



Northern Ireland Assembly

AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR A BILL OF RIGHTS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 1 October 2020
Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present, Room 30:	Emma Sheerin MLA (Chairperson) Michelle McIlveen MLA
Present, via StarLeaf:	Mike Nesbitt MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Mark Durkan MLA John O'Dowd MLA (deputising for Carál Ní Chuilín MLA)
Apologies:	Paula Bradshaw MLA Christopher Stalford MLA
In Attendance:	Caroline Perry (Assembly Clerk) Gareth Cross (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in open session, with four Members but an absence of a decision-making quorum, at 2.06 p.m.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Briefing on the South African experience by Albie Sachs

Albie Sachs, a former Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, who served a 15-year term, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 2:09 p.m.

His briefing outlined his experience of the preparations of the Constitution of South Africa and the reasons why this was important for the people of South Africa. Albie

stressed the importance of a preamble to: establish the value system and vision for the country; capture the historical moment, and act as an interpretative tool. He observed that the Preamble, Foundational Principles and Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa are linked by the central notion of human dignity.

Mark Durkan left the meeting at 2: 58pm.

The Ad Hoc Committee meeting suspended at 2.58pm.

The Ad Hoc Committee meeting resumed at 3.03pm.

Mike Nesbitt joined the meeting at 3:03pm.

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Albie for his evidence and flexibility in light of technical difficulties.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

3. Briefing on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland by Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws QC

Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws QC, a renowned barrister, human rights advocate and broadcaster, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 3:17 p.m.

Her briefing outlined what she believes makes a good Bill of Rights. Baroness Kennedy explained the importance of a Bill of Rights in the context of Brexit. She highlighted a number of rights which she believes should be protected by a Bill of Rights, including: cultural identity and language rights; citizenship rights and children's rights.

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Baroness Kennedy for her evidence and patience in light of technical issues and delays.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

With an absence of a decision-making quorum, further committee business was deferred to the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3.53 p.m.

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA
Chairperson, Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights