*The Ministry of Justice is currently undertaking a consultation on reforming the Human Rights Act 1988.*

*Having read the consultation we are concerned that some of the proposed reforms would undermine or severely weaken hard fought for legislation, that currently protects the rights and beliefs of vegans. Below you will find a template letter that you can email as ‘a member of the public’ to the Human Rights Team at the Ministry of Justice. Please ensure this is sent no later than 11.59pm on Tuesday 8March 2022.*

*Your letter should be emailed to:* HRAreform@justice.gov.uk

Dear Human Rights Team,

As a vegan, and supporter of The Vegan Society, I am writing to express my concerns about some of the proposed reforms to the Human Rights Act 1988.

I am concerned that UK courts will not need to follow the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights recognised in 1993 that veganism attracts protection under article 9 of the European Convention “the human right to freedom of thought conscience and religion”.

Furthermore, the proposed changes would allow for UK courts to be able to draw on various examples from other countries where veganism is not fully protected, weakening the position of vegans in the UK.

The proposed reforms could also create a permission stage for rights claims so that trivial or spurious claims can be thrown out. The idea of vegans having the protection of law has been described as nonsense by some UK parliamentarians and The Vegan Society has had reason to write a formal complaint about derogatory comments. Vegans have also been targeted under counter terrorism measures in the past.

The creation of a permission stage in which vegans would have to prove they suffered a ‘significant disadvantage’, along with courts not being required to look to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights could result in cases presented by vegans being dismissed as trivial or spurious and is extremely worrying.

The reform proposals also intend to remove the current positive obligation on public authorities. This positive obligation has been, and still is, hugely significant to the advances made for vegans. It means vegans can insist that a public authority provides vegan food, vegan uniform items where available, gives due regard to the needs of vegans in school and hospital. Organisations, such as The Vegan Society, continue to rely on this positive obligation to support vegans.

The Human Rights Act is working well for vegans. It looks to the European Court of Human Rights which oversees the Convention. Serious attention is given at the court to ethical convictions and rights under article 9 “the human right to freedom of thought conscience and religion”. Vegans attract protection under this right.

To conclude, I believe that there is no evidence that reforms are required and I believe the Human Rights Act 1998 must be retained. The reform proposals should be abandoned, as they will only take away power from individuals, human rights campaigners, and the courts. Instead, the UK government should implement an extensive education campaign to inform people about their fundamental human rights.

Yours sincerely, (YOUR NAME)