A WORLD WITHOUT FEAR OR POVERTY

Peace & Progress:

A Party for Human Rights

"The object of the Party is to organise, educate, argue for, and achieve all the principles of Human Rights as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in all subsequent international Human Rights Conventions and treaties to which this country is signatory and by which it must be bound."
Peace & Progress Constitution. Adopted 13 March 2005

The historical foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world

> 'The United Nations Charter is not just an obsolete inconvenience to those in power, although law is frequently so regarded by politicians. It is the most widely ratified treaty in human history…' *Unpublished letter to the New York Times by leading US Academics quoted in **Lawless World** by Philippe Sands*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948) arose from the Charter of the United Nations (26 June 1945), which was the founding document of the United Nations.

The Declaration was, and remains, a clear statement of principles: the equal rights of men and women, without distinction of any kind (such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion) to self-determination, equality before the law, social progress and better standards of living.

The UN Charter and the Declaration have been the inspiration for many who have changed the direction of their countries: the young Nelson Mandela; the Hungarian students who rebelled against the Soviet occupation in 1956; the Algerian Liberation movements for independence from French colonial rule (1954-62); the Soviet dissidents and their human rights movement led by young students like Vladimir Bukovsky, and later by the Russian nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov and his wife Elena Bonner; the Czech "Spring", brutally crushed in August 1968; and the American Civil Rights marchers including Martin Luther King (1955-68).

Each one of the great powers on the Security Council of the United Nations has betrayed those principles on many occasions, with devastating consequences for millions of people. Despite this, international conventions exist to provide a framework for relations between nations and peoples in times of both peace and war. These include: the Convention on Genocide (9 December 1945); the four Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims, the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Geneva III), the Protection of Civilians (12 August 1949); the Convention on Refugees (28 July 1951); the Treaty Banning Atmospheric Nuclear Tests (10 October 1963); the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (16 December 1966); the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1 July 1968); the Convention Against Torture (4 February 1984); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989); and the KYOTO protocol (16 February 2005).

These are legally binding treaties and they have changed the fabric of existence on all continents. To regulate in times of dispute or allegations of violations by individual states, the international community set up the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. In the aftermath of the Second World War, European countries passed the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on 4 November 1950 (ECHR), overseen by the European Court of Justice. They are the basis for a law-governed global world. If the political will exists to implement them, these are powerful instruments for economic and social progress, for human rights and for democracy.

> ‘The rule of law is defined as that which allows the rights of individuals to be determined by law and not the arbitrary actions of authority. There can be no punishment unless a court decides that there has been a breach of law. It incorporates habeas corpus and such things as the right to silence, the right to a trial by jury, the presumption of innocence, freedom of association, a free press and free speech’ – *Henry Porter, **The Observer**, 2 April 2006*

The destruction of human rights under Labour

The ECHR was incorporated into British law in the Human Rights Act (13 November 1998), the landmark legislation of the New Labour government. Within five years of this Act coming into force, the executive in the Labour government has undermined the basic freedoms and rights contained in the Act and has grievously undermined the United Nations and international law.

Human rights law is synonymous with democracy, but this government is using its executive authority, derived from the royal prerogative, to: demolish the cornerstones of our democratic institutions and processes; to either by-pass parliament completely or reduce it to rubber-stamp legislation; to undermine the separation of powers between parliament and the judiciary, and the judiciary’s right to declare the executive in grievous abuse of its power.

These wide-ranging executive powers, used by the Prime Minister, give the government huge freedom to act with little accountability. Blair can use executive powers on most foreign policy issues to enter into treaties and agreements with the WTO, World Bank, Nato, G8, the EU or diplomacy in the UN Security Council without any recourse to parliament.

It is also used domestically. The tragic extra-judicial killing of Jean Charles de Menezes illustrates that our government operates a shoot-to-kill policy here in the UK, *de facto* if not *de jure*, which has never been the subject of any debate between our elected representatives in the House of Commons.
On 11 April 2006, Lord Steyn, who retired as one of Britain’s most senior high court Law Lords last year, delivered the Attlee Foundation lecture, *Democracy, the Rule of Law and the Role of Judges*. In it he said ministers did not always understand the principle of the separation of powers as it affected the judiciary. Lord Steyn stated that the Home Secretary Charles Clarke had recently complained of his frustration that the Law Lords would not meet him for discussions *“because of their sense of propriety”*, before adding that the reality of the situation is that Mr Clarke *“apparently fails to understand that the Law Lords and cabinet ministers are not on the same side …..A cosy relationship between ministers and Law Lords would be a worrying development.”*

It is the executive within government, both in the UK and the US, that heads the challenge to the rule of law, a challenge which has rapidly accelerated as a result of the so-called ‘War on Terror’.

> ‘A common mistake is that MPs come to equate a party political majority in the Commons with ‘parliament’. They say ministers are answerable to parliament and not to the courts and by that they mean that ministers should answer only to the Commons………Since 1688 our constitution has made it clear that the only way ministers can ultimately be rendered answerable to parliament is through judges in the courts ensuring that they do not employ powers that parliament has not given them. The judges are in fact asserting the supremacy of parliament rather than their own and they need to do so from a position of independence.’ ***Just Law - The Changing Face of Justice and Why it Matters to Us All** by Helena Kennedy.*

Challenging the rule of law in the USA

Following the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, the US Attorney General sent a Bill to the US Congress on 19 September. The US Senate passed the *Patriot Act* on 11 October, 96 votes to 1. The House of Representatives passed the Act the following day. Section 412 of the Patriot Act gave the Attorney General sole discretion to detain non-citizens without probable cause, public disclosure or judicial review with the declared intention of preventing further attacks from foreign terrorists operating within the United States.

President Bush’s Military Order of 13 November 2001declared a State of Emergency and the mobilisation of the US Armed Forces. This order included Section 7, concerning the Detention, Treatment and Trial of Certain Non-Citizens in the War Against Terrorism meaning “*any individual who is not a United States citizen with respect to whom I determine from time to time in writing…*”

It went on to state:

“The individual shall not be privileged to seek any remedy or maintain any proceeding, directly or indirectly, or to

have any such remedy or proceeding sought on the individual's behalf (i) in any court of the United States, or any state thereof, (ii) any court of any foreign nation, or (iii) any international tribunal."

In January 2002, the US started to transport alleged "enemy combatants" to its military base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. It did so in order to avoid the jurisdiction of the US courts and thereby created an unprecedented legal system whereby the US military is prosecutor, jury, judge, defender and, potentially, executioner of those detained. Significantly, it attempted to undermine the principle of *habeus corpus*, whereby an individual is entitled to be brought before a court of law for the legality of their detention to be independently determined. In 2003 Lord Steyn described Guantanamo Bay as a "legal black hole". In a landmark decision, the US Supreme Court in the case of Rasul v. Bush (28 June 2004),ruled that detainees could have access to US courts, but the US Senate overruled this decision (10 November 2005), an example of the legislature in the US overriding the independence of the judiciary.

From the *Patriot Act* onwards, the Bush administration began to ride roughshod over the rules of war contained in the Geneva Conventions and their protocols, treaties to which the US is signatory, and over the Constitution of the United States itself.

' There are usually good reasons why international laws have been adopted. For the most part they work reasonably well. Imperfect as some of the international rules may be, they reflect minimum standards of acceptable behaviour and, to the extent they can be ascertained, common values. They provide an independent standard for judging the legitimacy of international actions.'
***Lawless World** by Philippe Sands*

Challenging the rule of law in the UK

Having committed itself to standing side by side with the US following the 11 September atrocity, the Blair government soon went down the same route. On 18 December 2001, the United Kingdom presented the Secretary General of the Council of Europe with a derogation from Article 5 -*The Right to Liberty and Security* - of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Referring to UN Security Council resolution 1373 ("*denying safe haven to those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist attacks*"), the Government claimed a public emergency in the United Kingdom:

"*There exists a terrorist threat to the United Kingdom from persons suspected of involvement in international terrorism. In particular, there are foreign nationals present in the United Kingdom who are suspected of being concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of international terrorism, of being members of organisations or groups which are so concerned or of having links with members of such groups, and who are a threat to the national security of the United Kingdom. As a result, a public emergency, within the meaning of Article 15(1) of the Convention, exists in the United Kingdom".*

With a minimum of debate, a majority in the House of Commons voted for the *Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001* which gave the Home Secretary similar powers to those given to the US Attorney General and President Bush by the *Patriot Act* to detain foreign nationals indefinitely if they could not be deported because they would be tortured in their own countries. Those detained appealed against their internment and the case came before the House of Lords which gave its judgment in December 2004. The indefinite detention of foreign nationals in British prisons, without being questioned or charged, or being permitted to see evidence used by the Home Secretary for their detention, was judged by the Law Lords (by a majority of 8 to 1) to be incompatible with the UK's obligations under the ECHR. All the grounds given by the government for their detention, including the claim that there existed a public emergency, were rejected.

Lord Hoffman stated in his judgment:

"The real threat to the life of the nation comes not from terrorism but from laws such as these".

Lord Scott described the Act which authorised indefinite detention on grounds not disclosed and evidence by a person whose identity was not disclosed as *"the stuff of nightmares".*
The Blair government responded with the *Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005* (12 March 2005) under which the prisoners were removed from Belmarsh and other places of detention and placed under control orders, severely restricting their liberty. Since then, on 12 April 2006, Mr Justice Sullivan ruled on a challenge in the High Court to the first control order issued against a British Muslim that these control orders against terrorist suspects were *"an affront to justice"*, that they were a breach of human rights law and that supposed safeguards of a suspect's rights were little more than a *"thin veneer of legality" (The Guardian* 13 April 2006*).*

> '..the way democracy has developed in Britain has been in large part on the basis of the transfer of monarchical powers to a Prime Minister and Cabinet who are accountable to Parliament, rather than in the transfer of those powers to Parliament itself'
> *From* ***Power to the People.*** *The Report of Power: An Independent Inquiry into Britain's Democracy - The Centenary Project of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust*

Changing the "rules of the game"

The government's intention to challenge the Law Lords gathered pace when, after the terrorist attacks in London on 7 July and 21July 2005, the Prime Minister declared that *"the rules of the game have changed"*. On BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor stated that:

"I want a law which says the Home Secretary, supervised by the courts, has to balance the rights of the individual deportee against risks to national security. That may involve an Act which says 'This is the correct interpretation of the European Convention'"

The government was underlining its intention to challenge the independence of the judiciary and to circumvent its obligations under international law to safeguard the rights of every individual and to uphold democracy.

This was made more apparent in an article published in the *Evening Standard* by the Home Secretary Charles Clarke (22 August 2005), who wrote:

"We have been working since early this year to conclude agreements with a number of countries, mainly in North Africa and the Middle East, which allow us, under certain circumstances, to deport foreign extremists from Britain back to their countries of origin. Part of these agreements is the assurance that people we deport will not be ill-treated in their country of origin."

Public statements of protest by Manfred Novak, the UN's Special Rapporteur on Torture, by Amnesty International, the Islamic Human Rights Commission and others, were loftily swept aside by the Home Secretary as the opinion of "pressure groups". Yet the fact remains that these 'assurances' would not be necessary if there was not common agreement that these countries routinely carry out torture.

Mr Clarke ignored the UK's obligations under the ECHR and under the United Nations Convention on Refugees and the Convention Against Torture. Article 3 of both the ECHR and the Convention Against Torture prohibit torture under any circumstances. Even so, Clarke wrote: *"It is time to break new ground."*

By 1 October 2005 sixteen Algerians were reported as detained in UK prisons. This was followed by five Libyans detained on 4 October and five Iraqis on 8 October. Four of the Algerians were men accused by the Attorney General and the media of the 'Ricin Plot', who had been acquitted by the jury at the Old Bailey in April 2005. The Ricin Plot had even been used by Secretary of State Colin Powell to spell out the imminent threat of terrorist attacks in the run-up to the war against Iraq. But there had been no "plot" and no Ricin factory for the production of explosives. According to *The Independent* (15 February 2006) *"The existence of Ricin continued to be proclaimed for over two years"* after tests at Porton Down proved definitively that there was none. Nevertheless the Home Office has ordered their deportation back to Algeria, without charge and without a trial. The others, some already previously detained for over three years in Belmarsh and other top security prisons, are also under threat of deportation. During that period of time, their health has seriously deteriorated to a point where the damage may be irreversible.

In March 2006, *The Guardian* reported that six Algerians were considering returning to their country despite the risk of torture, as the only alternative to staying in the UK *"forever subject to a regime in Britain which offered them nothing but despair"* (*The Guardian* 20 March 2006). These men have since gone on humger strike.

In a judgment given on 8 December 2005, the Law Lords ruled that evidence obtained under torture cannot be used by the British authorities against suspects. Home Secretary Charles Clarke accepted the ruling but said it would have *"no bearing"* on efforts to combat terror. He said the government did not use evidence it knew or suspected had been obtained by torture (reported in *The Guardian* 9 December 2005). But the use of torture in gathering intelligence has been widespread during the war on terror from the very beginning.

Torture as a tactic in the 'War on Terror'

Following the declaration by President Bush of a State of Extraordinary Emergency on 28 December 2001, legal advice was tendered to the Department of Defence by John C Yoo and Patrick A Philbin, both deputy assistants to Attorney General Ashcroft, regarding the legality of denying habeas corpus to "enemy aliens" detained at the US

Naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

On 2 February 2002, in a Memorandum from the Legal Adviser to the Department of State to Judge Albert Gonzales, Counsel to President Bush, William H Taft wrote:

"The President should know that a decision that the Conventions do apply is consistent with the plain language of the Conventions and the unvaried practice of the United States in introducing its forces into conflict over fifty years. It is consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 1193 affirming that 'All parties to the conflict (in Afghanistan) are bound to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and in particular the Geneva Conventions…' " (*The Torture Papers: The Road To Abu Ghraib, Cambridge University Press, 2005)*

Despite this President Bush declared, on 7 February 2002, that *"none of the provisions of Geneva apply to our conflict with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere throughout the world"*, that *the "Taliban detainees are unlawful combatants and therefore do not qualify as prisoners of war under Article 4 of Geneva"* but that *"as a matter of policy, the United States Armed Forces shall continue to treat detainees humanely and, to the extent appropriate and consistent with military necessity, in a manner consistent with the principles of Geneva"*. (*The Torture Papers: The Road To Abu Ghraib, Cambridge University Press, 2005)*

Already, however, legal advice was being given by the US government on the use of torture in interrogation.

Guantanamo Bay – the apex of the human rights crisis

Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rhuhel Ahmed, all British citizens, were detained in Afghanistan on 28 November 2001, and held under horrendous conditions by the warlord, General Dostum, for 30 days.

They were then handed over to US Special Forces and transported to Kandahar, where they were brutally questioned by US military for a week and then by British SAS soldiers. Asif and Shafiq were then transported to Guantanamo Bay. Rhuhel was left in Kandahar prison and was interrogated once by MI5 and once by an official from the Foreign Office. In the face of repeated beatings and sleep deprivation, Rhuhel decided to agree to everything he was being told to admit to, on the understanding that he would be sent back to Britain. Then a Foreign Office official told him he would be sent to Cuba.

These three men were released from Guantanamo Bay and returned to the UK in March 2004, having been subjected to torture and brutal conditions for two years. They were released because of evidence produced which proved they had not been members or associates of Al Qaeda.

'The United Nations Charter is not just an obsolete inconvenience to those in power, although law is frequently so regarded by politicians. It is the most widely ratified treaty in human history, a binding legal obligation to which the US has committed itself in accordance with its constitutional process. Article VI of that constitution decrees that treaties are "the supreme Law of the Land" and that the President "shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed."… '
Unpublished letter to the New York Times by leading US Academics quoted in ***Lawless World*** *by Philippe Sands*

Moazzem Begg, Martin Mubanga, Feroz Abbasi and Richard Belmar were released in January 2005 and returned to their families in Britain having undergone three years of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. These UK citizens were released thanks to the combined efforts of US and British lawyers, American journalists, the efforts of many British and American individuals, including Terry Waite, and the legal forces of the American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for Constitutional Rights.

The British Prime Minister, his cabinet, the Attorney General, the intelligence services and the Ministry of Defence all ignored Security Council Resolution 1193 and accepted President Bush's statement that Geneva Convention III did not apply to any citizen, including British ones.

There are still 8 UK residents incarcerated in Guantanamo whom the British government also refuses to protect under international law: Shaker Aamer, Bisher al-Rawi, Ahmed Ben Bacha, Omar Deghayes, Jamil al-Banna, Ahmed Errachidi, Binyam Mohammed and Abdelnour Sameur. Three of them have been held for more than three years. At least one is still believed to be on hunger strike since August 2005, force-fed by medical professionals who have been accused of contravening their professional code of ethics. The British residents have been subjected to torture and brutal treatment prohibited under the UN Convention Against Torture. None have been charged with any offence or any terrorist act. A UN report published on 16 February 2006 on behalf of the UN Human Rights Commission called on the US government *"to close down the Guantanamo Bay detention centre*

and to refrain from any practice amounting to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment." The US government has rejected the report.

During Lord Steyn's Attlee Foundation Lecture he stated that:
"While our government condones Guantanamo Bay the world is perplexed about our approach to the rule of law…. You may ask: how will it help in regard to the continuing outrage at Guantanamo Bay for our government now to condemn it? The answer is that it would at least be a powerful signal to the world that Britain supports the international rule of law" (quoted in *The Guardian*, 12 April 2006).

'The rule of law is one of the tools we use in our stumbling progress towards civilising the human condition: a structure of law, with proper methods and independent judges, before whom even a government must be answerable. It is the only restraint upon the tendency of power to debase its holders. History is dogged by the tragic fact that whenever individuals, political parties or countries become too powerful they are tempted to refuse to subordinate that power to wider and higher law. We have seen it recently with the United States picking and choosing when to apply the Geneva Conventions.' ***Just Law - The Changing Face of Justice and Why it Matters to Us All*** *by Helena Kennedy.*

The rights of the families of the British residents still detained to have their relatives freed from Guantanamo and the right of their legal representatives to have access to US and British courts is at the apex of the defence of our democratic rights today.

It is through the abuses at Guantanamo that the US is seeking to create a new 'legal' regime. The noxious, illegal culture of the global war against terrorism led by the White House, the Justice Department and the Pentagon, has permeated every nook and cranny of the New Labour government, the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign Office, the Home Office and the intelligence services in spite of the protests of former UK diplomats, military personnel, the Law Lords and almost all the international lawyers in Britain.

As the renowned international lawyer Philippe Sands has written:

"In the run-up to the war on Iraq, Blair even expressed a willingness to override the UN Charter…on the legality of the war, he and his Attorney General dismissed the views of Foreign Office legal advisers - and almost all the international lawyers in Britain - that the use of force was not authorised by the Security Council…The Attorney General accorded to the Prime Minister the right to decide unilaterally, and on the basis of an unspecified standard, that Iraq was in material breach of resolution 1441 so as to justify the use of force." (Lawless World: America and the Making and Breaking of Global Rules by Philippe Sands, Penguin, 2005).

The violation of international and domestic laws has not and could not make any civilian population safe from terrorist attack. The most degrading and illegal abuse and humiliation of Muslim prisoners suspected of terrorism, which began in the White House, the Justice Department and the Department of Defence, spread like a plague into Afghanistan, Cuba and to Iraq and, from the earliest days, the UK government has been complicit in it.

'Guantanamo Bay will forever be a historical reference point for our time. It is a stain on American justice. Only the present US administration tries to defend the utterly indefensible. Unfortunately our prime minister is not prepared to go further than to say that Guantanamo Bay is an understandable anomaly. In its feebleness, this response to a flagrant breach of the rule of law, reminiscent of the worst actions of totalitarian states, is shaming for our country.' *Lord Steyn,* ***Atlee Foundation Lecture*** *2006*

It has continued with the extensive use of extraordinary rendition, the process whereby a person is transferred to a country, usually on behalf of the Bush administration, for the purposes of being tortured to extract information from them to be used in the 'war on terror'. Britain, alongside many other western governments, has colluded with the CIA by allowing chartered flights transporting victims or potential victims of torture to use their airspace or to land in and refuel in their territories.

The stories of the British citizens and UK residents who were rendered to Afghanistan and then to Guantanamo Bay are chilling. It is a fact that they were interrogated under torture, and a fact that they were "rendered" with the complicity of the British government, with complete contempt for the Geneva Conventions and with disregard for international conventions and human morality.

Human Rights are the only answer to terror

On 15 September 2005 Prime Minister Blair spoke at the UN Summit:

"The UN must come of age. It must become the visible and credible expression of the globalisation of politics. The modern world insists we are dependent on each other. We work with each other or we suffer in isolation. The principles of the UN have always had a moral force. Today they receive the sharper impulse of self-interest…the terrorist attacks in Britain on July 7 have their origins in an ideology born thousands of miles from our shores."

The nations which came together to give voice to that "moral force" through the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration, embedded in international law in the Conventions which have followed, were well aware of that dependency and the need to ensure that states did not have the right to act arbitrarily, even out of a belief that they occupy the moral high-ground.

In drafting the Declaration it was acknowledged that the:

"disregard and contempt of human rights have resulted in the barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind."

Furthermore, that:

"it is essential that, if [people are] not compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law."

The principles of the UN cannot be dictated by "self interest" if they are to provide the protection which all people require. If human rights are the privilege of the few, dictated by economic and political self-interest dressed up as 'moral force', then what are the options available to those who are the target of human rights abuses?

'What does the rule of law mean? Whose rules? Are judges only doing their job well if the government likes their decisions? Judicial desire to please government and to reflect this in their judgments has provided cover for terrible abuses of power the world over. Populist governments can get all manner of laws through parliament; the whole purpose of human rights principles is that in their application they provide standards against which all law must be measured.' ***Just Law: The Changing Face of Justice and Why It Matters to Us All*** *by Helena Kennedy.*

It is the right of people to defend themselves against oppression and to take up armed struggle for liberation from oppression or occupation. And as history repeatedly shows, oppressed peoples will and do insist upon that right when their human rights are denied. History also tells us that no increase in international security can be gained by denying human rights. Quite the contrary. Justice is the name we give to our civil, political and human rights. Where there are no rights, there is no justice, and where there is no justice there is no security. In such a climate, people will use whatever means are available to defend themselves. They will argue that they too can also act out of conviction, that they too are not bound by the rule of law. Under these conditions fundamentalists of any persuasion can fan the flames of despair, and despair breeds terror. Those who identify with the victims of oppression because, for example, of a shared religion, will attack those they see as the perpetrators of the oppression. If states can describe the slaughter of innocent civilians as 'collateral damage', they undermine the safety of their own citizens who then become legitimate targets in the minds of those who seek revenge.

The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has described terrorism as:

"Any action that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do, or to abstain from doing, any act" (From *Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*).

The 'war on terror' is incompatible with the 'war on poverty'

The roots of many desperate acts of terror lie in the oppression and grinding poverty that is the daily reality for many millions of people throughout the world. But in both economic and political terms, the war on terror works against the war on poverty. They are ideologically and economically opposed and cannot be sustained in the same agenda.

The cost of the Bush administration's agenda for America's own poor has been high. The Republican neo-conservatives have turned a $128bn Federal surplus into a $319bn deficit. The war in Iraq has cost 18,000 US casualties and $250bn which is estimated to rise to $3trn. While US transnational corporations are profiting from a permanent war economy, poverty in the US has risen from 8.7% to 10.2% during the Bush administration and 15% of US citizens now have no health care at all.

Tony Blair established his Commission on Africa in 2005, promoting himself as the champion of the fight against world poverty. At the same time, Gordon Brown set out his own plan for the world's poorest countries called the 'International Finance Facility', frontloading aid and requiring poor countries to open their economies up to foreign imports.

In addition, the UK government played a leading role in the G8 decision to cancel the debts of some of the poorest countries in the world. But the G8 decision came at a price for those poorest countries too, with conditions attached which included opening their economies up to foreign trade and privatisation. These requirements will further trap these nations in poverty and increased dependency upon the richer nations. The G8 commitment also detracts from the minimum and achievable objectives of the UN Millennium Development Goals established in 2000, which include the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, universal primary education and halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, objectives that within the first five years of this century have already fallen by the wayside.

The 'war on terror' takes the form of a new 'crusade', spearheaded by Bush and supported by Blair, of direct intervention in order to impose a western, socio-economic and political order upon countries that are judged as hostile. It has happened in Afghanistan, and Iraq and now the US is provoking a new conflict with Iran which was the main 'rogue state' listed by Bush in his original "axis of evil" speech. But whatever moral justification the crusaders use, our democracies are corrupted by the economic imperatives which benefit only the nations making the rules, rather than those forced to abide by them. The cost of the war on terror not only undermines our ability to fund the war on poverty;the continued displacement of people, within and between countries, as a result of poverty and conflict is also creating a greater destabilisation of the world, which in turn is creating the conditions for terror.

Peace & Progress: a party for human rights

Let us consider, for a moment, the words of the American judge, Justice Louis D. Brandeis, written some 75 years ago:

"Our government is the omnipotent, the omnipresent teacher, for good or ill, it teaches the whole people by its example. Crime is contagious. If the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for the law; it invites every man to become a law unto himself."

The government's contempt for the rule of law and human rights is undermining security and democracy in this country. The more the government and the opposition are united in the belief that human rights are expendable, the more human rights become politicised. Once it was possible for non-governmental organisations to promote human rights non-politically, advocating them to whichever party was in power and opposing those actions which endangered them. Now human rights require an advocate within the political arena. Peace & Progress is a party for human rights.

We exist for the reasons quoted from our constitution at the beginning of this document. Our members and our party are pledged to advocate and defend human rights whenever and wherever they are under attack. In the last General Election, we stood candidates in order to focus attention on the serious disregard for human rights and international law which is evident in parliament, and the serious consequences for all citizens and UK residents, in Britain, Europe and the world. We do not dispute the need for security measures for the whole population. We do believe, however, as did the men and women who drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that these principles, and the laws based on these principles, are fundamental to the prevention of all forms of terror and to the preservation of a democratic law-governed world.

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I would like to join ***Peace & Progress: A Party for Human Rights***

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Printed and Published by Peace & Progress