

1. Who the submission is from

This is a joint submission from the Human Rights Consortium to the UPR in respect of its examination of the United Kingdom. The member organisations of the Consortium are as follows;

1. Action on Medical Negligence Association
2. ADD-NI Children's Charity
3. Advice NI
4. Afro-Community Support Organisation NI
5. Age NI
6. Al-Nisa Association NI
7. Alternatives NI
8. Amnesty International
9. An Munia Tober
10. Artscare
11. Autism NI
12. Aware Defeat Depression
13. Ballymacarrett Arts and Cultural Society
14. Barnardos
15. Belfast & District Trades Council
16. Belfast Carers' Centre
17. Belfast Interface Project
18. Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre
19. Beyond Skin
20. British Deaf Association
21. Cairde
22. Carers Northern Ireland
23. Carers UK, Belfast Central Branch
24. Carrickfergus Community Forum
25. Centre for Global Education
26. Changing Faces
27. Charter NI
28. Children in Crossfire
29. Children in NI
30. Childrens Law Centre
31. Chinese Welfare Association
32. CO3
33. Committee on the Administration of Justice
34. Community Arts Partnership
35. Community Change
36. Community Development & Health Network
37. Community Dialogue
38. Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
39. Community Places
40. Community Relations Forum
41. Community Transport Association (CTA)
42. Confederation of Community Groups
43. Conference of Religious of Ireland
44. Conflict Trauma Resource Centre
45. Contact A Family
46. Conway Education Centre
47. Corrymeela Community
48. COSTA
49. Council for the Homeless (NI)
50. Cresco Trust
51. Currynierin Women's Action Committee
52. Dennett Interchange
53. Derry Trades Council
54. Destined
55. Disability Action
56. Disability Action Human Rights Centre
57. Disabled Police Officers' Association
58. Early Years
59. East Belfast Survivors of Suicide
60. Ely Centre
61. Employers For Childcare
62. Engage with Age
63. EPIC – Ex Prisoners Interpretive Centre
64. European Movement NI
65. Falls Community Council
66. Family Planning Association
67. Fermanagh Women's Network
68. First Steps Women's Centre

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69. Forthspring
70. Forward Group (The)
71. Foyle Down Syndrome Trust
72. Foyle Women's Information Network
73. Friends of the Earth
74. Glenshane Community Development Ltd.
75. Good Shepherd Congregation
76. Groundwork NI
77. Guide Dogs for the Blind
78. Hands That Talk
79. HIV Support Centre
80. Housing Rights Service
81. Include Youth
82. Indian Community Centre
83. Integrated Education Fund
84. Interaction Belfast
85. INTERCOMM
86. Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC)
87. Jigsaw NI
88. Kilcooley Community Action Group
89. Kilcranny House
90. Latinoamerica Unida
91. Law Centre (NI)
92. Learn and Grow
93. Ligoniel Healthy Living Centre
94. Linc Resource Centre
95. Lower Castlereagh Community Group
96. Making Women Seen and Heard
97. Mencap
98. Men's Advisory Project (MAP NI)
99. Mercy Sisters
100. Mindwise
101. Morton Community Centre
102. Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
103. Newstart Education Centre
104. Nexus Institute
105. NIACRO
106. NI Newpin
107. NO CIRC NI
108. North Down & Ards Trades Council
109. North West Community Network
110. North West Forum of People with Disabilities
111. Northern Ireland African Cultural Centre
112. Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
113. Northern Ireland Assoc. of Citizen Advice Bureau
114. Northern Ireland Business Education Partnership
115. Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
116. Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
117. Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
118. Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association
119. Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)
120. Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network
121. Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
122. Northern Ireland Youth Forum
123. Northern Visions
124. NUS/USI
125. Old Warren Partnership
126. Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group
127. Omagh Forum for Rural Associations
128. Organisation of the Unemployed Northern Ireland
129. PAKT
130. Palestine Aid
131. Parents Advice Centre
132. Parkanaur College
133. Pat Finucane Centre
134. Peace People
135. PILS Project
136. POBAL
137. Polysoc
138. Positive Futures
139. PPR Project
140. Project Futures Global QUB
141. Public Achievement
142. Queerspace
143. Rainbow Project
144. Real Network

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| 145. Rights in Community Care | 169. Ulster Human Rights Watch |
| 146. Rural Community Network | 170. Ulster Peoples College |
| 147. Save the Children | 171. Ulster Teachers Union |
| 148. SEEDS | 172. UNISON Northern Ireland |
| 149. Seven Towers Residents Group | 173. Upper Springfield
Development Trust |
| 150. Seymour Hill and Conway
Community | 174. Victim Support |
| 151. Signature | 175. Waterside Womens Centre |
| 152. Simon Community Northern
Ireland | 176. WAVE Trauma Centre |
| 153. Soroptomist International | 177. West Belfast Partnership Board |
| 154. South Down Action on Healing
Wounds | 178. Willowbank Community
Resource Centre |
| 155. South Tyrone Empowerment
Programme | 179. Windsor Women's Centre |
| 156. Springboard Opportunities | 180. Women in Business NI |
| 157. St Columb's Park House | 181. Women into Politics |
| 158. St Luke's Family Centre | 182. Women's Aid Federation
Northern Ireland |
| 159. Star Neighbourhood Centre | 183. Women's Centre (The) Derry |
| 160. STEER Mental Health | 184. Women's Common Paths
Network |
| 161. Strathfoyle Women's Centre | 185. Women's Information Group |
| 162. Stravaganza (Cresco Trust) | 186. Womens Resource and
Development Agency |
| 163. TADA Rural Support Network | 187. Women's Support Network |
| 164. Tar Isteach | 188. Workers Educational
Association |
| 165. Terry Enright Foundation | 189. Young Citizens in Action |
| 166. TESOL Project | 190. Youthnet |
| 167. Trademark | |
| 168. Training for Women Network | |

2. About the Human Rights Consortium

The Human Rights Consortium was established in 2000 and is now a coalition of over 190 non statutory, not for profit and non political party organisations from across Northern Ireland which represents every community and sectoral issue. We campaign together for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, a commitment which was originally made in our peace agreement the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998 but has yet to be implemented. In addition the Human Rights Consortium works toward embedding a culture of rights across the province through workshops, publications and capacity building with our members to facilitate and encourage human rights engagement.

3. Human Rights Issues relating to Northern Ireland

There are a number of human rights issues outstanding in Northern Ireland but as our remit concerns a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland we will focus on this point. In addition we will raise an issue about general UK wide human rights protection.

a) Bill of Rights

1. Northern Ireland is a conflicted and segregated society which continues to deal with the legacy of conflict which directly or indirectly affected the lives of the majority of people in Northern Ireland. Those communities most affected by the so-called Troubles in terms of death and injury remain the most socio-economically disadvantaged. Although we now have a functioning executive and enjoy relative peace – peace is not a done deal here and every day there are rumblings of discontent and dissatisfaction at times resulting in violence. There are two interlinked issues which the UK government has failed to address despite repeated public and legislative commitments to do so- dealing with the past and the Bill of Rights.
2. The debate for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland originated during the 1960's from political parties, trade unions and civil society in response to socio-economic discrimination and inequality. In 1998, following over three decades of conflict, the Irish and UK government along with Northern Ireland political parties signed the Belfast Good Friday peace agreement in which a firm commitment was finally made for a Bill of Rights.
3. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) was created to give advice to Government on what should be in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. They consulted widely with communities and various sections of society however in 2006, due to perceived lack of political engagement in the process, the Bill of Rights Forum was created to enable civil society and politicians to work together to produce advice on a Bill of Rights to the NIHRC, which they did in 1998. The NIHRC in turn considered this advice and produced their own comprehensive advice to the UK government which was presented to the Secretary of State in 2009. The UK government took over nine months to examine the NIHRC advice and issued a consultation document in which they wholesale rejected the Commissions advice and consulted essentially on only two rights- the right to be British or Irish (which we already have in the Good Friday Agreement) and the right to take part in elections (which we already have in the Human Rights Act). The Human Rights Consortium facilitated widespread public and civil society engagement in the consultation with the result that over 36,000 individual and organisational responses were received by the UK government with 95% of these responses rejecting the government proposals and calling for a strong Bill of Rights.
4. Since the consultation ended the UK government have refused to analyse the 36,000 plus responses despite a commitment to do so and have instead stated that there is no cross party support among local political parties in Northern Ireland for a Bill of Rights and that without this support a Bill cannot be progressed. This is a gross misrepresentation of the situation when in fact all Northern Ireland parties have agreed at some stage to a Bill of Rights – the point of disagreement lies in the content and how extensive these rights should be.
5. The Consortium works to facilitate the progress of a Bill of Rights and as part of this carry out regular independent polling to assess the levels of support for a Bill. Annual

polling shows upwards of 80% public support for a Bill and our latest polling (see below) shows that there is no statistical difference between support for a Bill of Rights among the electorate of any of the Executive parties (these are the parties' currently governing Northern Ireland).

Importance of a Bill of Rights by party support

Sinn Fein (95*)	88%
SDLP (106)	86%
DUP (178)	84%
UUP (70*)	83%
Alliance (79*)	81%

6. The Bill of Rights provides an invaluable opportunity to address the human rights abuses of the past and to create a set of shared values on which the people of Northern Ireland can build a stable and peaceful future, one in which the government can be held to proper account. Since 1998 there has been over a decade of debate, discussion, consultation, public polling, and legal advice and yet we are no further to achieving a Bill of Rights. This latest research provides a clear mandate for political parties in Northern Ireland to move forward on the Bill of Rights - a process which must be led and facilitated by the British Government.

The review process may wish to ask the UK government how it intends to honour the commitments of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and in particular what consideration it has given to the Concluding Observations of various UN treaty mechanism including;

Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on Economic and Social Rights

“The Committee strongly recommends the inclusion of effective protection for economic, social and cultural rights, consistent with the provisions of the Covenant, in any Bill of Rights enacted for Northern Ireland”. (2002, at para 29)

Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

“The Committee recommends that the State party continue to take measures to bring its legislation into line with the Convention. To this aim, the State party could take the opportunity given in this regard by the development of a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland and a British Bill of Rights, and incorporate into them the principles and provisions of the Convention, e.g. by having a special section in these bills devoted to child rights.” (2008, at para 11).

Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

“The Committee regrets that the Equality Act 2010 does not apply to Northern Ireland. The Committee further regrets that Northern Ireland does not have a Bill of Rights notwithstanding the provisions of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of 1998 and recommendations from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.... The Committee wishes to remind the State party that the obligation to implement the provisions of the Convention in all parts of its territory is borne by the State party. This makes the State party the duty bearer at the international level in respect of the implementation of the Convention in all parts of its territory notwithstanding the

specific governance arrangements that it may have adopted. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party should take immediate steps to ensure that a single equality law and a Bill of Rights are adopted in Northern Ireland or that the Equality Act 2010 is extended to Northern Ireland.” (2011, at para 19)

A strong message from the review with regard to the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland would be helpful in progressing this process.

b) UK wide human rights protection

1. The Human Rights Consortium is concerned not only that the UK Government will continue to renege on its commitment to deliver a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland but also that it may undermine what few rights protections already exist. The current Conservative led Government has been openly hostile toward human rights and in particular European judgements and has established a UK Bill of Rights Commission to advise on a possible UK Bill of Rights which many believe is an exercise intended to regress human rights protections and one which would endanger the Human Rights Act (domestic legislation which incorporates parts of the European Convention). The UK government has ratified a wide range of UN treaties which are not readily enjoyed in Northern Ireland or in the rest of the UK as their content is not disseminated, not incorporated and not embedded here. A UK Bill of Rights provides a possible vehicle for incorporating these commitments into domestic law so that they can be readily accessible and enjoyed by the people of the UK.

A clear message from the review in terms of the UK government’s obligations to respect, protect and promote the rights which they are a party to may assist.

The review process may wish to ask the UK government how it intends to incorporate their existing international commitments into domestic law.