

# **Human Rights Consortium Scotland**

## **Summary Report**

**Universal Periodic Review of the UK,  
Geneva 24 May 2012**

The Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UK's human rights record took place on Thursday 24 May. The Human Rights Consortium Scotland (HRCS) organised live viewings of the session in 2 locations across Scotland, and took part in the Twitter debate happening across the country.

Sixty UN member States posed questions to the UK and made recommendations in a number of areas. Many congratulated the UK on embedding recommendations from the UK's previous UPR review in 2008, particularly through its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, its withdrawal of reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and passing the Equality Act.

States also highlighted issues of concern. The most frequent were those relating to the prevalence of discrimination in the UK (in particular racial profiling), migrant workers (particularly the need to sign the UN Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers), violence against women, human trafficking, physical punishment of children, extraordinary renditions, and allegations of torture by the military in foreign detention facilities.

States focussed their recommendations on the whole of the UK, though some directly commended the establishment of the Scottish Human Rights Commission. Lord McNally who headed the UK delegation made particular reference to Scotland as taking a distinctive approach on issues in areas such as justice, health and education. He further mentioned Scotland's changes to civil legal aid, and the race equality statement developed by the Scottish Government. Scotland's success in the area of climate justice, and in creating a multi-agency approach towards offenders was also highlighted, and Lord McNally noted the Scottish government's commitment to creating a modern, inclusive and human rights respecting society.

The UK was congratulated for its frank engagement with the UPR process, yet Lord McNally seemed to play down many concerns, saying that he did not believe the UK's human rights record was on a downward slope – a statement contrary to many NGO submissions which have pointed to wide-ranging cuts and erosion of human rights protections for the most vulnerable. Disappointingly, only Cuba mentioned the issue of cuts to welfare specifically, while only a handful of States made recommendations relating to economic, social and cultural rights.

### **Next Steps**

The UK conceded that it needs to work harder to tackle issues such as violence against women, and throughout the session elaborated the many ways by which the UK is improving human rights respect in the UK. Following the UK's review, Lord McNally hosted a side event for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at which he committed to on-going dialogue with them, with the intention to move beyond the Review, establish a 'process' of engagement and a programme to deliver on recommendations from the UPR. In what was a positive discussion with Lord McNally, HRCS Chair Carole Ewart raised the need for Scotland to be represented on the UK delegation and on the lack of funding available for human rights NGOs in Scotland.

Lord McNally's commitment to consult the devolved administrations, the national human rights institutions and NGOs before making a comprehensive response in September was reiterated in the UK's final remarks to the UPR on the adoption of the Draft Report on 30 May.

The HRCS will participate and follow this development of outcomes of the UPR process and continue to bring attention the human rights issues as they relate to Scotland. Specifically, HRCS aims to increase awareness of human rights and to build capacity on delivering human rights principles and standards so that people's daily lives are improved.

The adopted Draft Report of the Working Group of the United Kingdom will go to the plenary session of the Human Rights Council in September for adoption. Click the link to read the Report and give us your feedback: [http://www.upr-info.org/IMG/pdf/a\\_hrc\\_wg.6\\_13\\_l.7\\_united\\_kingdom.pdf](http://www.upr-info.org/IMG/pdf/a_hrc_wg.6_13_l.7_united_kingdom.pdf)

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