



7th Annual Assembly of
the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
**MOVING REFORMS
FORWARD
IN TESTING TIMES**
19-21 November 2015, Kyiv, Ukraine

Resolution No. 4/AA/2015

November 21, 2015
Kyiv, Ukraine

**Open letter of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum to the Prime Minister
and the Secretary of State for Justice of the United Kingdom**

The Right Honourable David Cameron MP, The Prime Minister
The Right Honourable Michael Gove MP, The Secretary of State for Justice

Dear Mr Cameron,
Dear Mr Gove,

Participants of the 7th Annual Assembly of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in Kyiv wish to reiterate their support for the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) as an indispensable instrument for promoting respect for human rights in those of our countries, which are members of the Council of Europe (CoE). The ECHR and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg have been effective in defending human rights, and the ECtHR in Strasbourg has often proven to be the institution of last resort for our citizens whose rights have been infringed or are under threat.

We are, thus, extremely concerned about the tenor of the debate within the ruling Conservative Party in the United Kingdom which appears to be moving to change the country's relationship with the ECtHR and replace the existing British Human Rights Act that incorporates the European Convention with a new Bill of Rights which could curtail previously granted rights.

The United Kingdom has long been a champion of human rights and British lawyers authored the European Convention when it was first adopted by the CoE. The great strength of the Convention is that it sets a universal standard of respect for human rights and thus puts pressure on individual rulers to adhere to these standards.

Were the United Kingdom to break this arrangement by enacting a Bill of Rights allowing Britain's authorities to deviate from universally accepted standards and to treat the judgements of the ECHR as merely advisory, this would set a dangerous precedent for rulers of other member countries of the CoE. Some of these rulers have found the verdicts of the ECtHR irksome and if the United Kingdom showed them the way, they would be tempted to pass their own Bills of Rights, which would impose limits on the rights of their citizens.

Not only would the moves mooted by your party undermine respect for human rights in certain Eastern European countries but they would harm the United Kingdom's reputation as a promoter of human rights globally. In the name of our civil society organisations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, we appeal to you to reconsider and maintain arrangements which hitherto have served the cause of human rights well.

Krzysztof Bobiński

Co-Chair of the Steering Committee
Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

on behalf of over 170 civil society organizations from the Eastern Partnership and EU countries