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Labour 'tramples on human rights'

By Justin Parkinson
Political reporter, BBC News, Lib Dem conference

Sir Menzies Campbell has kicked off the Liberal Democrat annual conference with an attack on the government's human rights record.



Sir Menzies said Gordon Brown had to defend civil liberties

The party leader accused Labour of "trampling" over freedom of speech and the presumption that suspects are presumed innocent until found guilty.

Sir Menzies urged ministers to respect the terms of the Human Rights Act when making new laws.

He told delegates in Brighton he was "enraged" by the government.

'Liberty lost'

Sir Menzies called for an independent review of "how much liberty had been lost under Labour".

The Lib Dems are promoting their opposition to government policies including introducing identity cards and increasing the length of detention without trial for some terror suspects.

Sir Menzies said: "Here in the UK the rights of British citizens have been relentlessly undermined by the most centralising, authoritarian and intrusive government in the post-war era.

"Freedom of speech, the right to privacy, the principle of innocence until proved guilty, freedom from detention without charge.

“ These rights are not whimsical or self-indulgent. They are substantial and necessary ”

Sir Menzies Campbell

"There has been no right too precious, too hard-won or too long-standing for new Labour not to want to trample on it."

Sir Menzies said the Conservative Party wanted to scrap the Human Rights act, while "shamefully, the government declines to defend it".

He said: "The Human Rights Act not only complements our traditional liberties; it guarantees many of them in law too.

"It guarantees the right to a fair trial and to freedom of

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expression, the right of assembly and association, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

"These rights are not whimsical or self-indulgent. They are substantial and necessary."

Sir Menzies questioned the UK's right to "promote human rights if we disparage them here at home".

He cited Zimbabwe as an example of the erosion of human rights, adding: "That is where the road ends - where human rights are trampled under foot."

Sir Menzies said Gordon Brown should put the UK "at the forefront of an international campaign to end the tyranny and suffering in Zimbabwe".

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