



For immediate release

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**UK poverty and inequality breach human rights obligations, Just Fair to tell  
United Nations**

Just Fair – the leading charity to advance economic and social rights in the UK – is heading to **Geneva on 13 June** to present evidence to United Nations experts that rising levels of deprivation, poverty and inequality breach the UK's obligations under international law.

Under the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UK is committed to protecting the rights to food, housing, social security, health and equality, among others.

Just Fair will argue that cuts to public services and social security and have severely undermined protection of many of the rights in the Covenant, particularly for people with disabilities and children—and cannot be justified by reasons of economic necessity.

On the contrary, since 2010, UK governments have deliberately chosen to reduce tax revenues—notably, by increasing the tax-free personal allowance and cutting corporation tax—while making inadequate efforts to reduce the 'tax gap' caused by tax evasion and avoidance which official figures estimate at £34 billion—and independent estimates at more than £100 billion.

At the same time, actual or projected cuts to social security total more than £30 billion—even though the economic crisis and subsequent debt were caused by problems in the financial sector, not the social security bill.

Among the issues that Just Fair highlights in its submission to the Committee are:

- The rising use of food banks and severe food insecurity affecting more than 8 million people;
- New evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that 1,252,000 people, including 312,000 children, are living in destitution;
- The combined effect of tax and 'welfare reform' policies which the Institute for Fiscal Studies project will increase relative child poverty in the UK by 50 per cent, with 18.3 per cent in absolute poverty by 2020-21.
- The failure by the UK government to assess the cumulative impact of 'welfare reform' on economic and social rights—despite evidence that it has had a disproportionately harsh effect on children, single parent families and people with disabilities;

- The inadequacy of the new ‘national living wage’, which is set too low to cover basic living costs, is denied to under-25s, and is offset by cuts which hit working households reliant on social security to supplement poverty wages.
- The impact of housing policy and social security reform in increasing homelessness and decreasing access to affordable, secure and decent housing for those on both middle and low incomes.

Just Fair will appear **on 13 June** before the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the independent expert body that monitors states’ compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

As part of this monitoring process, states must report to the Committee on their record roughly every five years. The last time the UK reported was in 2009, and so this is the first opportunity the Committee has had to evaluate the impact of the austerity policies pursued since 2010.

Just Fair has made a submission to the Committee on behalf of the Just Fair Consortium—a network of 76 national and local charities, non-government organisations and community groups.

The Committee is due to release its findings on **27 June 2016**.

Jamie Burton, Chair of Just Fair, says:

*“The UK government has made a clear choice to slash public services and social security, while cutting taxes and allowing the huge ‘tax gap’ caused by tax evasion and avoidance to persist. Ministers have not even attempted to assess the desperate consequences of these policies in increasing inequality and reducing living standards in the UK.*

*“Just Fair will present evidence to UN Committee on Economic and Social Rights that these backward steps leave the UK in breach of its international human rights obligations.”*

#### **Note to editors**

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, a body of independent experts, monitors states’ compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). The UK has been bound by the Convention since 1976.

On 26 October 2015, the Committee published the ‘list of issues’ (questions) that it wanted the UK Government to respond to as part of its sixth periodic review of the UK. The list of issues is [here](#). The Committee’s findings (known as ‘concluding observations’) will be published on 27 June 2016

Read Just Fair’s full submission to the Committee [here](#).

Just Fair has published a series of reports that have highlighted the impact that austerity measures have had on economic and social rights in the UK. These reports can be found [here](#).

The Just Fair Consortium includes Amnesty International UK, the Child Poverty Action Group, Crisis, the Refugee Council, the Trade Union Congress and the Trussell Trust.

**For more information, please contact Jamie Burton, Chair of Just Fair.**

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