



# Joint Committee on Human Rights

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From Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Chair

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19 October 2016

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your letter of 12 October, enclosing the Government's response to our report on Counter-Extremism.

I am disappointed to note that the Government does not seem minded to accept our recommendation for an independent review of the Prevent Strategy. Nor has the Government committed to the publication of a draft Bill (or draft clauses) relating to its proposal to combat extremism by way of civil orders, despite the fact that my Committee has been very clear that any consultation exercise which does not provide a clear legal definition of what is meant by extremism (and in particular non-violent extremism) would be futile.

Given that the Government response reiterates the fact that United Kingdom "has in place one of the strongest legislative frameworks in the world to protect communities from hostility, violence and bigotry" it is also concerning that the Government has still not been able to identify any clear gaps in the legislative framework that any new legislation introducing civil orders is designed to fill.

While I accept the Department's view that any proposals in this area "will need careful consideration and cannot be rushed", it is perhaps unfortunate to announce a Bill in two successive Queen's Speeches which has not been fully thought through in advance.

My Committee will continue to keep this subject under review and may wish to invite you to attend to give evidence if any new legislative measures are forthcoming.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon. Harriet Harman

Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights