

WHAT DO OTHERS THINK

WHAT DO LEGAL PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Open Letter to the Prime Minister – March 2026

3,236 legal professionals, including **more than 300 KCs and 22 former judges** signing a letter to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer urging the government against “*draining valuable time and resources*” by “*attempting to force through an unpopular, untested and poorly evidenced change to our jury system*”.

“Evidence is now emerging to show that the plans to restrict jury trial will have no significant effect on reducing trial delays, but the Parliamentary debate still continues, driven in the case of some Labour MPs by “ideological” opposition to jury trial. This is bizarre, given the historical role of the jury in protecting dissidents and sustaining democracy: attacking juries must be regarded a betrayal of the values for which Labour purports to stand.”

<https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/media-campaigns/campaigns/justice-needs-juries/open-letter-to-pm.html>

WHAT DO JUDGES THINK?

Currently sitting judges may not speak about these matters, therefore we cant ask them. A number of former judges have however expressed firm views:

- **Sir Stephen Mitchell in The Sunday Times - 25-6/4/2026**

Sir Stephen Mitchell, one of the foremost criminal lawyers, practitioners and judges of his day, a Crown Court judge, sitting at The Old Bailey, and then a High Court Judge who worked alongside Lord Igor Judge. Writing in the Sunday Times he has said “*I was a judge. We must not be silenced over the vandalism of juries*”.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/law/article/judges-silenced-jury-trial-curbs-3vt0bt15d>

- **Judge Joanna Korner KC letter to the Times - 26/4/2026**

Joanna Korner KC, is an English judge who now sits in the International Court in The Hague. She responded by letter to The Times to Sir Stephen Mitchell’s article in the Sunday Times writing:

“Sir Stephen Mitchell is correct when he says that the restriction of jury trials will fail to cut the staggering backlog of crown court cases).

I sat as a judge in Southwark crown court, which is the venue for trials of long and complex fraud cases. At no time did I have reason to believe that juries were incapable of understanding the issues raised by these cases. Moreover, had the cases been tried by judge alone, the delay would have been greater, in that the

judge would have to have give full written reasons for the verdict delivered. This would mean that to deliver judgment within a reasonable time, he/she would be unavailable to take new trials.

The assertion that trial by judge alone will reduce the backlog is not supported by my experience at the International Criminal Court, in which I now sit, where trials are held before a bench of judges. In my last case, it took months to produce a fully reasoned judgment.”

<https://www.thetimes.com/comment/letters-to-editor/article/sunday-times-letters-president-trump-political-genius-d7khh30c>

- **HH Geoffrey Rivlin KC**, senior circuit judge and former Resident Judge at Southwark Crown Court in his Written Evidence to Parliament 10/3/2026

“It is a Bill which would rip the heart out of a justice system which, for so many years, has managed to achieve the impossible – the confidence of the public....”

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/65675/documents/8094>

- **And in the Daily Telegraph - 12/12/2026**

“In this time of crisis, it a great pity that any reform of the jury system should arise at all. It is not necessary; it can only do harm.... [it is] a distraction, creating unnecessary battle lines and efforts to save face. It will soak up valuable time and energy when there is much vitally important work to be done.”

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2025/12/12/judges-turn-on-lammy-plans-to-scrap-jury-trials/>

- **HH Wendy Joseph KC – former Old Bailey Judge in the Dailey Telegraph - 31/12/2026**
As an Old Bailey judge, I’ve seen why scrapping juries would be disastrous

“Judges only bring one viewpoint, because that’s all anyone can look at the world through,” she says. “The great advantage of the jury system is that you get 12 minds, from 12 different backgrounds, with 12 different sets of life experiences.” That “mixture of age, gender, intelligence, experience, education and religion” is crucial, she says – “it is how justice is done”

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/12/31/old-bailey-judge-scrapping-juries-would-be-disastrous/>

- **HH Chris Kinch KC in the Sunday Times 29-30/12/2025**

“The only answer is to provide the judges and the courtrooms and the legal aid funding to do it, which I suspect is why they won’t, because the MoJ is obsessed with saving costs and cutting the budget.”

“I know there are a lot of people who will say, ‘Oh, juries don’t understand this, they don’t understand that.’ But the fact is, over the piece, juries get things right and you have to be pretty brave to say that 12 citizens is anything other than an impartial tribunal.”

“Whereas mainly white, middle-aged judges who up to now have not been involved in the fray are suddenly going to be chucked into the arena, and nobody’s really thought about that. They certainly haven’t asked the judges.

So you’re going to lose that connection with the community which juries provide.”

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/law/article/jury-trials-judges-uk-david-lammy-vkz7d6nvf>

- **And in the Daily Mail - 19/3/2026**

‘I just don’t see that there are going to be huge savings that would justify the upheaval the proposals will cause,’ Kinch tells the Daily Mail.

'And the potential loss of confidence when you have one judge making a decision instead of 12 members of the community - who are completely independent, chosen at random and come in what for me has always been the essence of democratic involvement in the criminal courts.'

It was only a few years ago that Lammy was saying the presence of people from ethnic minorities being in the jury was the only effective safeguard for fairness in the criminal justice system.

'This is because you couldn't necessarily trust the individual prejudices of a single judge.'

<https://www.dailymail.com/news/article-15653231/Retired-judge-savages-David-Lammys-jury-trials-WONT-save-money.html>

- **HH Nic Madge, writing in The Guardian 15-16/3/2026**

Curtailing the right to jury trial will have a minimal effect on the backlog.

Jury trials are not the cause of the backlog. Furthermore, the government's proposals will disproportionately impact Black complainants, witnesses and defendants.

The random selection of jurors from local communities ensures that they are far more likely to reflect the cultural heritage of people appearing in court.

https://www.theguardian.com/law/2026/mar/15/impact-of-fewer-jury-trials-on-minorities?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

- **Letter to the Times HH Gary Burrell KC - 16/3/2026.**

"... The court backlog is not a result of jury trial procedures. It's mainly because the Ministry of Justice restricts the number of days a judge and court can sit, to limit costs. All judges are willing to sit as many days as it takes to reduce the backlog. The jury system actually works well and there is no better alternative. A judge sitting alone or with magistrates may result in more convictions but at what cost? The Post Office scandal has relevance here. It would be unfair to the judge and the accused to expect one person (or even three) to make these decisions. I was a QC for 13 years and a circuit judge for 14 years. The jury system works. It is fair and that is why our legal system is the envy of most countries."

<https://www.thetimes.com/article/61b44b2c-5770-4c36-a8ed-675fc7b0c293?shareToken=7bb624842b388b2aa5187b89bce819e3>

- **HH Paul Dodgson - Daily Telegraph 12/12/2026**

"I have no doubt whatsoever that jury trial is the fairest and most effective means of deciding whether someone is guilty of an offence.

"I can honestly say that I only remember one verdict from a jury that I fundamentally disagreed with and although I disagreed with the verdict I understood why the jury came to it."

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2025/12/12/judges-turn-on-lammy-plans-to-scrap-jury-trials/>

- **Senior retired judges, CBA, Bar Council and Circuit leaders, letter to the Times – 8th-9th March 2026**

Judge-only trials - *Sir, As retired judges, chairs and former chairs of the Bar and the Criminal Bar Association, we disagree with the ... proposals Not because we are reactionaries but because the changes will be unworkable in practice.*

The evidence that they will significantly affect the backlog of cases is too thin to support the policy. Victims, witnesses and defendants will still have to wait years, even under the government's best-case scenario. The experience that juries bring to trials is a better guarantee of fairness to all in a multicultural society than the narrower professional experience of judges. Cutting juries out of the predicted 50 per cent of trials suggests a lack of trust by politicians in the public. We may not have a written constitution but trial by jury is a constitutional matter.

The government wants to rush the Courts and Tribunals Bill through parliament, despite it not having been in Labour's manifesto and despite inadequate impact assessments. If magistrates are allowed to pass two-year sentences to take more trials from the Crown Court, their existing record backlog of cases will simply grow.

<https://www.thetimes.com/comment/letters-to-editor/article/times-letters-international-law-and-the-war-against-iran-qlj26sjxr>

Triggering the article - [Lammy's jury reform plans are unworkable, lawyers warn](#)

"The experience that juries bring to trials is a better guarantee of fairness to all in a multicultural society than the narrower professional experience of judges," the letter said.

"Cutting juries out of the predicted 50 per cent of trials suggests a lack of trust by politicians in the public."

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/crime/article/jury-reform-plans-unworkable-times-letter-zs5zhq72c>

- **12 March 2026 – Flora Page KC's resignation letter published in The times, triggering the article "[Postmaster' lawyer quits over David Lammy's 'tyrannical jury reforms'](#)"**

Flora Page KC represented victims of the Post Office scandal. She resigned from the Legal Services Board (LSB), a non-departmental government body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, which regulates the sector. Flora "criticised Sir Keir Starmer for sanctioning the "*act of tyranny*", which she said was "a sign that this government has completely lost its way". Page told Lammy the backlog was being used as "*a cynical cover*" to push through the reforms. She added: "*You should be ashamed of yourselves. It was disgusting to see the way you hijacked the suffering of victims to make your arguments yesterday.*"

https://www.thetimes.com/uk/law/article/david-lammy-jury-reforms-flora-page-7mk2c50j2?gaa_at=eafs&gaa_n=AWETsqdZZbwm1lrMZDuKzBKzPNC9SXntyWMWLx3Kr0lnMgM3UWvVpjEvf7aqZ2V4SM%3D&gaa_ts=69b7d0fa&gaa_sig=j33CDt9pnyrd1AooqPF0U_9aPWe3-V52xexeC_MqYwYclK3Yi0z6RjHicp53_e4dLKzAUdhPdaVmeo_IRqNMt9w%3D%3D&gearefreshHH

- **Flora Page KC Interview with Daily Telegraph 29/3/26**

Flora said she was incensed at Mr Lammy's "*tyrannical*" plans for jury-free trials after watching him use "*the pain of victims*" to try to force through his measures. Ms Page said of the plans -

"It comes from a place of not trusting the people. It comes from a place of not believing that the people of this country are the right people to take decisions about serious matters.

"The jury is something that is intangibly part of the constitution that delivers power outwards to people and doesn't allow for it to be centralised. A certain type of person finds that very uncomfortable. They don't like the fact that it's not something that you can measure and control"

She said the "*wantonly destructive*" plans risk undermining the rule of law in Britain and damaging public trust in the system of justice that has developed for centuries. They could lead to the rule of law disintegrating and "*then you start to have people taking the law into their own hands*".

"Judges are part of the establishment... It's just not the same as 12 ordinary people who come with no preconceptions, who come ready to take their responsibilities incredibly seriously."

She added: "*Every single person has their prejudices, their preconceptions [but] what makes it worse as a judge is that you then have to go through your career listening to lots and lots of cases and starting inevitably to form your own views about certain types of case, certain types of witness, certain types of defendant."*

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2026/03/29/david-lammy-exploited-rape-victims-jury-free-trials/>

WHAT ABOUT THE EFFECT ON THE SAFETY OF JUDGES?

The Lady Chief Justice Baroness Sue Carr has spoken about safety concerns for judges to an invited group of journalists as part of an agreed annual press update in March. The comments were published in among others The Independent, The Times and the Law Society Gazette and were republished nationally and internationally via Reuters.

- **The Independent – 17/3/2026**

Baroness Carr told journalists: *“My responsibility is to make it as plain as I can that I have grave security concerns if there are going to be judge-alone trials.*

“It’s a very different environment to be working in, and judges usually sit in one main centre, so they are going in and out of one centre on a daily basis, rather than High Court judges who are sitting all around the country.”

Baroness Carr said she had *“made the case very, very strongly”* that judicial security needs to be considered by the government.”

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/lammy-jury-trials-judges-security-courts-baroness-carr-b2940054.html>

- **The Law Society Gazette**

“On security, I see it as not only appropriate but my responsibility to make it as plain as I can that I have grave security concerns if there are going to be judge-alone trials. I have been assured this is all being heard and understood and resources made available.”

<https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/lcj-expresses-grave-security-concerns-over-judge-only-trials/5126223.article>

- **Reuters**

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/grave-security-concerns-judges-over-plan-curb-jury-trials-englands-top-judge-2026-03-17/>

WHAT IS SAID ABOUT THE EFFECT ON BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC PEOPLE?

- **In addition to the comments made by a number of former judges above, a group of prominent Black lawyers wrote to The Times on 16/3/2026**

Curbs on jury trials - *Sir, Flora Page KC, who represented wrongly convicted sub-postmasters, is right about the “tyranny” of David Lammy’s jury reforms (news, Mar 13). If the Courts and Tribunals Bill becomes law it will create further unfairness and miscarriages of justice for black and minority ethnic defendants. The deputy prime minister’s own 2017 Lammy report states there is evidence of racism embedded in the justice system. In his swearing-in speech as lord chancellor just last October he referred to “my work on the Lammy review into racial inequality in our criminal justice system”. His report states: “The lesson is that juries are representative of local populations — and must deliberate as a group, leaving no hiding place for bias or discrimination.” Nevertheless, Lammy proposes both that judges replace juries and that tens of thousands of more cases should be sent to the magistrates’ courts where many defendants,*

because of legal aid rules, will be unrepresented. Lammy's U-turn is unconstitutional, contrary to his own review and will create further unfairness. He must please do the right thing and not replace juries with judges.

<https://www.thetimes.com/article/61b44b2c-5770-4c36-a8ed-675fc7b0c293?shareToken=7bb624842b388b2aa5187b89bce819e3>

- **Hadley Freeman. The Times - 14/3/2026**

Well, Mr Lammy, have I got a reading recommendation for you. It's a 2017 review of minorities and the criminal justice system, which conclusively found that minorities prefer jury trials, seeing them as a safeguard against prejudice because they — unlike judges and magistrates — represent the local population. It was written by our old friend, David Lammy A Few Years Ago. As the man said, life moves pretty fast.

<https://www.thetimes.com/article/1631ae3e-3ea2-4216-a6f8-dad7d4d00b3b?shareToken=6365970a9009760b42348ba4ebb9b360>

VICTIMS and VAWG

- **Charlotte Nicols MP. Daily Express - 11/5/2026**

Charlotte Nichols said the Justice Secretary's proposals will do "*almost nothing*" for victims of sexual violence, adding that women are being used as a "*rhetorical device*".

In a stinging attack on the Labour Government, she added: "*How do you use rape victims as a rhetorical device for a Bill which does almost nothing for them?*"

"They (the Government) were trying to pitch it as criminals and legal professionals kicking off, and we are standing up for victims."

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2204375/Jury-trials-David-Lammy-Ministry-of-Justice-Labour-Keir-Starmer>

- **30 VAWG groups - 17 March 2026 – The Guardian – 30+ Violence Against Women and Girls Organisations write to the Justice Secretary in defence of jury trials for women both as victims and defendants**

In letter to justice secretary, groups say judge-led decisions more likely to be influenced by bias than those made by 12 random people

The groups said that the proposals, which will affect court cases in England and Wales, will deepen mistrust in the justice system among victims and distract from measures designed to reduce offending.

The letter says: "*VAWG organisations have long called for radical action to address the harms the criminal justice system causes for survivors, including the crown court backlog.*

"However, to position the rights and interests of survivors as directly opposed to those of defendants oversimplifies the reality of how our criminal justice system treats women and survivors on all sides of our adversarial model.

"This includes a failure to recognise that women who are survivors of violence are routinely and unjustly criminalised, particularly when they are members of minoritised communities.

"We are deeply concerned that the curtailment of jury trials risks unfair outcomes that undermine justice for everyone.

"For centuries, trial by one's peers has acted as a democratic safeguard, functioning as a vital connection between society and the law, so that justice is not determined by a single class or authority alone."

BARRISTERS AND OTHER LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

- **Michael Mansfield KC - 17/3/2026 - The Guardian**

“faith and confidence in how justice is dispensed. Retention of jury trials has remained a central tenet for proponents of judicial reform until recently, when there was a sudden seismic shift against juries – one that was conspicuously absent from the 2024 Labour manifesto.

Take David Lammy, the deputy prime minister, secretary of state for justice and lord chancellor. He was very much against jury abolition – so much so that on 20 June 2020, he tweeted: “Jury trials are a fundamental part of our democratic settlement. Criminal trials without juries are a bad idea. The government need to pull their finger out and acquire empty buildings across the country to make sure these can happen in a way that is safe ... You don’t fix the backlog with trials that are widely perceived as unfair.” Lammy is now proposing the exact opposite, with judge-only trials for offences likely to attract a sentence of less than three years. Such offences are not necessarily minor and can include theft, fraud, wounding and burglary. It’s not just about sentences but defendants’ reputations.”

...

“There is a very real risk of an increase in miscarriages of justice where trials are presided over by a cynical case-hardened judiciary without the safeguard of a diverse jury. In addition to which, judges who sit alone will be burdened with the onerous task of compiling a reasoned judgment setting out the evidence, the law, their findings and a final verdict. This will inevitably add a considerable period of delay at the end of a trial.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/commentisfree/2026/mar/17/labour-juries-court-proposals-government-ministers-criminal-justice-system>

- **Geoffrey Robertson KC, founding heading of Doughty Street Chambers. Where Prime Minister Keir Starmer KC was a junior tenant – Daily Telegraph - 13.4.26**

<https://www.criminalbar.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/G-Robertson-KC-for-Mercys-Sake.pdf>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/04/13/scrapping-jury-trials-betrays-labour-values-starmer-mentor/>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/04/13/labour-plan-scrap-jury-trials-threat-britain-freedoms/>

Writing for The Telegraph, he said that out of the elements comprising the justice system, including judges, magistrates, jurors and probation, *“the only institution they have chosen to demolish is the only one that commands public respect”*.

“Remove, at one fell swoop, one half of the centrepiece of British criminal justice and the whole edifice will be in much more danger than from a backlog that can be reduced in other ways.”

“The criminal justice system depends in the end on public trust. The Government claims that the system may fail unless the backlog is tackled. But it is a system of interlocking institutions – judges, magistrates, jurors, probation service and so on. The only institution they have chosen to demolish is the only one that commands public respect. Remove, at one fell swoop, one half of the centrepiece of British criminal justice and the whole edifice will be in much more danger than from a backlog that can be reduced in other ways”.

- **Richard Atkinson, former head of the Law Society - Women ‘at greater risk of domestic violence’ if Lammy curbs jury trials**

“They will be your more serious cases of coercive and controlling behaviour, of stalking, of serious harassment. These are very vulnerable victims whose cases are known to have very high attrition rates.”

“I speak to the police quite a lot. Their victim care units and witness care units repeatedly report that delay leads to withdrawal, particularly in domestic violence cases.

“So you have a very vulnerable cohort that is being effectively threatened by this policy, with even longer delays in their cases coming before the court.

“Tragically, and I say this as a defence lawyer, but also as a human being, we know this attrition rate will see some of those cases go on to suffer more serious violence because the perpetrator wasn’t dealt with and their offending wasn’t addressed when it was at a lower level.

“These aren’t merely academic discussions around numbers. These are people’s lives. These potentially have really serious consequences.”

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2026/03/29/women-greater-risk-domestic-violence-jury-trials/>

- **“Judge” Rob Rinder MBE, criminal barrister and television personality. Letter to MPs - March 2026**

“The projections are speculative. There is no credible evidence this will make justice swifter. Yet a fundamental British liberty, ancient and hard won, is being traded away all the same. The backlog was not caused by juries. It was caused by chronic underfunding, shuttered courtrooms, broken infrastructure and delay long before a jury is sworn. Proven measures such as opening courts, intensive listing and proper investment work. Eroding jury trial will not.”

“A jury does not guarantee perfection, but it does ensure that no single perspective, prejudice or institutional instinct decides a person's fate. These are not abstractions. They are the people you represent. To remove juries from such cases is to edge towards justice done to people rather than justice done with them.

My grandfather, a Holocaust survivor, fled tyranny in Europe. He loved this country because here the power of the state was checked by a jury of citizens. Around the world we see rights diminished not with a bang but with a shrug. Once surrendered they are rarely reclaimed intact.

This is not about nostalgia. It is about trust. Trust in the public. Trust in our constitutional inheritance. Trust in the idea that liberty is safeguarded by participation”.