

PRESS RELEASE

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INQUEST URGES MPs TO VOTE AGAINST GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS FOR "SECRET" INQUESTS IN COUNTER TERRORISM BILL

INQUEST publishes a detailed briefing paper today on the government's proposals for "secret" death in custody inquests. The proposals are contained in Part 6, clauses 64-67 of the Counter Terrorism Bill 2008 which receives its second reading in the House of Commons tomorrow. INQUEST is urging MPs to call for the withdrawal of Part 6 of the Bill immediately.

INQUEST is strongly opposed to the measures contained in the Bill which give the Secretary of State extraordinary powers to intervene in inquests where sensitive information is involved. The proposals could result in inquests into highly contentious deaths in custody taking place without juries, in private, with government-appointed coroners and counsel overseeing the evidence. This would exclude bereaved families, their legal representatives and the public at large from the investigation process.

Helen Shaw, co-director of INQUEST said:

"The proposals amount to a fundamental attack on the independence and transparency of the inquest system and could result in the inquests into highly contentious deaths involving state agents taking place without juries, in private, with government-appointed coroners and counsel overseeing the evidence. This would exclude bereaved families, their legal representatives and the public at large from the investigation process in breach of article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. We have seen no arguments or evidence from the government to justify the imposition of such wide-ranging and draconian proposals and believe they should be withdrawn immediately"

INQUEST's briefing can be downloaded from [here](#).

Notes to editors:

1. The parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, the House of Commons Justice Committee, the Law Society and JUSTICE have all expressed similar concerns about Part 6.
2. INQUEST is the only non-governmental organisation in England and Wales that works directly with the families of those who die in custody. It provides an independent free legal and advice service to bereaved people on inquest procedures and their rights in the coroner's courts.

Further Information	INQUEST's briefing on the proposals
INQUEST	office 020 7263 1111