



The Chair of the Bar

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

9 October 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you as Chair of the Bar, representing all barristers in England and Wales, following your recent comments about lawyers.

As you will be aware, the proper application of the laws of this country is fundamental to the functioning of our justice system and society more widely. Lawyers are a vital part of the administration of justice, including the criminal justice system. Early in the pandemic, we were rightly identified by your Government as 'key workers', crucial to keeping society operating safely and properly during Covid-19.

Lawyers are bound by a professional duty to their client and to the court. It is a barrister's task to set out the proper arguments for the court, regardless of any political affiliation. Barristers are bound by the 'cab-rank rule' whereby, if they are available and have the requisite expertise, they must take every case offered and do it to the best of their ability.

I therefore deplore your remarks at the Conservative Party Conference which wrongly seek to politicise and attack lawyers for simply doing their job in the public interest. Far from the criminal justice system being 'hamstrung' by lawyers, the backlog of cases, extreme delays, crumbling court estate and shockingly underpaid practitioners are a direct result of chronic underfunding by successive Governments. It is the continual lack of investment that hamstring the system and prevents many members of the public from accessing effective justice.

THE BAR COUNCIL

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A member of your Cabinet, the Lord Chancellor, recently said *"The freedoms and protections which we all enjoy rely on the rule of law; it is an important constitutional principle and, as a responsible Government, we remain committed to it."* The Government cannot remain committed to this principle by attacking those who put it into action every day.

A few days ago, he deprecated as wholly wrong the harassment and attacking of professionals for *"doing their job – we must call it out and deal with it."*

I urge you to withdraw your comments and to reassure thousands of key workers – including lawyers employed by your own Government - that they are not being attacked by their Prime Minister for their important contribution to the justice system.

In the interests of transparency, I will be publishing this letter. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Pinto". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a simple horizontal line.

Amanda Pinto QC
Chair of the Bar of England and Wales

cc:

Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP, Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State for Justice
Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP, Attorney General
Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary