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Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD,  
Department of the Taoiseach,  
Merrion Street  
Dublin 2

20 March 2023

Dear Taoiseach,

1. We note reports in the media that the Government is considering an official review of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) considers that such a review is vital to ensure any future emergency response is informed by lessons learned. We have long called for such a review to include a human rights impact assessment. Media reports have indicated that the proposed review will include consideration of the use of emergency powers and the impact of restrictions on liberty.<sup>1</sup> ICCL warmly welcomes this development.
2. ICCL monitored and analysed the making of emergency laws and regulations and their implementation from a rule of law and human rights perspective from the very beginning of the government's response to the pandemic in Ireland. We made many submissions to government across a wide range of policy areas and produced a wide-ranging report on human rights and the pandemic, which we published in May 2021. We enclose our submission on the Health (Preservation and Protection and Other Emergency Measures) Act 2020 and our report entitled 'Human Rights in a Pandemic'.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Harry McGee's article in *The Irish Times*, January 2 2023, <https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2023/01/02/taoiseach-leo-varadkar-commits-to-a-full-covid-inquiry-in-2023/>

3. Given the substantial impact on a range of rights during the pandemic response, we encourage government to include both an assessment of this impact and an assessment of the extent to which the response complied with Ireland's national, regional and international human rights obligations.
4. We stand ready to assist with this review in any way that may be helpful and hope that our existing work on this topic will be useful. We would be grateful to hear more detail regarding your intentions for the scope and timing of this review.

Yours sincerely,



Liam Herrick,  
Executive Director,  
Irish Council for Civil Liberties

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1. ICCL Submission to Government on the Health (Preservation and Protection and Other Emergency Measures) Act 2020
2. Ansbro, Carthy, Cronin, McLoughlin-Buke, *Human Rights in a Pandemic*, ICCL, May 2021