

OPEN LETTER TO THE HOME SECRETARY AND JUSTICE SECRETARY ON THE POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL

15 MARCH 2021

Dear Home Secretary and Justice Secretary,

We write to share our profound concern and alarm over the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill published last week. Not only does this Bill contain numerous threats to the right to peaceful protest and access to the countryside, criminalise Gypsy and Traveller communities' way of life, as well as a whole host of expansive policing powers, but it is being rushed through parliament during a pandemic and before civil society and the public have been able to fully understand its profound implications.

Contained within this 307-page Bill are plans to:

- Introduce draconian new police powers to decide where, when and how citizens are allowed to protest and have their voices heard by those in power
- Increase penalties for those breaching police conditions on protests and the ease with which they can be found to have done so
- Create a new trespass offence that criminalises the way of life of nomadic Gypsy and Traveller communities, while the government manifestly fails to provide adequate sites and permitted stopping places, and has implications for the public's right to protest, access to the countryside and people experiencing homelessness

This is a huge Bill, both in length and in potential consequences - for young people calling for social change facing greater criminalisation by the state, for Gypsy and Traveller communities facing threats to their way of life, and for anyone who values freedom of expression and the right to make yourself heard against the powerful.

This in itself is enough to cause alarm, but the government is also trying to rush this Bill through parliament, with less than a week between publication and second reading. This is deeply inadequate and provides no time for MPs and their staff, let alone the communities it stands to affect so profoundly, to understand what the consequences of this wide-ranging Bill may be.

For a country that so often prides itself on civil liberties, this Bill represents an attack on some of the most fundamental rights of citizens, in particular those from marginalised communities, and is being driven through at a time and in a way where those who will be subject to its provisions are least able to respond.

We urge the government to fundamentally rethink its approach.

Yours sincerely,

Gracie Bradley, Interim Director, Liberty

Hugh Knowles & Miriam Turner, Co-Executive Directors, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Sarah Mann, Director, Friends, Families and Travellers

Guy Shrubsole & Nick Hayes, Co-Founders, Right to Roam Campaign

Len McCluskey, General Secretary, Unite the Union

Fiona Colley, Director of Social Change, Homeless Link

Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary, Open Spaces Society

Tom Platt, Director of Advocacy & Engagement, The Ramblers

Louise Hazan & Harpreet K Paul, Co-Founders, Tipping Point

Andrew Simms, Co-Director, New Weather Institute

Anna Vickerstaff, UK Lead, 350.org

Kevin Blowe, Campaigns Coordinator, Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol)

Dave Turnbull, Head of Access, Conservation & Environmental Sustainability, British Mountaineering Council

Roger Geffen, Policy Director, Cycling UK

Kristiana Wrixon, Head of Policy, Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations

Stephanie Draper, Chief Executive, Bond

Minnie Rahman, Campaigns and Communications Director, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

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Rebecca Baron, Head of Activism, Ben & Jerry's Europe

Siân Summers-Rees, Chief Officer, City of Sanctuary

Colin Hines, Convenor, Green New Deal group

Leo Murray, Co-Director, Possible

Tom Brake, Director, Unlock Democracy

Professor Natalie Fenton, Chair, Media Reform Coalition

Yvonne MacNamara, CEO, The Traveller Movement

Rosie Lewis, Deputy Director & VAWG Services Manager, The Angelou Centre

Maari Nastari, Interim CEO, The Outside Project

Maurice Mcleod, Chief Executive, Race on the Agenda

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Asad Rehman, Executive Director, War on Want

Dr Halima Begum, Chief Executive, Runnymede Trust

Brian Gormally, Director, Committee on the Administration of Justice

Kate Clow, Chair of the Board, Culture Routes Society

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain

Jess Turtle, Co-Founder, Museum of Homelessness

Daniel Hale, Campaign Director, Purpose Europe

Siana Bangura, Founder & Producer, Courageous Films

Lynn Jamieson, Chair, Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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Deniz Uğur, Deputy Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition

David Mackenzie, Nukewatch UK

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Frances Howe, Co-Director, Biofuelwatch

Leni Morris, CEO, Galop

Hannah Martin & Fatima Ibrahim, Co Directors, Green New Deal UK

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Vicky Blake, UK President, University and College Union (UCU)

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Nick Lowles, CEO, HOPE not hate

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Joe Corre, Talk Fracking

Naomi Smith, CEO, Best for Britain

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Jacqueline Bourne, Founder Member, One World Voice

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Jane Tallents, Core Group member, Trident Ploughshares

Lynne Segal, The Care Collective

Steven McCracken, Co-Founder, The Free Press?

Louisa Davison, Steering Committee, Citizens' Climate Lobby UK

Alphonsine Kabagabo, Director, Women for Refugee Women

Jyoti Fernandes, Chair, Landworkers' Alliance

Anthony Johnson, Registered Nurse & Lead Organiser, Nurses United UK

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Bea Millar, Chair, Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Change

Eva Watkinson, Head of Campaigns, Jubilee Debt Campaign

Robbie Gillett, Director, Adfree Cities

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Clare Skidmore, Advice Manager, Race Equality First

Suzanne Duval BEM, BME Mental Health Manager, Diverse Cymru

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Paul Cook, Head of Advocacy, Tearfund

Sophie Neuburg, Executive Director, Medact

Josh Russell & Tom de Grunwald, Co-Founders, Forward Democracy

Carina Millstone, Executive Director, Feedback

Diarmaid McDonald, Lead Organiser, Just Treatment

Kate Paradine, Chief Executive, Women in Prison

George Dow, Co-Chair, Green Christian

Paul Delaney, Acting Director, Positive Money

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Louise King, Director, Children's Rights Alliance for England

Louisa McGeehan, CEO, Just for Kids Law

Alex Jacobs, Director, Joffe Charitable Trust

Ben Donaldson, Head of Campaigns, United Nations Association UK

Sanchita Hosali, Director, British Institute of Human Rights

Crispin Truman, CEO, CPRE, the countryside charity

Steve Crawshaw, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Freedom from Torture

Chris Jones, Director, Statewatch

Hiba Ahmad, Investigator & Organiser, Foxglove

Gillian Lobo, Head of UK Litigation, ClientEarth

Make Votes Matter

Extinction Rebellion (XR) UK

Christian Climate Action

Campaign Against Arms Trade

Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC)

Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants (LGSM)

Reclaim The Power

Feminist Fightback

UK Nanas

The Rights Collective

Another Europe is Possible

Psychologists for Social Change Cymru

UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN)

Choked Up

Fridays For Future Europe

Rainbow Coalition Against Racism

John Morgan, President, Manchester TUC

East Lancashire CND

Cumbria and Lancashire Area CND

Svetlana Kotova, Director of Campaigns and Justice, Inclusion London

Rachel Berger, Chair, Climate Friends Bradford on Avon

Debby Kennett, Chief Executive Office, London Gypsies and Travellers

Ellie Rogers, CEO, Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange

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Alison Blackwood, Manager, Southwark Travellers' Action Group (STAG)

Anne Miller, Chair, Carbon Neutral Cambridge

UKSCN London

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Richard Solly, Co-ordinator, London Mining Network

Tony Phillips, Branch Secretary, UNISON London Fire Brigade

Bristol Energy Network

Amy Smith, London Renters Union

Our Future Now

Bedfordshire Climate Change Forum

Adela Pickles, Frack Free Ryedale

Frack Free Sussex

Frack Free Dee

Elane Heffernan, Disabled Members Rep, UCU NEC

Patricia McManus, Chair, Brighton UCU

Climate Action Chester & District

Climate Action Lewisham

Blackwater Valley Friends of the Earth

Professor Thomas Acton, Secretary, Brentwood Gypsy Support Group

Ben Greig, Chair, On the Verge Cambridge

Global Justice Now Cambridge Youth

Global Justice Stirling

Sisters Uncut Leeds

Nicki Myers, Secretary, Cambridge People's Assembly Against Austerity

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Northern Police Monitoring Project

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Sheffield DPAC

Newcastle DPAC

London DPAC

North Staffordshire East Cheshire DPAC

Suffolk DPAC

Cambridgeshire and Essex DPAC

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Eco Action Families

Weald Action Group

Wanstead Flats Take the Knee

Cambridge Keep our NHS Public

Sustainable Nantwich

Plastic Free Nantwich

Gloucestershire Climate Action Network

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Helen Davies & Cherry Sewell, Co-Chairs, Barnet Stand Up To Racism

Janette Evans, Chair, Barnet Unite Community

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Piers Edsall, Environmental Smart

Tamara Micner, Trustee, Kehillah North London

XR Peace

XR Youth Cambridge

XR Sheffield

XR Cambridge

XRUK Justice Steering Group

XR Dumfries and Galloway

XR Cheshire

The Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam, Lord Bishop of Salisbury

Jeffrey Newman, Emeritus Rabbi, Finchley Reform Synagogue

Rabbi Danny Newman, Rabbi & Founder, HaMakom

Rabbi René Pfertzel, Kingston Liberal Synagogue

Rabbi Jackie Tabick, West Central Liberal Synagogue

Rabbi Anna Posner, Rabbi, Beit Klal Yisrael, Norwich Liberal

Jewish Community and Student Chaplain, Reform Judaism

Vaughan Jones, Minister, Union Chapel Church

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Mike Barson, Keyboard Player, Madness

Dr Roxana Cavalcanti, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Brighton

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