



*Promoting Justice / Protecting Rights*

## Press Statement

### **Bill of Rights - government needs to try again**

*23<sup>d</sup> February 2010*

Leading human rights group, the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) has criticised the government's proposals for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The group's response comes in the final days of the public consultation on the Bill of Rights, which ends on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March.

In its response to the consultation, CAJ has made it clear that it will continue to campaign for a Bill of Rights, but that the government proposals do not stand up in human rights terms and should be rejected in their totality.

#### **Aideen Gilmore, Deputy Director of CAJ, says:**

"We will be letting the Northern Ireland Office know that what they have offered in their consultation document on a Bill of Rights does not come close to what is required, either by the government's international human rights obligations or under the terms of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement.

What has been produced by the government should be seen as an attempt to dishonour and disregard the spirit and letter of that Agreement, and could potentially undermine rather than advance the protection of human rights and equality in Northern Ireland. By attempting to relegate so many rights for discussion in a British "national" debate, it ignores the very mandate outlined in the Agreement to develop a Bill of Rights reflecting the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland as it emerges from conflict and attempts to build a peaceful and stable future."

She concluded: “CAJ has campaigned for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland for many years, and will continue to do so, but only one worthy of the name. It is now time to implement a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland that the vast majority of people here have clearly said they want, and that is particular to their needs following years of violent conflict. Without this, building a peaceful and shared future could be jeopardised, as recent events have all too clearly shown.”

The CAJ document outlines a number of key reasons why it rejects the government’s proposals, including the commitment made to progressing rights in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the fact that the current proposals are focussed on policy issues rather than constitutional rights protection and the failure of the government to consult in a meaningful way.

## ENDS

### Notes to editors

- A copy of CAJ's response is attached to this email.
- **Aideen Gilmore is available for comment.**
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) is an independent, non-governmental human rights organisation which works to ensure that the administration of justice is compatible with the highest international human rights standards.
- See [www.caj.org.uk](http://www.caj.org.uk) for further information on CAJ and its work.

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