



Ministry of
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25 JAN 2008

Dear Naomi,

**Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill:
Abolition of common law offence of blasphemy**

Thank you for your letter of 7 January 2007 to Michael Wills. Your letter has been passed to me to respond to as any change to the law on blasphemy would be made through an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill, and I am responsible for this area of the Bill.

I am grateful to the British Humanist Association for its support for the abolition of the common law offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel. The Government has every sympathy for the case for abolition, but we believe that we should consult with faith groups, especially the Church of England, before proceeding.

Subject to the outcome of that consultation, which we expect to be concluded quickly, we will bring forward amendments to abolish the blasphemy offences during the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill's passage through the House of Lords.

Best wishes
Maria Eagle

MARIA EAGLE MP