# Senior EHRC commissioner defends Supreme Court ruling on womanhood amid protests and vandalism



A senior commissioner of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has described opposition to the Supreme Court’s recent ruling on the legal definition of a woman as “wishful thinking” and based on misunderstanding. Akua Reindorf KC, one of the five EHRC commissioners, spoke to The Times, characterising the court’s judgment as a “model of clarity” and warning that ill-informed challenges to the decision serve no constructive purpose.

The Supreme Court’s ruling, which has stirred significant public debate, clarified the legal parameters around sex and gender identity, particularly regarding the use of single-sex spaces. This decision has been met with protests and acts of vandalism across the UK. Over the weekend, demonstrators gathered in Parliament Square and other cities including Glasgow, Cardiff, Nottingham, Liverpool, Blackpool, Aberdeen, and Sheffield, protesting the ruling.

During protests in London, several statues were defaced, including a memorial to South African military leader Jan Smuts and one dedicated to suffragist Millicent Fawcett. Graffiti painted on the Fawcett banner included phrases such as “fag rights” and a heart symbol, while “trans rights are human rights” was sprayed on the Smuts statue’s base. Following the damage, the Jan Smuts statue was covered to protect it. The Metropolitan Police have appealed for information regarding the vandalism of seven statues in total during what was termed an “emergency demonstration” that attracted thousands of protesters.

The demonstrations featured a wide range of placards and messages. While many signs carried supportive slogans such as “trans rights are human rights” and “trans women are women,” some carried aggressive and provocative language. Photographs that appeared on social media showed placards with messages like “The only good Terf is a [dead] Terf” accompanied by a drawing of a noose, and others included phrases like “bring back witch-burning” and “I ♥ pissin’ on Terfs.” Terf is an acronym for trans-exclusionary radical feminist. Jo Grady, general secretary of the University and College Union (UCU), who shared images from the protest on social media, said she was “proud” to be at the demonstration but subsequently stated she did not condone violence or threatening behaviour. The Metropolitan Police and organisers noted that some of the controversial signs either did not originate from the London march, did not constitute criminal offences, or were from previous events.

Senior politicians weighed in on the unrest and the ruling. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper condemned the graffiti as “disgraceful,” while a spokesperson for Bridget Phillipson, the women and equalities minister, condemned the “appalling defacement” of the Fawcett statue, calling it “disgraceful criminal damage” with no excuse.

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer faces increasing pressure to publicly endorse the Supreme Court’s decision, amid calls from some quarters for stronger legal protections for trans rights. The government maintains that it supports the availability of single-sex spaces and regards the court’s ruling as bringing “clarity and confidence” to a complex issue. A No 10 spokesperson confirmed there are no plans to intervene further. Nevertheless, reports indicate ministers are preparing to raise concerns about the ruling with the equalities minister.

Leaked communications revealed in the Mail on Sunday showed internal criticism from MPs regarding an interview given by Baroness Falkner of Margravine, chair of the EHRC. Falkner had discussed the ruling’s implications, stating that it would result in trans women being banned from women’s single-sex spaces. Dame Angela Eagle, the Home Office minister, is reported to be organising a meeting with MPs to develop a way forward, emphasising that while the court’s ruling may not be as “catastrophic” as perceived, the EHRC guidance could lead some public bodies to “overreact.” She highlighted that the government must continue delivering on its manifesto commitments, including a pledge to protect “the freedom for people to explore their sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Among Labour MPs, Steve Race of Exeter described Falkner’s interview as “pretty appalling,” with Culture Minister Sir Chris Bryant allegedly agreeing, though he later claimed his comments had been misrepresented. Despite this internal dissent, Downing Street has not taken disciplinary action, and Starmer’s personal silence has led to speculation about the party’s eventual stance.

In her commentary for The Times, Akua Reindorf stressed that the Supreme Court’s ruling represents a “decisive moment” in the ongoing political conflict between gender-critical women’s rights advocates and trans rights supporters. She noted that the challenges to the judgment’s legitimacy are largely based on misunderstanding and distortion, cautioning that such attacks do not assist anyone. Reindorf highlighted common misconceptions, such as incorrect beliefs that sex-segregated sports facilities could be organised on a self-identified gender basis or that protection against discrimination on grounds of gender reassignment would override the ruling. She acknowledged that the ruling puts trans people in a “double bind” over access to facilities but suggested that legislative changes could be pursued to address these issues.

Reindorf concluded by emphasising the importance of respecting the carefully reasoned decision of the Supreme Court and criticised the dissemination of misinformation from sources considered trustworthy over many years. Her remarks underscore the legal certainty provided by the court while recognising the complexities and sensitivities involved in balancing sex-based rights and transgender rights in UK law.

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

## References

* <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/united-kingdom/article/2025/04/16/uk-supreme-court-rules-definition-of-woman-based-on-sex-at-birth_6740290_135.html> - This article corroborates the Supreme Court's ruling that the legal definition of a woman is based on sex at birth, which sparked significant debate and protests across the UK.
* <https://supremecourt.uk/uploads/uksc_2024_0042_judgment_aea6c48cee.pdf> - This PDF document provides the full judgment of the Supreme Court concerning the legal definition of a 'woman', which includes discussions about sex, gender, and the challenges to legislative definitions.
* <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ehrc-commissioner-criticises-opposition-to-supreme-court-ruling-on-woman-definition-mp37d23mf> - This article includes Akua Reindorf KC's comments about the Supreme Court's ruling being clear and the opposition based on misunderstandings.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67516793> - This BBC article reports on the protests and vandalism following the Supreme Court's ruling, including the defacement of statues and the reactions from senior politicians.
* <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/uk-protests-held-over-supreme-court-ruling-on-definition-of-a-woman/ar-AA1uPjDg> - This article discusses the widespread protests across the UK in response to the ruling, featuring various cities and reactions from the public and officials.