

**Lechmere Essay Prize 2025**

**Question**

**Critically assess the following statement in light of the UK’s obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR):**

**“But when the application of rights begins to feel out of step with common sense – when it conflicts with fairness or disrupts legitimate government action – trust begins to erode.”**

**– Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP, Lord Chancellor, 18 June 2025**

**In your response, focus on the role of Article 8 ECHR, its application in immigration and prison contexts, and whether domestic and Strasbourg courts have struck an appropriate balance between individual rights and the public interest.**

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| Word Count\*: |  |

*\*The limit is 3,000 words. The word count does not include footnotes, but footnotes should be used for pure reference purposes and should not include analysis*

**Assessment criteria**: Essays will be assessed solely on the quality of legal analysis and argumentation, not on the stance taken. Entrants are not expected to adopt any particular view on the ECHR or its application. Supportive and critical perspectives will be marked equally, provided they are well-reasoned, evidence-based, and professionally expressed.

Note on the use of generative AI. Entrants intending to use generative AI tools must familiarise themselves with the Bar Council’s guidance: “Considerations when using ChatGPT and generative artificial intelligence software based on large language models” (Information Technology Panel, 30 January 2024).

All entries must include a brief statement (maximum 100 words) at the end of the essay explaining whether, and if so how, generative AI was used. Responsible, limited use is permitted. However, over-reliance on AI or uncritical use — such as accepting inaccurate content or failing to verify legal sources — may be reflected in the assessment of the submission.

**Declaration**

By signing this document I confirm that;

* I have read and understood the guidance on plagiarism and consequent penalties, which is available on the Middle Temple website.
* the essay I am submitting for the Lechmere Essay Competition is my sole creation and original work. Any work from other authors is acknowledged and appropriately referenced.
* I am a member of the Middle Temple, and am either a student, or a newly Called barrister looking for, or currently undertaking, pupillage.
* I intend to practise at the Bar of England and Wales.

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