# UK to criminalise climbing on Winston Churchill statue in Parliament Square



The UK government is set to introduce a new law that will criminalise climbing on the statue of Winston Churchill located in Parliament Square. This announcement was made by Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and is part of the ongoing discussions surrounding the Crime and Policing Bill currently being considered in Parliament. Offenders who violate this new regulation could face penalties of up to three months in prison and a £1,000 fine, positioning the Churchill statue alongside other national monuments as a protected site.

In her statement, Cooper remarked, "As the country comes together to celebrate VE Day, it is only right that we ensure Winston Churchill's statue is treated with the respect it deserves, along with the other sacred war memorials around our country." Although the Churchill statue is not officially classed as a war memorial, the intention to include it stems from a desire to uphold its symbolic importance. The statue, a prominent bronze figure standing at 12 feet, was unveiled in Westminster Square in 1973 by Churchill's widow, Clementine, and has since become a focal point of national sentiment and remembrance.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer also expressed his support for the initiative, asserting that Churchill is "at the summit of our country's greatest heroes" and pointing out the "justifiable fury that is provoked" when protests utilise the statue as a platform. He emphasised the importance of this move in honouring not only Churchill but also the "greatest generation" of which he was a part.

The Churchill statue has increasingly become a site for demonstrations over the years. In 2014, a man was arrested for occupying the statue for a 48-hour period during Occupy Democracy protests but was later acquitted. Significant incidents involving the statue include being sprayed with red paint during May Day protests in 2000, resulting in a 30-day jail sentence for the perpetrator, as well as graffiti during Extinction Rebellion demonstrations in 2020, which led to a fine for an 18-year-old protester.

Recent protests have seen campaigners climbing the statue while voicing various issues, including a notable incident involving trans rights activists in late April 2023. Their demonstration, which focused on the Supreme Court's decision regarding the legal definition of a woman, included climbing the statue and displaying placards from its plinth.

As the legal framework around public demonstrations continues to evolve, the government’s push to protect the Churchill statue represents a broader dialogue on the intersection of protest, historical figures, and national memory in contemporary Britain.

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

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/teenager-charged-criminal-damage-winston-churchill-statue-a4545776.html> - This report covers the 2020 case of an 18-year-old charged with criminal damage after defacing the Churchill statue with graffiti during an Extinction Rebellion protest.
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7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdded9rqd2do> - Please view link - unable to able to access data