

**NICOLAS BRATZA**

Wednesday 24 October 2012

17

Why does the notion of human rights get such a bad press in Britain?

The jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights runs in 47 countries, but it is criticised most overtly and regularly in Britain. The outgoing president asks why



NEW

HOT

COMMENTED

SHARE

95

Like

56

Tweet

+MORE

It is something of an understatement to say that the European Court of Human Rights, which I have had the honour and the privilege to preside over for the past 12 months, has had [a bad press in the United Kingdom](#). The very notion of human rights has become the target of abuse in certain quarters as if this noble aspiration, enshrined notably in the 1948 Universal Declaration as a response to the limitless barbarity of the Second World War, had somehow become the cause of many of society's ills. It seems to me that the drafters of the European Convention on Human Rights, among whom British common lawyers played a decisive role, would be somewhat bemused by this turn of events.

Whatever the perception about human rights generally, I do feel a responsibility, as my term in Strasbourg ends, to try once again to set the record straight about its role, in particular in relation to the UK. To my profound regret Britain is, of the 47 countries in which the court's jurisdiction runs, the one in which the court is most regularly and overtly criticised.

During my year as president, I have visited a number of states whose record in terms of violations is much less favourable than the UK's yet whose political and judicial authorities show a greater level of respect and understanding for the Court and its work.

In April of this year, the 47 states, including the UK, joined together in

