**[Response by Jeff Dudgeon in News Letter 28 April 2012]**

**Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore calls for delivery on Northern Ireland Bill of Rights**

[Patrick Corrigan](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/patrickcorrigan/),

Sat 21 April 2012, 7:50am

[7](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/21/tanaiste-eamon-gilmore-calls-for-delivery-on-northern-ireland-bill-of-rights/#comments)



Tánaiste, Eamon Gilmore, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Copyright Kevin Cooper Photoline NUJ

I was pleased to be at the Alliance Party conference dinner in the La Mon hotel last night to hear the guest speech from Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore TD.
He used it to make a strong call for Northern Ireland party leaders to get round a negotiating table to deliver the [long-awaited](http://rightsni.org/2012/04/still-waiting-for-a-bill-of-rights-for-northern-ireland/) Bill of Rights. As I don’t see it yet published elsewhere, it’s worth reproducing the relevant speech extract at length:

Just as history is shared between the communities, so must the future be. As we near the 15th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement we must cast our minds forward and look at what can be achieved in the next 15, 25, 50 years. We cannot become complacent. Our work is not done. There remains much which we can do, and should do, and must do. Just as we will be commemorating the past …in the coming years, we must not lose sight of the future of this island.
A shared future for the people of Northern Ireland must be built on a cornerstone of equal respect for the rights of all communities. The Good Friday Agreement provides for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which would be based on the European Convention for Human Rights but also formulate rights which ‘reflect the principles of mutual respect for the identity and ethos of both communities and parity of esteem.’ The formulation and enactment of these rights, specific to Northern Ireland, would offer a strong, codified, response to those who allege that this post-Agreement society is not equal and does not respect the rights of all citizens.
We continue to be deeply engaged with the human rights agenda and hear regularly from civil society of the lacunae in human rights legislation. There are many groups who feel strongly that it is high time we addressed this.
Human rights and equality are fundamental to building a stable future for the island of Ireland. They are necessary for a solid, unshakeable, foundation for a lasting peace. A clear expression of these rights in a formal Bill of Rights can act as a touchstone.
Human rights and Equality are not unique, distinct entities; they have application and implications across all of the strands of the Agreement.
Human rights are part of the safeguards for the successful participation of all communities in the political and social life of Northern Ireland; equality of opportunity and parity of esteem are also fundamental to this society.
The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission were established to ensure that rights and equality are respected, and I commend them for their work now and in the past. However, a Bill of Rights drawn up by agreement between the main parties would set out precisely and formally the rights upon which a shared future can be based.
It is from certainty that trust and confidence is built, and trust and confidence were the cornerstones of the peace process. A Bill of Rights would base rights and equality in certainty and ensure the trust and confidence of the people of Northern Ireland for the future.
Next week we host a conference, as part of our Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) 2012, the world’s largest regional security organisation, comprising 56 member states from across Europe, Central Asia and North America. The Conference will reflect on the peace process with a view to the future.
The title of the conference is ‘Shared Future: Building and Sustaining Peace’ and the speakers will be drawn from those who had experience of the process and those who are currently working to enact its provisions.
The Conference is a case-study for the information of others grappling with the challenge of peace, but it will reflect themes which we must continue to engage with ourselves. We have come this far and created a framework for peace, and now is the time to begin to build a concrete peaceful future.

The only way we can ensure that this peace will last is by ensuring that human rights and equality are the basis of all progress.

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« [“They are conversations – they are not negotiations, they are not mediation…”](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/20/they-are-conversations-they-are-not-negotiations-they-are-not-mediation/)

**Comments (7)**

1. *Drumlins Rock (*[*profile*](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/drumlinsrock/)*)*

[21 April 2012 at 9:06 am](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/21/tanaiste-eamon-gilmore-calls-for-delivery-on-northern-ireland-bill-of-rights/comment-page-1/#comment-1067417)

4. The new Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (see paragraph 5
below) will be invited to consult and to advise on the scope for defining,
in Westminster legislation, rights supplementary to those in the European
Convention on Human Rights, to reflect the particular circumstances of
Northern Ireland, drawing as appropriate on international instruments and
experience. These additional rights to reflect the principles of mutual
respect for the identity and ethos of both communities and parity of
esteem, and – taken together with the ECHR – to constitute a Bill of Rights
for Northern Ireland. Among the issues for consideration by the
Commission will be:
• the formulation of a general obligation on government and public
bodies fully to respect, on the basis of equality of treatment, the identity
and ethos of both communities in Northern Ireland; and
• a clear formulation of the rights not to be discriminated against and to
equality of opportunity in both the public and private sectors.
The consultation was carried out and advice given, the reccomendation were found to be such a complete dogs dinner of a mess even Eamon seems too embarassed to mention it. I take it he is calling for the whole process to start over again? Which is a lovely thought for all those consultants who milked it the last time but I can think of better ways to spend our money, and even Chuck Feeny seems to have moved on.
Its dead, cremated, and buried in a deep hole with a tree growing on top. Let it Rest in Peace.

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Commend 0

1. *cynic2 (*[*profile*](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/cynic2/)*)*

[21 April 2012 at 9:12 am](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/21/tanaiste-eamon-gilmore-calls-for-delivery-on-northern-ireland-bill-of-rights/comment-page-1/#comment-1067418)

Absolutely. Our current Human Rights (TM) industry is on its knees since the blessed Monica left!
Scores of potential Graduates seeking a career in the Human Rights Industry are being denied it by the lack of things to do. It is so bad that we have even spotted a lawyers in Belfast who was not a Human Rights Lawyer (TM)!
Perhaps the Irish Government will fund all this for us?

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Commend 0

1. *lamhdearg2 (*[*profile*](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/lamhdearg2/)*)*

[21 April 2012 at 9:28 am](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/21/tanaiste-eamon-gilmore-calls-for-delivery-on-northern-ireland-bill-of-rights/comment-page-1/#comment-1067420)

would the euro one not supersede it anyway.

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Commend 0

1. [*fitzjameshorse1745*](http://fitzjameshorselooksattheworld.wordpress.com/) *(*[*profile*](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/fitzjameshorse1745/)*)*

[21 April 2012 at 10:40 am](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/21/tanaiste-eamon-gilmore-calls-for-delivery-on-northern-ireland-bill-of-rights/comment-page-1/#comment-1067427)

And I recall being at the SDLP Conference in November 2010 when the NI Civil Rights Consortium a body representing scores of voluntary organisations made a presentation at a fringe meeting.
Now as then I wonder what the commissioners at the Human Rights Commission have been doing. They are a complete waste of space.

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1. [*oneill*](http://www.openunionism.com/) *(*[*profile*](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/oneill/)*)*

[21 April 2012 at 10:53 am](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/21/tanaiste-eamon-gilmore-calls-for-delivery-on-northern-ireland-bill-of-rights/comment-page-1/#comment-1067430)

*Perhaps the Irish Government will fund all this for us?*
Which reminds me of one of the unintended and welcome consequences that I forgot to mention re things to relish in a 32 county state- the demise of the local human rights oligarchy.

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1. *Drumlins Rock (*[*profile*](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/drumlinsrock/)*)*

[21 April 2012 at 12:31 pm](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/21/tanaiste-eamon-gilmore-calls-for-delivery-on-northern-ireland-bill-of-rights/comment-page-1/#comment-1067439)

oneill, think that is starting to happen anyways, with Chuck Feeny either runnig out of money or moving on to another crusade, and the squeeze on finance at Stormont, it may be a pet project of the shinners but not the vote winner it once was.

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1. *Framer (*[*profile*](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/frame/)*)*

[21 April 2012 at 12:39 pm](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/04/21/tanaiste-eamon-gilmore-calls-for-delivery-on-northern-ireland-bill-of-rights/comment-page-1/#comment-1067440)

I notice Gilmore doesn’t remind us the agreement said any new NI rights were to be equalled in the south – fat chance of that for starters, while NIHRC and the myriad of experts on the BOR Forum couldn’t come up with a single Northern Ireland right on, say, parity of esteem. They all preferred maximalist international rights.
By the way he must not have known the Alliance Party voted against most of the previous reports.