# Boris Johnson criticises sentencing of Northampton childminder over social media remarks



Boris Johnson has openly criticised the sentencing of a Northampton-based childminder, Lucy Connolly, to 31 months in prison following her posting of inflammatory remarks on social media in the aftermath of a tragic incident in Southport, Merseyside. The former Prime Minister's comments highlight concerns over freedom of expression in the United Kingdom, where Connolly was sentenced for publishing material intended to provoke racial hatred after a violent attack that shocked the nation.

On July 29, 2022, a man named Axel Rudakubana was responsible for a stabbing spree that left 13 people injured, including eight children, three of whom tragically lost their lives. The attack occurred during a Taylor Swift-themed dance class, generating significant media coverage and public outrage. In the wake of the incident, unfounded claims circulated online suggesting Rudakubana was an illegal migrant, a narrative that Connolly echoed in her social media post.

In her tweet, which Johnson later described as “disgusting” and “vile,” Connolly proclaimed extreme views regarding asylum seekers and the government, insisting on drastic measures such as mass deportation. Despite deleting the post within roughly four hours due to intense backlash, it had amassed over 310,000 views.

As tensions flared in the days following the Southport stabbings, large-scale riots erupted in the UK, resulting in attacks on hotels housing asylum seekers. The judge in Connolly's case directly linked her social media post to the subsequent violence, highlighting the potential repercussions of her words.

Johnson, in his remarks to the Daily Mail, expressed concern that the severity of Connolly's sentence undermines the UK's standing as a defender of free speech. He remarked, "This has caused amazement among our friends and allies – notably in America where they have constitutional protections for free speech." He further contended that the jailing of a mother of two with no prior convictions serves as a “propaganda gift to tyrants like Vladimir Putin,” who could use such examples to contrast the situation in the UK with the repression of speech in his own country.

Johnson's comments suggest he believes that the repercussions faced by individuals for their online expressions could foster a perception of the UK as intolerant towards free speech, raising important questions about the balance between public safety and freedom of expression within the legal framework.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)