

Written evidence from A1 (SOT63)

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee The Status of the UK's Overseas Territories in the 21st Century inquiry

I respond specifically to the question on the effective protection of the rights and interests of British Overseas Territory Citizens under the current constitutional arrangements.

I am a British Overseas Territory Citizen (Turks and Caicos Islands). I was naturalized 20 years ago, in 2003. I first became resident in TCI in February 1994, as an employed lawyer, having been admitted to the TCI Bar in February 1994. I am the principal of Themis Bishop, Attorneys, and in continuous practice in the TCI for 29 years.

I am a party to proceedings challenging refusal of my application (made in 2017) for Islander status, which refusal was issued 6 years later in 2023. The proceedings for judicial review remain pending to date.

Since the date of the proceedings, the government has introduced amending legislation which I consider to be plainly an attempt to defeat my application. The new regulations propose a points system that make it a virtual mathematical impossibility for even well qualified applicants to obtain grant of status. The effect of the denial of such status is that even after 30 years of lawful residence and having BOTC status, I will remain unable to vote as well as being excluded from certain types of business. In fact, if not for having an existing license to own a law practice, I would be specifically excluded from owning certain categories of law practice.

I wish to make the committee aware that for all practical purposes, there is no pathway to citizenship that includes the right to vote, and that in fact I consider myself and others involved in proceedings challenging the refusal of grant of status at some risk. Criticism of our group challenging the refusals have been made by members of the legislature and even by the very board considering the applications for status.

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