

## General Election 2019

### Key human rights issues, policy 'asks' and questions for candidates

---

#### Introduction

There's a General Election on 12 December. It's a chance to help shape the future of the country over the next five years. To ask some basic and important questions. What kind of country do I want to live in? How should my vote reflect my values?

What kind of future do I want for my family, my friends, my community?

In the next few weeks, candidates competing to become your MP will be asking you for your vote. But to make a proper choice you too need to ask them questions.

Jews are taught to 'pursue justice'. How should we apply that teaching in the short time before the election? Human rights are the cornerstone of a just society, the expression of our communal commitment to fairness, equality and compassion. This is our chance to renew and strengthen that commitment.

Here at René Cassin we have asked ourselves: what are the most important human rights and social justice issues at stake at this election? This briefing aims to inform the Jewish community about how they can raise these issues with candidates. Our list is not exhaustive – but it covers the issues that our supporters are most concerned about.

Each section has a simple 'ask' – along with some useful background information on that issue and questions that can be posed to prospective candidates.

Our contact details are at the bottom of the briefing. Please get in touch if you have any questions about the issues highlighted in the document. If you use the briefing and get responses from any of your candidates do get in touch with us through email or social media and let us know. It will help us hold successful candidates to account. If you can't make any hustings but still want to contact your local candidates and raise the issues below, you can download the template letter from our website.

#### About René Cassin

René Cassin is a charity working to promote and protect universal human rights, drawing on Jewish experience and values. We are named after Monsieur René Cassin, the French Jewish lawyer who co-drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the aftermath of the Second World War.

## The election campaign itself

### Keeping the debate measured and respectful

Intolerance and hostility towards any community is unacceptable and stands in stark contrast to our values – as human rights defenders, we stand together against all forms of hate.

Politicians have a duty to set an example, yet some continue to use hateful rhetoric that affects us all. We are encouraging everyone – and especially parliamentary candidates – to be use measured and respectful language in this election campaign, to celebrate the diversity of their constituents, and to challenge prejudice.

In line with our ‘Cut It Out’ campaign, launched during Hate Crime Awareness Week last month, we urge you to ask all candidates:

*As a candidate in this election, will you ...*

- *Use respectful language in your campaign?*
- *Stand for a society that is open and diverse?*
- *Challenge those who use stereotypes and prejudice?*

## After the election – the top Line

René Cassin believes that the incoming government should ...

- **Safeguard existing equality and human rights laws**
- **Provide better support for survivors of modern day slavery**
- **Address hate crime and discrimination suffered by minority groups**
- **Ensure people cannot be held in immigration detention for more than 28 days**

## Safeguarding equality and human rights in the UK

The Jewish community knows all too well what happens when societies fail to uphold the human rights of vulnerable individuals and communities. We are particularly concerned about the potential for regressing from internationally agreed universal standards that apply to everyone in our country such as the European Convention on Human Rights. Any move to weaken the Convention or the Human Rights Act (which enshrines the Convention in British law) could undermine human rights at home and abroad.

In addition, many EU laws relate to issues of human rights, fairness and equality. If and when we do leave the EU, it is essential that changes to laws that effect our rights are properly debated in Parliament.

**Policy Ask: Safeguard equality and human rights in the UK by**

- **protecting the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act**

- keeping existing equality and human rights laws when we leave the EU

*If you become my Member of Parliament, will you ...*

- *Work to safeguard equality and human rights in the UK?*

## **Modern Day Slavery**

Because of our history, slavery is an issue that resonates with Jews across the world. But, sadly, slavery is not a thing of the past. Modern slavery, including human trafficking, continues and must be challenged. Millions of people live in modern day slavery around the world, including an estimated 136,000 in the United Kingdom. Although 2015's Modern Slavery Act was a welcome step in the right direction, there continue to be areas where more must be done.

The support currently provided to survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery is not meeting the needs of the vulnerable. Support ends abruptly and too early and no information is retained as to what happens to survivors in the longer term. The current situation means that many end up destitute and put back in danger from people-traffickers.

***Policy ask: Provide better support for survivors of modern day slavery***

*If you become my Member of Parliament, will you ...*

- *Work with us to improve the lives of survivors of modern day slavery in the UK?*

## **Hate Crime and Discrimination**

Hate speech and hate crime targeting minorities in this country is on the rise. Home office statistics show that overall hate crime has increased by more than 50% in the past two years. Hate crimes based on race – up 44%. On religion – up 89%. On sexual orientation – up 62%. On disability – up 99%.

To a Jewish organisation, this sounds horribly familiar – the Community Security Trust's latest figures show that what it calls 'anti-Semitic incidents' are at an all-time high.

But, when hate crime increases all minorities suffer. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are amongst the most discriminated against in the UK – nine out of 10 Gypsies, Roma and Travellers have reported suffering racial abuse.

***Policy ask: Address hate crime and discrimination faced by minority groups, especially Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities***

*If you become my Member of Parliament, will you ...*

- *Address hate crime and discrimination faced by minority groups?*

## **Immigration Detention**

The UK is the only country in Europe that has a policy of indefinite immigration detention. Every year more than 30,000 men, women and children are locked up without knowledge of when, or if, they will be released. Several reports have shown the system to be 'expensive, ineffective and unjust.' The UK detains far too many people and for far too long, especially considering that a range of community-based alternatives to detention remain under-explored and under-discussed.

***Policy ask:*** Ensure people can only be held in immigration detention for a maximum of 28 days

*If you become my Member of Parliament, will you ...*

- *Work to limit the length of time people can be held in immigration detention?*

## **After the election – the bottom line**

All political parties should take this opportunity to take a stand for the laws and values that protect the rights of all individuals across the UK, especially those of the most vulnerable.

## **Contact Details**

[info@renecassin.org](mailto:info@renecassin.org)

853 Finchley Road, Golders Green, NW11 8LX

@Rene\_Cassin 020

020 3621 5464