# Human Rights Consortium Responds to proposals to Leave the ECHR

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The **Human Rights Consortium** has strongly condemned proposals By Suella Braverman MP and Baroness Arlene Foster to withdraw the United Kingdom from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and to repeal the Human Rights Act (HRA). The Consortium has labelled the proposals legally and morally flawed, politically reckless and constitutionally dangerous.

**A Direct Threat to the Northern Ireland Peace Process**

**Kevin Hanratty, Director of the Human Rights Consortium** said, ‘The most alarming aspect of these proposals is the attempt to decouple Northern Ireland from the ECHR framework. The ECHR is not a peripheral element of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement - it is a central pillar. The Agreement explicitly commits to the incorporation of the ECHR into Northern Ireland law, with enforceable remedies and safeguards.’

‘To suggest that this commitment is merely 'descriptive' or 'non-binding' is a dangerous misreading of both the letter and spirit of the Agreement. The ECHR commitment is a cornerstone of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. It remains a confidence-building measure for communities emerging from conflict. Undermining it risks destabilising the delicate balance of rights, equality, and mutual respect that underpins peace. Any attempt to impose regressive changes to the rights framework in Northern Ireland would violate the principles of the Agreement and international law.’

## No Legitimate Case for Withdrawal

‘The ECHR has been a cornerstone of human rights protection in the UK for over 70 years. It was championed by British leaders in the aftermath of World War II and has since provided vital safeguards for individuals against abuses of power. The claim that the ECHR undermines sovereignty or democratic governance is a distortion of both legal reality and historical fact. The Human Rights Act does not transfer sovereignty to Strasbourg. It empowers UK courts to interpret and apply rights domestically, ensuring that individuals can seek justice at home.’

## A Regressive Vision for Rights

‘The proposals suggest replacing the ECHR with a patchwork of common law and parliamentary statutes. This would strip away the universality, enforceability, and independence that the ECHR provides. It would leave rights protections vulnerable to political whim and erode the ability of individuals to hold the state to account.’

## Conclusion

‘Anyone genuinely interested in the protection of rights should be seeking the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement’s human rights commitments - including the delivery of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland - not threatening the basic levels of protection we currently have in the Human Rights Act and the ECHR.’

‘The Human Rights Consortium urges all political leaders, civil society organisations, and members of the public to reject these proposals in the strongest terms. Leaving the ECHR would not be a restoration of sovereignty—it would be a retreat from our shared values of dignity, equality, and justice.’

‘We call on the UK Government to reaffirm its commitment to the ECHR, the Human Rights Act, and the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.’

‘Peace and rights are not negotiable.’

**ENDS**

* The Human Rights Consortium is a NI based charity that campaigns for a human right based Northern Ireland that includes a Bill of Rights. There are over 165 member organisations of the Consortium drawn from across Northern Ireland. More information about the Consortium can be found on our website [www.humanrightsconsortium.org](http://www.humanrightsconsortium.org)
* The commitment to the ECHR was included in the Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity section of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. It reads - HM Government undertakes to “complete incorporation into Northern Ireland law of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), with direct access to the courts, and remedies for breach of the Convention, including power for the courts to overrule Assembly legislation on grounds of inconsistency.”
* The [**Human Rights Act**](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents) has played a significant role in implementing one of the core human rights protections of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement by helping incorporate rights from the [European Convention of Human Rights](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf) into domestic legislation. The HRA has acted as an important safeguard on the exercise of power in Northern Ireland by the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly in the 25 years of its existence.
* [The Prosperity Institute](https://www.prosperity.com/) has today published a [paper](https://www.prosperity.com/media-publications/echr/) co-authored by Suella Braverman MP and Guy Dampier with a foreword by Baroness Arlene Foster that calls for the UK to withdraw from the ECHR and attempts to bypass the commitment in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement to incorporate the ECHR into law in Northern Ireland.