

# Human Rights Act Factsheet

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The Human Rights Act (HRA) enshrines the rights established in the **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)** into UK domestic law.

**Five years and £30,000:** the approximate time and cost of making a human rights claim before the HRA came into force. This was because human rights claims could not be dealt with in British courts and had to be taken to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The Human Rights Act has been described as a '**charter for criminals**', in fact, a more accurate description would be as **a charter for victims** as the following cases show:'

- **Victims of human trafficking and child slavery:** In 2011, the Human Rights Act was used to guarantee that a case of four female victims of human trafficking and child slavery was properly investigated by the Metropolitan Police service. The UK High Court found that the failure to investigate the alleged crime constituted a violation of the victims' human rights to be free from slavery and free from torture, inhumane and degrading treatment.
- **Elderly vulnerable couples:** An elderly couple had lived together for more than six decades and heavily relied on each other due to the blindness of the wife and mobility issues of the husband. They were suddenly separated by health care services when the man was moved to a care home and the woman was told she did not fit the criteria. Thanks to the right to a family life, guaranteed by the Human Rights Act their case was reassessed and they were eventually placed together.
- **Gay and Lesbian people:** The Human Rights Act effectively prevents discrimination on the grounds of sexuality. A judgment in 2000 ruled that the UK army dismissal of a gay man violated his human right to a private life; it eventually led the UK to revise its Armed Forces Code of Social Conduct in January 2000.
- **Freedom of Press:** The Human Rights Act protects UK journalists' sources against state interference. In 2008, Sally Murrer, a reporter on the Milton Keynes Citizen newspaper, was accused of aiding and abetting misconduct in a public office. Her case was eventually thrown out because evidence for her trial had been obtained through police bugging – which constituted a violation of her rights under the ECHR and HRA.