

# Amnesty International GROUP CAMPAIGN UPDATE



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March 2016

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## The Human Rights Act Campaign Week of Action 9-16 April

The Government is committed to scrapping the Human Rights Act (HRA) and replacing it with a British Bill of Rights. They announced in the Queen's speech last May that they would consult on this proposal. We don't know when the government will bring out the consultation. Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, recently said in parliament it would come "soon" but we have been expecting it since last May!

We are preparing for the government's consultation to come at any time, making sure we keep up momentum to Save the Act while we wait!

When Michael Gove gave evidence to the European Union justice subcommittee in early February he said:

*"Not only did Britain play a leading role in establishing those convention rights but, through the medium of the Human Rights Act, we have those convention rights observed in a far more direct fashion than is the case in one or two other jurisdictions. But even though Britain played a role in establishing the convention in the first place, and even though Britain is, through its courts and its Parliament, determined to play a leading role in the protection of rights, **human rights—it is a source of regret to us—have a bad name in the public square.** Human rights have become associated with unmeritorious individuals pursuing through the courts claims that do not command public support or sympathy."*  
(emphasis added)

The government needs to be reminded that there are people across the country who care about the HRA.

**So we're asking you all to be involved in a week of action for the HRA in April, from 9 to 16 April.**

Amnesty activists cross the country will be taking action together, in the same week, to put pressure on their politicians, raise the issue in their local media and engage with the public in their area, so that people realise that the HRA is something that many of us are willing to stand up for.

### Tips for activities for the week of action

#### 1 - Meet with your MP

Arrange to meet your MP during the week of action (9 – 16 April). MPs can often have a very busy schedule so it is good to write in advance asking for a meeting that week. If you can't arrange for that specific week, please try to arrange as close as possible.

MPs will often have a surgery, which is time set aside every week or month when they meet their constituents about issues. They may not like to use surgery time for campaigning so offer to meet them at their surgery or maybe just before or after.

You can use this meeting to talk to them about why you think the HRA is so important and to find out their views on the Act.

If you can't meet your MP directly then you could always write to them letting them know your views on the HRA and asking them for theirs. Use the enclosed Q&A to help you draft your letter. After you have met your MP or written to them please let us know what they said. This helps Amnesty to plan lobbying in Westminster. Please email [lobbyfeedback@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:lobbyfeedback@amnesty.org.uk)

## **2- Write to your local paper**

Please feel free to use the sample letter attached with this pack - or use it as inspiration for your own letter - and send it to your local paper to try and get some coverage, letting others in your area know that HRA is important to you. If you need any contacts for local publications or just want some advice on any press matters, contact [harriet.garland@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:harriet.garland@amnesty.org.uk) 0207 033 1549

## **3 - Arrange an event in your local area**

You could arrange a stall in the town centre, a stunt, an Amnestea and have HRA themed cakes – anything you like to raise awareness about this work. If you are putting on an event you could invite your MP and local paper along.

Tell others about your campaigning! Tweet updates and pictures of your activities using the hashtag #humanrightsact or #savetheact. You could also share the petition to Michael Gove using this URL [www.amnesty.org.uk/hra](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/hra)

Thank you for taking part in the week of action. Please send any photos, videos, copies of your letters in the paper and feedback from your meeting with your MP to [activism@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:activism@amnesty.org.uk)

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## **Human Rights Act Activist challenge**

Thank you for all the entries for the activist challenge. There were some brilliant ideas and it was so hard to pick the winners! However, after much agonising, we are happy to announce that the winners are:

Local Group category: Edinburgh Central, with this fantastic campaign video [http://youtu.be/RzdOKOn\\_vRA](http://youtu.be/RzdOKOn_vRA)

Student group category: Cambridge University group for organising and facilitating some incredible campaigning for the Human Rights Act from across the student network

Youth Group category: Kings Norton Girls School in Birmingham for their brilliant Amnestea event called Hands Up for the Human Rights Act

Congratulations to all our winners! Your prizes will be on the way to you soon.

Well done to all entries!

# **CALLING ALL GROUPS BASED IN SCOTLAND!**

## **Scottish Election 2016**

The Scottish Parliament election will take place on Thursday 5 May 2016. Candidates will hit the campaign trail once Parliament dissolves on 23 March. But Amnesty Scotland's campaign starts now!

Amnesty International's campaign for the Scottish Parliamentary election is about making a positive case for human rights and addressing some of the urgent human rights issues in Scotland today.

We want all candidates in this election to pledge to:

- Save the Human Rights Act
- Welcome refugees to Scotland
- Support efforts for a co-ordinated response to the refugee crisis in Europe
- Put human rights at the heart of Scotland's International Relations

Amnesty activists across the UK will be campaigning to save the Human Rights Act from March-May this year. Activists in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be doing this campaigning in the context of their devolved administration elections. This is a great way to show the local relevancy of the Human Rights Act and bring out the specific implications for the devolved nations.

Amnesty Groups in England will be using a "Week of Action" as their focus in April. You may want to arrange your events during that week too, but at election time it may not be possible!

## **Campaign Asks**

We are asking all candidates to sign our pledge card and have a picture taken with an "I ♥ Human Rights" placard. The four asks of the campaign are explained in the "Scottish Election 2016" Leaflet which you can give to the candidate to take away with them. Here's a summary:

### **SAVE THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

Scotland's government and Parliament are united in their support for the Human Rights Act and the next Parliament could potentially block the UK Government's attempts to force changes in Scotland. The Westminster Government would need legislative consent to legislate in areas that are a responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. Given the position of the current Scottish Government and Parliament, it is unlikely that this consent would be given. We need to make sure that this support for the HRA is maintained in the new Scottish Parliament!

### **Week of Action 9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> April**

While we are campaigning during the election in Scotland, Amnesty activists in England will have a Week of Action to focus their activity. You can plan your election events, stalls or meetings during this week too or decide if there are local dates that make more sense for your campaigning.

### **SCOTLAND WELCOMES REFUGEES**

There has been a hugely positive response to the refugee crisis from people and communities across Scotland. We need to build on this goodwill and harness it. We can't be complacent about the discriminatory attitudes that some people might hold and barriers that asylum seekers and refugees still face in Scotland. This positive approach is the first step in building a fair and humane asylum process which places human dignity at its heart.

## **EUROPE'S RESPONSE TO REFUGEES**

We are facing the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War and yet the response by many states in Europe has been uncoordinated and inadequate. We can only begin to address this global crisis by sharing responsibility amongst all states so that we can all play a proportionate role.

Scotland can help by being a positive voice in this debate; acknowledging that people are risking their lives because what they are fleeing is even worse; repression, bombings, and countless human rights abuses. We cannot build higher fences, close our eyes and hope that this situation will go away. Leadership needs to be shown and a commitment to play our part in Europe to respond more humanely.

## **SCOTLAND'S PLACE IN THE WORLD**

Scotland has an ever-increasing role on the world's stage whether diplomatically, through trade, academic links or through culture and the arts. We need to ensure that human rights are at the heart of all of Scotland's international relations; that Ministers are raising human rights issues on their trips overseas; that Scottish businesses are not involved in or fuelling human rights abuses and that all formal agreements with other countries, takes into account their human rights record. Amnesty International is calling for cross-party support for an international human rights strategy to cover all the international relations of the Scottish Government and associated agencies. There is a huge amount of support for human rights across government but we need to make sure that efforts to promote human rights by one part of government isn't undermined by another.

## **Tips for activities**

Attached in this pack is Scottish Parliament Election Activists toolkit & Campaign briefing. This goes into more detail about some of the events and campaigning you can do during the election. There may be events, hustings or opportunities in your local area which you can link up with or you might want to arrange your own event or meeting. Think about having your event during the Week of Action (9 -16 April) as this will link to activity from Groups across the country, to put pressure on their politicians, raise the issue in their local media and engage with the public in their area.

Remember that MPs are likely to be out on the campaign trail with their party candidates, so use the opportunity to engage with them. Invite your MP to your event as well as the candidates and talk to them specifically about the HRA.

The main campaign ask is for candidates to sign the pledge card and have their picture taken with an "I ♥ Human Rights" placard. If there are MPs, party activists or members of the public who want to sign up, then get them to sign the Save the HRA Scotland petition!

Please send any photos, videos, copies of your letters in the paper and feedback from your events or meetings to [activism@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:activism@amnesty.org.uk). This helps us know how much activity is taking place!

# Human Rights Act Resources

## We have lots of resources for you to use

**HRA002** - Pocket guide - A handy guide that sets out why the human rights act is so important.

**HRA003** – HRA posters

**HRA004** - (Heart) Human Rights badges

**HRA005** - Save the Human Rights Act badges

**HRA006** - Save the Human Rights Act stickers

**HRA009** – Save the Human Rights Act placards.

## Scottish Election Resources

**SCOT001** Scottish Election Leaflet

**SCOT002** Scottish Election Pledge card (for candidates to sign)

**SCOT003** Scotland Stands for Human Rights placard (card)

**HRA007** - Scotland Human Rights Act Leaflet

**HRA008** - I ♥ Human Rights placard (card)

### Please note:

As you can see, there are 3 different placards you can order. Please get the candidates to have their picture taken with the “I ♥ Human Rights” placards. The other placards are available so that any group shots could use a mixture of them!

The pledge card is for candidates to sign only. If there are other people wanting to sign up, they can sign the HRA petition (pdf available to download on the Groups page) or direct them to the petition online at: [www.savetheact.uk](http://www.savetheact.uk)

**You can order the above resources by calling 01788 545 553 and giving the above product codes.**

## Other resources to download:

Human Rights Act Q&A

Human Rights Act Petition

Letter to local paper

Human Rights Act Scotland Petition

Scottish Election 2016 Activist Pack

Scottish Election 2016 Activist Briefing