

JUSTICE PRESS RELEASE

JUSTICE
59 Carter Lane
London
EC4V 5AQ
020 7329 5100
www.justice.org.uk

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 11 JUNE 2008

Home Secretary wrong: international comparisons clear in 42 day debate

The Home Secretary Jacqui Smith has wrongly claimed that JUSTICE disputes Liberty's comparisons between periods of detention in the UK and other countries. In a letter to Martin Linton MP received on 11 June 2008, she claimed that 'even organisations such as JUSTICE accept that ... comparisons' made by Liberty 'are wrong'.

However, JUSTICE stated clearly in its parliamentary briefing on the current bill that '42 days is far longer than any other western democracy'. We noted explicit comparisons with other key common law jurisdictions and EU countries, and pointed out the errors in the government's own rejection of these comparisons. We specifically cited Liberty's study in support of our own conclusions.

We specifically set out our own research on the US position in our own report, *From Arrest to Charge in 48 Hours*, published in 2007. This indicates that the Home Secretary's letter contains a number of further errors about international comparisons, including the claim that 'pre-charge detention does not really exist in the US'. It does: it is limited to 48 hours.

Eric Metcalfe, JUSTICE's Director of Human Rights Policy said:

Unfortunately for the Home Secretary, the international comparisons are clear: the UK already has the longest period of pre-charge detention of any western democracy, and 42 days would push it even further ahead.

For further information, contact Eric Metcalfe work 020 7762 6415 mobile 07939 119 369 or via email to emetcalfe@justice.org.uk.

Notes to editors

1. A pdf copy of the Home Secretary's letter to Martin Linton MP is attached.
2. A pdf copy of JUSTICE's briefing on the Counter-Terrorism Bill for Second Reading in the House of Commons is available at www.justice.org.uk/inthenews/index.html. The analysis of international comparisons on pre-charge detention can be found at pp 16-21.
3. In November 2007, JUSTICE released a 30-page report showing that the US pre-charge detention limit of 48 hours was no obstacle to charging suspects in complex terrorism cases. A pdf copy of the JUSTICE report, *From Arrest to Charge in 48 Hours: Complex terrorism cases in the US post-911* is available on request.

Chairman of Council **Lord Goodhart QC**
JUSTICE Registered Charity No 1058580

Director **Roger Smith**

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