

## Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice

Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Via email: [CabSecforSJ@gov.scot](mailto:CabSecforSJ@gov.scot)

10 December 2024

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

### **State of the Nation 2024: Civil and Political Rights in Scotland**

It is my pleasure as the Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission to present you with a copy of our first State of the Nation report, marking Human Rights Day 2024.

For the first time, this year the Commission offers a snapshot of key human rights concerns and challenges affecting people in Scotland's civil and political rights, such as access to justice, fair trial and the freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

Drawing from our human rights monitoring work on spotlight projects and our international reporting to the United Nations and the Council of Europe over the period September 2023 - September 2024, we have examined 14 rights drawn from the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, mostly given effect in Scotland through the Human Rights Act 1998.

We find that there are significant access to justice challenges in Scotland, including a lack of human rights cases in Scottish courts. The justice system is currently highly complex, expensive and under-resourced. This means that in order to challenge and

ultimately remedy a possible human rights violation, people must navigate a fundamentally broken justice system, often at great personal and financial expense. As it stands, the Commission has very limited powers to close the gap, to the detriment of the people of Scotland.

I encourage the Scottish Government to reflect on our findings across each right and the outstanding commitments and recommendations identified across the report.

In the Commission's [Strategic Plan 2024-28](#), we have committed to a series of annual reports to Parliament, of which this is the first, to provide a snapshot of current human rights challenges, as well promote awareness of human rights in line with our mandate.

Our aspiration is that our annual State of the Nation reports become a fixed point for the Scottish Parliament, Government, the public and civil society to reflect on progress towards the fulfilment of human rights for all people, identify the challenges to be navigated and commit to action. To that end, we have written to the Presiding Officer and the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee to ask for their support in allocating annual Parliamentary time to this from 2025.

As always, the Commission stands ready to discuss any findings from our monitoring work, including the State of the Nation report, and opportunities to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Angela O'Hagan**  
**Chair, Scottish Human Rights Commission**

*cc. Minister for Equalities*

*Enc. Scottish Human Rights Commission State of the Nation Report 2024: Civil and Political Rights.*