

Call for Evidence Response – John Lowrie

I wish to make highly relevant comments that appear to fall outside the terms of reference for the review and the two themes for which comments are invited.

I speak as a British human rights advocate operating abroad (in Cambodia for over 20 years) and if I may do so on behalf of other advocates, especially local defenders who have no choice but to live in places much less tolerant than the UK.

What the UK does matters, in the example we set, in the way that we stand by international standards and institutions. Indeed of late our reputation has already suffered because of the shift of priority towards promoting trade. That has meant "reluctance" especially on the part of our diplomatic missions to speak up and speak out, lest they fall foul of authoritarian leaders like Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The UK's departure from the Human Rights Act or any diminution of it, including rendering less effective the value of [genuine] independent courts will send completely the wrong signal to countries still falling well short of basic human rights standards.