

Dear Sir,

The Backbench Business Debate on International Human Rights Day provides an important opportunity to assess the human rights climate in this country and beyond. As the Jewish voice for human rights, René Cassin adds a unique narrative to this discussion.

On the 10th December 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR). Written by Monsieur René Cassin, our namesake, and Eleanor Roosevelt among others, it set out to serve as a common standard of achievements for all peoples of all nations. International human rights law was Europe's civilised nations' response to the horror of the Holocaust. Monsieur René Cassin was a French Jewish lawyer motivated by what he had experienced in the first half of the twentieth century. He was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1968.

René Cassin's work within the Jewish community points to the fact that human rights issues strike at the heart of both our specifically Jewish and our universal sensibilities. Our Jewish experience leads members of the Jewish community to:

- Join the call of many others in asking the government to uphold the Human Rights Act;
- Introduce a time limit to the national shame that is the indefinite detention of asylum seekers;
- Fight against the last acceptable form of racism in the UK: discrimination of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities.

On the day that Monsieur René Cassin won the Nobel Peace Prize he wrote "***Now that we possess an instrument capable of lifting or easing the burden of oppression and injustice in the world, we must learn to use it***".¹

Human rights at their best are tools that can give a voice to the voiceless, power to the powerless and hope to the hopeless. Now more than ever it is vital that we learn how to use, promote and protect them.

Yours sincerely,



Sam Grant
Campaigns Manager
René Cassin

¹ Cassin, *How the Charter on Human Rights Was Born.*, p. 6 (January, 1968) 4-6.