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## **Calls for internment must be resisted**

The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) today urged that the UK authorities bear in mind the “unmitigated disaster” that internment proved to be in Northern Ireland when considering appropriate lengths of detention without charge.

CAJ believes that demands over the weekend in Britain by the Association of Chief Police Officers for an extension of the pre-charge detention period amount to calls for internment, and must be strongly resisted by all who want to ensure effective security.

CAJ’s Director, Maggie Beirne, said “All observers agree that internment in Northern Ireland in the early 70s was an unmitigated disaster. Not only were large numbers of innocent people held without charge, but the practice of internment was practiced in a discriminatory manner and created large ‘suspect’ communities; it allowed the development of coercive interrogation techniques subsequently considered by the international community to amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, amounting sometimes to torture; and it fed the very violence that it was intended to counter”.

CAJ believes that calls by Lord Carlile and others for judicial involvement in detention-without-charge situations will prove inadequate and risk undermining the rule of law. The European standard is that suspects be brought “promptly” before a judge, and the norm set by the European Court is less than one week. CAJ’s Director noted that - “Highly professional, human rights compliant policing to detect and prosecute crime, is the best form of security that can be achieved. Arbitrary extensions of police powers to allow for longer and longer periods of detention without charge run counter to this basic principle”.

**For more information contact Maggie Beirne on 02890 961122; 07703 486949**