



Grand Chamber hearing concerning life imprisonment in the United Kingdom

The European Court of Human Rights is holding a Grand Chamber hearing today **Wednesday 28 November 2012 at 9.15 a.m.** in the case of **Vinter and Others v. the United Kingdom** (application nos. 66069/09, 130/10 and 3896/10).

The case concerns three applicants' complaint that their imprisonment for life amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment as they have no hope of release.

The hearing will be broadcast from 2.30 p.m. on the Court's Internet site (www.echr.coe.int). After the hearing the Court will begin its deliberations, which will be held in private. Its ruling in the case will, however, be made at a later stage.

The applicants, Douglas Gary Vinter, Jeremy Neville Bamber and Peter Howard Moore, are British nationals who were born in 1969, 1961 and 1946 respectively. All three men are currently serving sentences of life imprisonment for murder.

Mr Vinter was convicted of stabbing his wife in February 2008, having already been convicted of murdering a work colleague in 1996. Mr Bamber was convicted of shooting and killing his adoptive parents, sister and her two young children in August 1985. Mr Moore was convicted of stabbing four men between September and December 1995. When convicted the applicants were given whole life orders, meaning they cannot be released other than at the discretion of the Secretary of State on compassionate grounds (for example, if they are terminally ill or seriously incapacitated).

Relying in particular on Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights, all three applicants complain that their imprisonment without hope of release is cruel and amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment.

Procedure

The applications were lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 11 December 2009, 17 December 2009 and 6 January 2010, respectively. In its judgment of 17 January 2012, the Court held, by four votes to three, that there had been no violation of Article 3 of the Convention. The case (covering all three joined applications) was referred¹ to the Grand Chamber at the request of the applicants on 9 July 2012.

¹ Under Article 43 of the European Convention on Human Rights, within three months from the date of a Chamber judgment, any party to the case may, in exceptional cases, request that the case be referred to the 17-member Grand Chamber of the Court. In that event, a panel of five judges considers whether the case raises a serious question affecting the interpretation or application of the Convention or its protocols, or a serious issue of general importance, in which case the Grand Chamber will deliver a final judgment. If no such question or issue arises, the panel will reject the request, at which point the judgment becomes final. Otherwise Chamber judgments become final on the expiry of the three-month period or earlier if the parties declare that they do not intend to make a request to refer.

Composition of the Court

The case will be heard by a Grand Chamber, composed as follows:

Dean **Spielmann** (Luxembourg), *President*,
Josep **Casadevall** (Andorra),
Guido **Raimondi** (Italy),
Ineta **Ziemele** (Latvia),
Mark **Villiger** (Liechtenstein),
Isabelle **Berro-Lefèvre** (Monaco),
Dragoljub **Popović** (Serbia)
Luis **López Guerra** (Spain),
András **Sajó** (Hungary),
Mirjana **Lazarova Trajkovska** (“the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”),
Nona **Tsotsoria** (Georgia),
Ann **Power-Forde** (Ireland),
Nebojša **Vučinić** (Montenegro),
Linos-Alexandre **Sicilianos** (Greece),
Paul **Lemmens** (Belgium),
Paul **Mahoney** (the United Kingdom),
Johannes **Silvis** (the Netherlands), *judges*,
Işıl **Karakaş** (Turkey),
Paulo **Pinto de Albuquerque** (Portugal),
Aleš **Pejchal** (the Czech Republic), *substitute judges*,

and also Michael **O’Boyle**, *Deputy Registrar*.

Representatives of the parties

Government

Laura **Dauban**, *Agent*,
David **Perry QC** and Louis **Mably**, *Counsel*,
John **Guess** and Alison **Foulds**, *Advisers*;

Applicants

Richard **Horwell QC**, Pete **Weatherby QC** and Simon **Creighton**, *Counsel*,
Luke **Hindmarsh**, Barry **Woods** and Dirk **Van Zyl Smit**, *Advisers*.

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The European Court of Human Rights was set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe Member States in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.