



Thursday, 16 December 2004

Press Release

FAIR calls for repeal of anti-terror laws, whilst House of Lords' decision slams 'Britain's Guantanamo'.

FAIR welcomes the decision taken by the House of Lords as it ruled 8-1 against the indefinite detention of foreign nationals suspected of terrorism.

For several years, suspects have been held in high security prisons across the UK under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 without being able to challenge their detentions. FAIR has on many occasions called for an urgent reconsideration of the current UK anti-terrorism measures which have allowed for the indefinite detention of foreign suspects.

The House of Lord's ruling confirms that the anti-terrorism legislation is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Lord Bingham, in his judgement, made it clear that the indefinite detention measures were not "strictly required", because "they require the detentions of some, but not all, those who present a risk".

At an inquiry into 'terrorism and community relations' held by the Home Affairs Committee in 14 December 2004, FAIR informed the panel of MPs that the anti-terror

laws have consistently targeted Muslims in disproportionate numbers and have exasperated levels of Islamophobia the Muslim community face. Director of FAIR, Samar Mashadi told the inquiry that “the countering of terrorism has to be done on par with civil liberties”. She continued by adding that “The government must reach out to the community by new initiatives and by publicly speaking out against Islamophobic attacks.

Human Rights Lawyer and adviser to FAIR, Imran Khan, told the committee, “A simple assessment of the legislation’s success rate would reveal that the measures are entirely disproportionate against the negative impact they are having on the perception of the Muslim Community”.

FAIR requests the Government to take heed of today’s ruling by the House of Lords, and to urgently take steps to rectify the problems caused by the anti-terrorism legislation. Such steps will work towards healing the wounds in the relationship between the Government and Britain’s Muslims.

[Ends]

Notes to Editors:

There are currently nine men, all of Muslim origin, indefinitely detained at Belmarsh Prison, London,

See Home Affairs Committee information
<http://www.parliamentlive.tv/notes/00002582.pdf>

See FAIR’s previous submissions calling for review of anti-terror legislation.
<http://www.fairuk.org/policy.htm>

See related news stories:
Repeal anti-terror law, MPs told
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4096245.stm