

**Human Rights Lawyers' Association  
Young Lawyers' Committee Elections  
Event Plan**

**Topic**

Is Human Rights a dirty phrase?

This topic is designed to look at the perception of human rights amongst the general public. Ever since the UK's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, and even more so since the passing of the Human Rights Act into law, there has been a divide between those who passionately support the protections offered, those who vehemently oppose the interference with their personal freedoms, and those who simply have not made up their mind.

A crucial role of the Human Rights Lawyers' Association is to promote human rights in the court of public opinion as well as in the courts of law.

**Format**

This would be a public debate. The key to this event is that it encourages participation. It is important to "set the scene" with a panel of individuals who are knowledgeable and eloquent in the area of human rights. But audience participation is absolutely critical; the event is all about widening the reach of HRLA and the debate around human rights in the UK.

Proceedings would start with introductory speeches from the four panellists, lasting five minutes each. They would all speak individually, providing a slightly different perspective on the question, although they would be evenly divided between those broadly supporting and opposing.

After these opening remarks the floor would be opened up to any member of the audience who wanted to participate. Any contributor would be allowed to speak for one minute on the topic of "my most important right". This topic intentionally removes the phrase "human rights" and allows people to consider the simple idea of a "right" that they enjoy in their everyday lives.

The event would also be open to members of the public not present through social media. The speeches would be streamed live and large screens would allow contributions from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other mediums using the hashtag #myright.

**Venue**

The venue would be somewhere that is openly accessible and not restricted. This would not be a ticketed event but one that would encourage anyone to attend and stay for as long as they wanted.

Ideal venues include the public performance space at the Royal Festival Hall or the temporary spaces created outside the National Theatre. There is also the possibility of using other outdoor spaces such as the quadrangle at Somerset House.

Timing is important. I would plan to hold the event on either a weekday evening or during the day at a weekend

If successful, I would like to see this style of event move outside of London to other cities around the UK like Bristol, Manchester, Edinburgh and Newcastle.

## **Speakers**

My ideal speakers would be:

*Ken Clarke MP*

As a former barrister and Lord Chancellor, Ken Clarke has been a staunch defender of human rights, often against the prevailing mood in the Conservative Party. He was at the centre of government when serious consideration was being given to repealing the Human Rights Act.

*Shirin Ebadi*

Shirin Ebadi knows what it is like to live without even basic human rights. As a former Iranian lawyer and judge she fought for the rights of women and minorities in a repressive regime. She now lives in exile in the United Kingdom and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003.

*Andrew Pierce*

As a former Assistant Editor of *The Times* and *The Telegraph* and now a columnist for *The Daily Mail*, Andrew Pierce acts as the voice for a large section of the British public. As an opponent of the Human Rights Act and the effect of judgements emanating from the European Court of Human Rights. 8

*Baroness Newlove*

The current Victims' Commission for England and Wales, Baroness Newlove has spoken out the imbalance in the rights afforded to offenders compared to the rights afforded to victims of crime. She lost her husband, Garry, who was beaten to death by drunken attackers in 2007.