those that have occurred since the revocation of special status, without consultation, in August 2019. Research has highlighted communications blackouts, repression under the Public Safety Act, the harassment of journalists, as well as the potential impact of internet restrictions on public health and safety in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic. Amnesty International has also, for decades, highlighted the dangers of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and has called for its repeal.

AIUK has also undertaken campaigning action on Jammu and Kashmir since August 2019, including a focus on the impact of the communications shutdown (see, https://www.amnesty.org.uk/thank-you-taking-action-kashmir).

Amnesty International has repeatedly called for the proper investigation of the mass rapes that took place in Kunan and Poshpora in 1991 and has reiterated a call for justice and compensation for survivors.

Amnesty’s existing plans
We expect Amnesty International to continue to monitor and highlight human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir, including those that take place under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Public Safety Act. AIUK will amplify the movement’s research and recommendations, including through campaigning actions, where these are called for by the International Secretariat.

There are no plans to call for UK Parliamentarians to form a fact-finding delegation to Jammu and Kashmir. Any such call could only be made after careful consideration and in consultation with the International Secretariat and relevant national offices.

Resource implications

The resources required to request that the International Secretariat undertake campaign work on Jammu and Kashmir are negligible. AIUK would not be able to campaign on the territory in the absence of IS research and co-ordination, which is likely to require significant resources from the International Secretariat.
If research and campaign plans be forthcoming, it may be possible to take this work forward through AIUK's usual approaches to country work.

O4 - CAMPAIGN TO END EXCESSIVE, CRUEL AND INHUMAN CELLULAR CONFINEMENT IN UK PRISONS

Summary: This resolution highlights the fact that many prisoners in the UK are confined to cells for 22 or more hours a day and proposes campaigning for a legally enforceable minimum standard of 8 hours a day out of cell.

Proposer: Cardiff Group

Resolution Text: This AGM instructs Amnesty UK to campaign to end excessive cellular confinement in UK prisons (often amounting to 22 or more hours in cell per day) and to urge the UK government to establish a legally enforceable minimum standard of 8 hours a day out of cell (whether solitary or shared).

Proposer Background Note: The need for acceptable standards has long been recognised in relation to torture and inhuman treatment:

- 'The CPT considers that one should aim at ensuring that prisoners in remand establishments are able to spend a reasonable part of the day (8 hours or more) outside their cell, engaged in purposeful activity of a varied nature. Of course, establishments for sentenced prisoners should be even more favourable' *European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) 2nd General Report of 1992 para 47*.
- 'No prisoner shall be subjected to, and all prisoners shall be protected from, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, for which no circumstances whatsoever may be invoked as a justification.' *UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of prisoners The Nelson Mandela Rules (Rule 1) General Assembly resolution 70/175, annex, adopted on 17 December 2015. (Emphasis added)*
- Every prisoner who is not employed in outdoor work shall have at least one hour of suitable exercise in the open air daily if the weather permits. (Mandela Rule 23) *HM Inspectorate of Prisons has long recognised the dangers of excessive confinement.*
- 'The amount of time spent outside cells is also critical to the mental health and wellbeing of prisoners. For those reasons, the public sector Prison Service has a key performance target (KPT) of 10 hours a day during weekdays for time out of cell. In nine prisons, (surveyed for the report) the best outcome for an unemployed prisoner amounted to less than four hours a day out of cell – and in a worst case could be less than an hour'. *Time out of cell: A short thematic review (Introduction) December 2007*
- The 10-hour KPT has been abandoned and the situation has continued to deteriorate
- 21% of UK prisoners were spending

less than 2 hours a day out of cell.
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Report of 2014–15

- "Even in Training Prisons, where people serve most of their sentence and work to reduce offending, one in five (20%) said they were locked up more than 22 hours a day"
Prison Reform Trust Bromley briefings Summer 2019 (p14)
- The groups most likely to be unable to work and therefore confined to cells include the elderly, mentally ill, and learning disabled.
- Self-inflicted deaths are 6.2 times more likely in prisons than in general population
Prison Reform Trust Bromley briefings Summer 2019

Board Background Note:
The Board looks forward to the discussion of this resolution but notes that it will not be able to take action independently from the IS.

Work to date
Amnesty International acknowledges that routine, excessive confinement to cells can amount to a violation of human rights. However, in recent years, International Secretariat and Amnesty International UK work on prison conditions has been limited to emphasising the responsibilities of state authorities in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Amnesty's existing plans
There are currently no plans for research and campaigning on cellular confinement in UK prisons. However, the Impact of the Movement strategy envisages increased scope for AIUK activists to develop, lead and pursue human rights campaigns on their own initiative with limited staff support.

Resource implications
The resources needed to implement this resolution centrally would be significant. AIUK would need to research the issue before undertaking any campaigning work and may need to recruit additional expertise. This is likely to require additional financial resources and the displacement of other activity.

05 - EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE UK HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Summary: This resolution calls upon Amnesty to support the existing European Court of Human Rights and the UK Human Rights Act.

Proposer: Woking Group

Resolution Text: This AGM calls on the Board to:

1. Support the UK's continued membership of the Council of Europe and thereby supporting the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.
2. Promote the work of the European Court of Human Rights within Amnesty and to the wider public.
3. Cooperate with other civil society groups and campaigning organisations in a wider campaign to save the UK Human Rights Act.
4. Initiate the provision of campaigning materials for members to lobby their MPs on this issue.

Proposer Background Note:
The UK was one of the founders of the Council of Europe in 1949 which has 47 members, many more than the EU. At the heart of its work is the aim to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It does this mainly via

the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and is upheld by the European Court of Human Rights. The Court has formed a vital cornerstone of human rights in Europe. The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated the rights set out in the ECHR into British law. The Government is committed to repealing the 1998 Act and withdrawing from the ECHR and bringing in their own Human Rights Act which would not be subject to the European Court of Human Rights. This would place the UK alongside only three other European countries which are not answerable to the ECHR.

Board Background Note:
The Board supports this resolution

Work to date
Amnesty International UK supports the UK's continued membership of the Council of Europe and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. In recent years, we have campaigned extensively in support of the Human Rights Act and to raise awareness of how the Act has protected people in the UK and enabled them to obtain justice.

The work that we have undertaken to date has included collaboration with human rights organisations and other stakeholders across the United Kingdom, as well as with individuals and groups who have benefitted from the Human Rights Act.

We note that it is not currently formal government policy to repeal the Human Rights Act or to withdraw from the European Court of Human Rights. However, the government has pledged to establish a "Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission", which may present a threat to existing rights protections.

In addition to our work focussing on Westminster and Whitehall, Amnesty International UK's offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland have been working with partners to expand human rights protection in those parts of the UK, by supporting processes to incorporate a wider range of human rights treaties into Scottish law and to restart meaningful dialogue on the Northern Ireland Bill of Rights. Debates and discussions in devolved administrations, legislatures and societies can have an impact on UK government policy towards the Human Rights Act itself.

Amnesty's existing plans
Campaigning and advocacy to maintain human rights protections in the UK is part of our existing plans. We have not campaigned on the issue during 2020, in part because we have prioritised issues that have emerged during the COVID-19 crisis. However, we plan to do so as the need and opportunity arise.

Little is known about the intended remit, make-up or methodology of the intended "Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission". However, we anticipate that when more is known, advocacy work and campaigning will be important.

Resource implications
Our existing plans include work to maintain UK human rights protections, including the Human Rights Act and ECHR. Assuming no substantial departure from those plans is required, the resources implications of this resolution would be limited.