

General Election: Political party manifesto points on human rights/race equality

The following are extracts from the political party manifestos for the May 2015 General Election that relate to race equality within a European context, the focus of UKREN's work. It will be updated as more manifestos are published.

Labour Party manifesto

".....Thanks to the Human Rights Act, some of our most vulnerable citizens, including disabled people and victims of crime, have been given a powerful means of redress. The Conservatives want to leave the European Convention of Human Rights, and abolish the Human Rights Act. A Labour Government will stand up for citizens' individual rights, protecting the Human Rights Act and reforming, rather than walking away from, the European Court of Human Rights.

".....We will establish a comprehensive race equality strategy to break down the barriers still faced by black and minority ethnic communities. Our aim is to make sure our national institutions, including Parliament, the police, judiciary, civil service, and the boardrooms of our companies, are more representative of our diverse country."

"....We will build alliances in Europe, promoting our country's interests and security, and standing up for human rights and social justice. We will work to reform the European Union, and we will retain our membership of it.....Labour will legislate for a lock that guarantees that there can be no transfer of powers from Britain to the European Union without the consent of the British public through an in/out referendum."

Conservative Party manifesto

"...We have stopped prisoners from having the vote, and have deported suspected terrorists such as Abu Qatada, despite all the problems created by Labour's human rights laws. The next Conservative Government will scrap the Human Rights Act, and introduce a British Bill of Rights. This will break the formal link between British courts and the European Court of Human Rights, and make our own Supreme Court the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK."

"....Instead of something-for-nothing, we will build a system based on the principle of something-for-something. We will then put these changes to the British people in a straight in-out referendum on our membership of the European Union by the end of 2017."

Liberal Democrats manifesto

"...We will protect the Human Rights Act and enshrine the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in UK law. We will take appropriate action to comply with decisions of UK courts and the European Court of Human Rights."

"...To tackle the racial discrimination faced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people we will:

- Build on the Coalition's BAME Access to Finance report to identify ways to encourage more BAME applicants to apply for finance and set up small business. We will publish diversity data on government entrepreneurship programmes and seek to achieve fair representation of BAME communities.
- Encourage businesses to ensure at least one place on their board is filled by a BAME candidate.
- Monitor and tackle the BAME pay gap.
- Outlaw caste discrimination.
- Maintain funding for people to develop and improve their English language skills to enable them to fully participate in society and achieve their potential.
- Challenge discrimination in the criminal justice system by:
 - Improving the safeguards in police stop and search powers in England and Wales with tighter guidance and requiring police to wear body cameras in Section 60 areas, the establishment of which will require judicial sanction.
 - Boosting police recruitment from BAME groups.

- Conducting a full review of the causes of the overrepresentation of BAME individuals in the criminal justice system.

To tackle religious discrimination and support faith and belief communities in working together we will:

- Continue support for the Interfaith Network to promote strong and sustainable relations between different faith communities.
- Support projects aimed at tackling intolerance such as Show Racism the Red Card and the Anne Frank Trust UK.
- Work closely with faith and community organisations, such as the Community Security Trust (which works to protect the Jewish community against antisemitic attacks) and the Muslim Council of Britain, to prevent hate crime, including at places of worship like synagogues and mosques. We are determined to combat antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate in the UK and internationally.”

“...We will hold an In/Out referendum when there is next any Treaty change involving a material transfer of sovereignty from the UK to the EU. Liberal Democrats will campaign for the UK to remain in the European Union when that referendum comes.”

UKIP manifesto

“...We will remove ourselves from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights: the Strasbourg Court whose interpretation of the European Convention of Human Rights has been known to put the rights of criminals above those of victims. Our own Supreme Court will act as the final authority on matters of Human Rights.

We will also repeal Labour’s Human Rights legislation. It has given European judges far too much power over British law making and law enforcement and prevented us deporting terrorists and career criminals and from implementing whole-life sentences.

Our human rights will be enshrined in law via the introduction of a new, consolidated UK Bill of Rights. This will complement the UN Declaration of Human Rights and encapsulate all the human and civil rights that UK citizens have acquired under UK law since Magna Carta. This new UK Bill of Rights will apply across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.”

“..We must leave the EU to prevent those with criminal convictions coming here. By opening the borders to convicted criminals, previous governments have put us at unacceptable risk. We have been badly let down.”

Green Party manifesto

“...More equal societies always do better than unequal ones - and that’s true for the well off as well as the poor. Almost every modern social and environmental problem - ill health, lack of community life, violence, drugs, obesity, mental illness, long working hours, big prison populations - is more likely to occur in a less equal society. Imagine a world in which everyone is respected whatever their ethnicity, gender, age, religious belief or non-belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, size, disability or other status. ...The Green Party is opposed to inequality not just because it is wrong in itself and more equal societies are happier societies, but because it fosters inappropriate growth”

“...We support the proposal to have an in/out referendum [on Europe] so that the British people can have their say. This is because much has changed since the UK joined the Common Market in 1974. Endless debate on membership is a diversion from more important matters, such as ending inequality and adapting our economy to One-Planet Living.”

Plaid Cymru manifesto

“...Plaid Cymru is committed to human rights. We are a party that celebrates diversity and wants to create a fair and equal society in which difference is respected. We believe that everybody, regardless of their characteristics or background, has a place in Wales’ future.

...We support the Human Rights Act and the European Convention on Human Rights, and will oppose any moves by a UK Government to withdraw from those.”

“...As Wales benefits from European Union membership, Plaid Cymru will continue to make the case for Welsh membership of the European Union. If a referendum on the UK’s membership of the European Union is held, then there should be no withdrawal from the European Union if that is not supported in all four of the nations consulted.”

SNP manifesto

“...Given the central place of human rights in Scotland’s constitutional settlement, and their importance at the heart of our politics, we will oppose scrapping the Human Rights Act or withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights.”

“...At least 330,000 Scottish jobs – around one in seven of all jobs - are dependent on our membership of the single market. That is why we will oppose a referendum on membership of the EU. Being part of Europe is good for business and it supports jobs in Scotland and across the UK. If an in/out EU referendum does go ahead, we will seek to amend the legislation to ensure that no constituent part of the UK can be taken out of the EU against its will. We will propose a 'double majority' rule - meaning that unless England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each vote to leave the EU, the UK would remain a member state.”

Respect manifesto

Not published yet

DUP manifesto

“...The DUP believes that the people of the United Kingdom should have a say on future UK membership of the European Union. At Westminster our MPs have been at the forefront of the campaign for a referendum on the European Union.”

Sinn Féin manifesto

“...Rights, equality and respect are the way to build a united community. There can be no justification for discrimination under the guise of a conscience clause, no acceptance of sectarianism under the guise of tradition and no resort to racism under the guise of tabloid popularism. Sinn Féin is seeking to build a pluralist, inclusive and equal society.”

Alliance Party manifesto

“...We recognise that human rights are inherent and universal. They are an essential part of modern governance and protect the individual, from all backgrounds, from injustices. They also provide sensible limits on governments and allow governments to plan in advance for these limitations. As a consequence, Alliance is a strong supporter of the European Convention on Human Rights and will oppose any attempts to repeal or dilute the Human Rights Act.

Whilst Alliance is open to a strong Bill of Rights, we believe that significant intellectual and political hurdles must be overcome to provide compelling arguments as to why Northern Ireland requires a fundamentally different human rights regime to other, especially neighbouring, jurisdictions.”

“...As a liberal internationalist party, Alliance remains whole-heartedly pro-European. We are ambitious and positive for the role that the European Union (EU) can play in Northern Ireland. Alliance supports the EU because it has broken down barriers between people. Just as Alliance supports overcoming divisions in Northern Ireland, it also supports overcoming divisions between

states, regions, nation and communities across Europe.....We absolutely reject claims that Northern Ireland would be better if the UK left this important organisation.”

SDLP manifesto

“...The SDLP is committed to defending and campaigning for equality and human rights across all sectors, regardless of: sexual orientation, religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, class, marital status, sex, disability and between persons with dependents and persons without.The SDLP will continue to defend human and equality rights and seek a robust, updated race equality law.”

“...The SDLP firmly believe that Northern Ireland is better off within a united Europe.”

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