

Alyn Smith MEP welcomes ruling on human rights



EUROPEAN JUDGES CONSISTENCY EXPOSES FAILURE OF EUROSCEPTICS TO RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS

SNP MEP Alyn Smith, today welcomed a judgment from the European Court of Justice (the highest court of the EU).

This stated that member states could maintain an indefinite ban on voting in European Parliament elections for certain nationals who were imprisoned so long as the restriction was proportionate to the aim pursued.

The judgement is in line with a previous opinion from the European Court of Human Rights in October 2005 which found that a blanket ban on prisoners voting was a breach of human rights law.

Alyn said: "Today's judgment came from the European Court of Justice, and is an interpretation of the laws of the EU, it is not directly based on the European Convention of Human Rights.

"This ruling shows consistency, and in my opinion, is the right balance. All this judgment does is state that not all prisoners should be treated the same way; a principal that I think is pretty reasonable.

"The European Court of Justice and European Court of Human Rights have different functions, one enforcing treaty law, the other the European Convention of Human Rights. That these two judgments agree in law despite finding in different directions for the individual cases shows how simple the issue is.

"Proportionality is central to this: prisoners can have the right to vote taken away but not universally.

“Unfortunately, proportionality is alarmingly absent from the UK Government. David Cameron cared so little about this judgment that he issued his opinion yesterday, stating he would simply ignore the result from the EU’s highest court.

“This cavalier attitude is all too familiar coming from a Government that has deliberately excluded nearly 90,000 Scots who happen to be EU citizens from the forthcoming EU referendum.

“The Conservatives seem to increasingly think that Human Rights are not fundamental, but optional.”