

Rt Hon John Swinney MSP
First Minister of Scotland
Scottish Government
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Via email only: firstminister@gov.scot

3 July 2024

Dear First Minister

Human Rights Bill – request for urgent update

Thank you for acknowledging our letter of 15th May in which we welcomed you to your new role as First Minister and requested that we meet.

We understand that the pre-Election period has meant that it was not possible to meet prior to recess; however, we would like to request an urgent meeting with you post-election to discuss the Human Rights Bill together with our incoming Chair, Professor Angela O'Hagan.

The commitment of successive First Ministers to introduce a Human Rights Bill with the intention of strengthening the human rights legal framework in Scotland and incorporating international human rights treaties into Scots Law has long been welcomed. It is considered best practice by the United Nations once a state party has ratified a treaty. The commitment of the State to take this action in Scotland has been recognised and welcomed in various concluding observations of the UN

Treaty Monitoring bodies, most recently in 2022 when the Scottish Government confirmed directly to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that it would introduce a Human Rights Bill during this session of Parliament.

We noted your initial priorities as First Minister – to eradicate child poverty; to grow the economy; to tackle the climate emergency; and to improve Scotland’s public services. Strengthened human rights law has potential to give Government and duty bearers the framework to better deliver on all of these areas which have a direct impact on progressively realising and upholding the human rights of the people of Scotland.

As Scotland’s National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), with a mandate to promote human rights, we seek an urgent update on the progress of the Bill. We anticipate that it will be included in your Programme for Government and look forward to working to inform its passage through the Scottish Parliament.

We therefore write again to request an early meeting with you to discuss this in advance of Parliament returning after the Summer. Please liaise directly with our Executive Director Jan Savage to schedule:

jan.savage@scottishhumanrights.com

We look forward to hearing from you.

Your sincerely,



Jim Farish, Shelley Gray, Claire Methven O'Brien
Members of the Commission

Angela O'Hagan
Incoming Chair

cc Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice by email
cc EHRCJ Committee by email