



LCHHR

Labour Campaign for Human Rights

**PRIORITIES FOR THE 2017 ELECTION
MANIFESTO**

May 2017

Introduction

Human rights are core Labour values. They are rooted in the guiding traditions of our movement - universality, equality, and solidarity. Universality because everyone, whatever their background or their geographical location, is entitled to them by virtue of their humanity. Equality because their universal nature means they can be used as powerful instruments to challenge inequalities and discrimination against oppressed, vulnerable, or disadvantaged people. And solidarity because they are an expression of our concern for others, including those beyond our borders. In short, they help bring our vision of social justice to life.

Below we have drawn up a list of our top 15 human rights priorities for the 2017 election manifesto, spanning Brexit and foreign affairs, immigration and asylum, human rights in counter-terrorism, legal protections, workers' rights, and civil society & trade unions.

Brexit and foreign affairs

1. Protect employment and equality rights during and after Brexit

Many of the employment and equality rights we benefit from are derived from EU law. They must be protected both during and after the Brexit process. That means opposing the use of Henry VIII powers and committing to protect all rights derived from the EU, including those established through judgements in EU courts.

2. Put human rights at the heart of trade deals after Brexit

The UK will have to negotiate new trade deals across the world following Brexit. In order to ensure we stay true to our own values, and to encourage reform around the world, all trade deals should respect democratic principles and freedoms, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and as defined in the European Convention of Human Rights.

3. Right to remain for EU nationals

Any EU national currently living in the UK should automatically and unilaterally be given permanent residency rights. This will end the anxiety currently being felt by millions of EU nationals living across the UK, many of whom have been here for years or even decades.

4. Give human rights parity with strategic and commercial interests in foreign policy

Strategic and commercial interests will always be part of foreign policy, but must not automatically trump human rights concerns whenever they come into conflict. The UK's continuing arms transfers to Saudi Arabia are just one example of where human rights are not being given the consideration they deserve.

Immigration and asylum

5. A fair immigration system based on value, not numbers

The net migration target turns people into statistics and is blind to justice or economic potential. Immigration decisions should be based on the value of a migrant and their claim to be here, not on a general policy to reduce numbers. The symptoms of this policy should also be tackled, particularly excessively high visa fees and the rigid, unresponsive immigration service that frequently denies people entry on the basis of counter-intuitive technicalities.

6. End the squeeze on family migration

The spousal income requirement for family visas is breaking up families and ruining lives. The current £18,600 threshold is beyond reach for a large portion of the population. The income requirement should be considerably reduced, and the applicant's earning potential should be taken into consideration as well as the sponsor's income. Other methods of proving income should also be explored, such as family guarantees.

7. A humane refugee and asylum system

Britain should take in our fair share of refugees to reflect our longstanding tradition of providing sanctuary to those fleeing persecution and conflict. We must also improve the conditions of asylum seekers and refugees when they are here by ending the practice of indefinite detention of asylum seekers, giving them the right to work, and increasing their

subsistence allowances. Refugees should also be given more time to find a home and a job before their allowances are cut off.

Human rights in counter-terrorism

8. End mass surveillance

The Court of Justice of the European Union recently ruled that blanket surveillance of the UK population is incompatible with fundamental standards of privacy. The UK's surveillance regime should be amended so that there is no surveillance without suspicion.

9. Review the Prevent strategy

The UK's 'Prevent' strategy to tackle extremism is divisive and controversial. Many people feel alienated by it after a catalogue of cases where it has been improperly applied. It has had a chilling effect on freedom of speech, preventing an open debate where extremist ideas can be challenged, and has also interfered with privacy. Labour should commit to a full review of Prevent, including examining alternative strategies for tackling terrorism.

Legal protections

10. Protect the Human Rights Act and commit to staying in the ECHR

The Human Rights Act and the European Convention of Human Rights are the guarantors of human rights in this country. Together they have helped rape victims get justice, protected children and the elderly against abuse, and helped achieve equality for LGBT people. The Human Rights Act must be kept, as must our membership of the ECHR.

11. A fair legal aid system that protects the most vulnerable

The cuts to legal aid have had a damaging impact on people's ability to achieve justice, leaving vulnerable people unable to challenge abuses against them. Labour should ensure the system is fair and protects the most vulnerable.

Workers' rights

12. Scrap employment tribunal fees

Employment tribunal fees are unaffordable for many workers, preventing them from challenging unfair decisions or abusive practices. They allow unethical companies to get away with flouting rules protecting workers' rights. They should be scrapped immediately.

13. Regulate the 'gig' economy

The 'gig' economy, where employees are forced to work on zero hour contracts and many are not classified as employees at all, must be properly regulated. Zero hour contracts should be scrapped, and companies should be prevented from improperly classifying employees as self-employed.

Civil society and trade unions

14. Scrap the Lobbying Act

The Lobbying Act is one of the most illiberal pieces of legislation passed in recent memory. It heavily restricts legitimate campaigning efforts by charities and other non-profit groups, while doing virtually nothing to tackle corporate lobbying. The Act should be scrapped.

15. Scrap the Trade Union Act

The ability to strike is a crucial source of leverage for workers who are dealing with unfair working conditions or pay, and is also a basic human right under freedom of association. The Trade Union Act interferes with legitimate strike action and makes it extremely difficult for workers to exercise their collective bargaining rights. It should be repealed.