

From Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*, right up to DH Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* the state has often sought to censor certain types of expression, and even today 'hate speech' is a crime, however as publication has become easier, censorship has been abandoned incrementally. Admittedly this is as much to do with the impossibility of enforcement as the passing of any specific law, however many UK courts in the 1980s and early 1990s were already applying a free speech principle in many common law cases such as libel and saw it as their duty where possible to maintain free speech. Even before HRA judges were therefore willing to provide legal protection for what they saw as the foundational tenets of free speech.

Freedom from Discrimination.

Britain has passed several laws prohibiting discrimination:

The Papists Act (1778) addressed discrimination against Catholics.

The Reform Act (1867) gave the vote to every male householder irrespective of race or religion.

The Representation of People Act gave women equal voting rights (before France, Spain or Italy and slightly before Germany in 1918).

Britain passed the Race Relations Act in 1965.

Britain decriminalised homosexuality in 1967.

Britain passed the Equal Pay Act in 1970.

Freedom from Domestic Violence.

The Married Woman's Property Act (1870) meant any money earned or inherited by a woman while married stayed hers.

The Matrimonial Causes Act (1878) made it possible for women in the UK to seek legal separation from an abusive husband.

The Matrimonial Causes Act (1923) allowed divorce on the grounds of adultery for women as well as men.

The Sexual Offences Act (1956) extended the definition of rape to include incest, sex with a girl under 16 and the use of drugs.

The 1976 Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act specifically addressed domestic violence and gave survivors new rights, by offering civil protection orders.

The 1977 Housing Act acknowledged women and children at risk of violence as homeless and therefore entitled to state-funded temporary accommodation.

In 1991 Marital Rape was criminalised.

The Family Law Act Part IV (1996) gave police automatic powers of arrest where violence had been used or threatened.

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004) allowed the police to arrest an assailant immediately rather than wait for a warrant.

Claire's Law (2014) gave women the right to ask police about a partner's history of domestic abuse.

Abolition of Slavery.

Britain passed the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833.

After the Second World War a team of British legal experts drafted a bill of human rights to help Europe protect people from abuses of state power, it was called the European Convention on Human Rights. WE gave THEM human rights - not vice versa!