

Reject the Terrorism Bill

We, the undersigned, are filled with fear and horror at the government's Terrorism Bill. If it becomes law, the Bill will change legal certainties that it was previously believed would stand firm in all circumstances. We are particularly concerned that the government is giving a green light to racism and Islamophobia and signalling a general attack on freedom of expression.

We are resolutely opposed to the extension of pre-charge detention to 90 days (as provided for in the Bill), or indeed to any extension at all of this period. We fear that any such measure is likely to encourage the arrest people of about whom there is no reasonable suspicion.

We are appalled at provisions in the Bill that make it a criminal offence to give 'direct or indirect encouragement' to, or 'glorify' acts of 'terrorism' – a term whose meaning has been distorted so that it includes acts of resistance to repressive regimes overseas and even includes acts which don't involve violence to the person. These provisions will demolish the right of free speech and suppress political debate on some of the most important issues of our time.

We are totally opposed to any steps to remove trial by jury for offences linked to terrorism, to allow the hearing of evidence in secret by judges and special advocates, to deport individuals at risk to regimes known to practise torture, to ban organisations which are not involved in terrorism or violence, or to criminalise imams, bookshops, mosques and organisations for the expression of legitimate religious and political ideas.

We believe that the Terrorism Bill is misguided and dangerous from beginning to end, and we urge MPs to reject it.

Name (please print)	Address	Email <i>(please print clearly)</i> and phone	Signature

This petition is a condensed and updated version of a full statement that is supported by a wide range of organisations – see overleaf

**Return to SACC, c/o Peace & Justice Centre, Princes Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4BJ
More information from Scotland Against Criminalising Communities www.sacc.org.uk**

United to Protect Our Rights

Since the bombings in London in July 2005 the police have succeeded in conducting widespread investigations using the vast range of powers already available to them.

Throughout those same 5 weeks, however, we have observed with fear and horror announcements by the government of the steps it intends to take to change legal certainties that it was previously believed would stand firm in all circumstances. We are particularly concerned that the government is giving a green light to racism and Islamophobia and signalling a general attack on freedom of expression in the Muslim community.

We the following register our grave concerns, and our total and stalwart opposition to the following steps proposed by the government:

1. The removal of trial by jury for offences linked to terrorism
2. The hearing of evidence in secret by judges and special advocates alone in terrorist trials with the accused person not told of the evidence against them and no public accountability
3. The deportation of individuals at risk to regimes known to practise torture in reliance on "diplomatic assurances"
4. The extension of pre-charge detention beyond the already lengthy 14 day period and the encouragement it will give to arrest people about whom there is no reasonable suspicion or intelligence
5. The banning of organisations which are not involved in terrorism or violence and do not advocate it such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir
6. The criminalisation of imams, bookshops, mosques and organisations for the expression of legitimate religious and political ideas (even if such ideas are thought to be offensive or wrong) such as the adoption of sharia law
7. The creation of new offences of indirect incitement to terrorism – even though incitement to murder is already a crime – and of acts preparatory to terrorism – even though existing law already makes it an offence to be knowingly involved in terrorism
8. The amendment or repeal of the Human Rights Act

We the undersigned have not forgotten the experiences of the conflict in Northern Ireland and the lessons of the last 30 years when the removal of fundamental rights and the creation of an entire suspect community achieved nothing other than the continuation of violence, fear, bitterness and the creation of an unbridgeable divide. We call on the government to protect all of the people by advocating a proper and judicious use of the existing law and by realising that over-reaction will be deeply counterproductive.

Supported by

Newham Monitoring Project, Islamic Forum of Europe, Birnberg Peirce Solicitors, Christian Khan Solicitors, The 1990 Trust, CAMPACC, National Civil Rights Movement, The Monitoring Project, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islamic Human Rights Commission, Bangla 2000, East London Communities Against State Terror, Stop Political Terror, Statewatch, Muslim Association of Britain, Stop The War Coalition, Scotland Against Criminalising Communities (SACC)

This statement was issued in response to a series of announcements made by the government prior to the official publication of the Terrorism Bill (published 12 October 2005). The published Bill modifies some of the earlier proposals, but leaves the essentials unchanged – it is still an assault on some of the keystones of democracy and the British way of life