

Public Meeting

THE NEW 'ANTI-TERROR' LAWS: TAKING LIBERTIES

"I have a horrible feeling that we are sinking into a police state"

George Churchill-Coleman, former head of police anti-terrorist squad during 1980s-90s

7-9pm Wednesday 2nd March 2005
Committee Room 10, House of Commons, Westminster

Hosted by Jim Dobbin MP

Speakers include **Gareth Peirce**, solicitor; **Gillian Slovo**, South-African born novelist; **James Welsh**, Legal Director of Liberty; **Simon Hughes MP**; **Richard Harvey**, Chair of Haldane Society; **Prof. Paddy Hillyard**, Queens University Belfast, author of the book *"Suspect Communities – People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain"*, **Saghir Hussein**, lawyer and Stop Political Terror

Charles Clarke's new proposals for civil 'control orders' on 'terrorist suspects' would serve political control. They would punish individuals for what they might do, not what they have done. The orders would include electronic tagging, restrictions on association, the use of phones and internet, and possible house arrest. Any breach could lead to imprisonment.

The executive nature of such powers would allow for politically motivated restrictions on individuals and their activity. Bob Marshall Andrews MP and QC described the proposals as *"the most substantial extension of the state's executive powers in 300 years."* Reminiscent of Apartheid-era banning orders, they are a measure associated more with dictatorships rather than democracies.

These proposals would require derogation from the European Convention on Human Rights. Even with a court procedure, the orders would amount to preventive detention. This would violate a fundamental principle of justice: the right to presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

All 'anti-terror' measures promote a politics of fear, especially a culture of 'suspicion' towards entire communities. The Home Secretary has a dilemma only in attempting to maintain the pretence of a 'public emergency' which warrants extraordinary measures. As Lord Hoffman said in his December judgement, however, there is no 'state of public emergency threatening the life of the nation' – the only basis for justifying internment, which requires an opt-out from the European Convention on Human Rights.

The government is attempting to continue its fake 'emergency', thus justifying further steps towards a police state. The real emergency is the threat to our rights. We say: Release the detainees! No internment! No house arrest! No politics of fear! No culture of suspicion!

The meeting is called by CAMPACC; Liberty; Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers; Kevin McNamara MP; Mark Thomas; Bill Bowring, barrister; Stop Political Terror; Voices UK; CARF; Peace and Justice in East London; Sutton for Peace and Justice; The Muslim Parliament of Great Britain; Association of Muslim Lawyers; Liberal Democrat Muslims Forum; The Green Party of England and Wales; Stop the War Coalition (STWC); Respect

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