# Kemi Badenoch’s leadership questioned amid growing Tory divisions and policy setbacks



Kemi Badenoch has become a controversial figure within the Conservative Party, particularly following her recent performance during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs), which has drawn considerable criticism. Less than 24 hours post-PMQs, Badenoch hurriedly reached out to Tory party members, heralding her supposed triumph over Labour leader Keir Starmer’s apparent reversal on the winter fuel allowance. Her assertion, however, appears steeped in denial, especially given that Starmer’s change was less a product of Badenoch's interrogation and more a reflection of broader discontent among Labour MPs and voters.

The Conservative leadership’s attempts to reframe this narrative are perplexing. While party insiders continue to laud Badenoch, praising her for putting the Prime Minister "on the rack" during PMQs, it raises questions about their perception of their supporters. With a party base already fraying at the edges, these attempts to recharacterise Badenoch’s performance as exemplary seem misguided, especially when the reality starkly contradicts such optimism.

Robert Jenrick, a rival and prominent Conservative figure, made a rare appearance in the Commons, indicating perhaps a reluctance to further cultivate Badenoch’s impression. His focus was on responding to the Independent Sentencing Review, a document that illustrates the ideological divides within the party. Jenrick, embodying a fierce retaliatory stance, argued that Labour’s recent moves on criminal justice represented yet another act of betrayal, rather than institutional reform.

This portrayal ties back into a wider narrative of turmoil within the Conservative ranks, where tensions between moderates and hardliners increasingly define discourse. The Tories’ struggle to craft a coherent message on crime, particularly in light of the Independent Sentencing Review, reflects the challenges facing Badenoch as she grapples with discontent within her party. The review's recommendations, greeted with mixed emotions, underline the complexities of balancing the party’s populist rhetoric with a more nuanced understanding of justice reform.

In a recent parliamentary debate, Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood highlighted criticisms of the proposed sentencing changes, which some argue could exacerbate systemic inequalities within the justice system. These critiques were echoed by Jenrick, who openly scorned the government's perceived leniency on crime, suggesting a perception among right-leaning factions that Labour is too soft, potentially alienating voters who favour harsher measures.

Against this backdrop, the announcement of the government’s deal regarding the Chagos Islands further complicates Badenoch’s narrative. While Conservative MPs have expressed outrage at what they deem a capitulation, the reality is that this negotiation had commenced long before Badenoch ascended to her current role. International consensus surrounding the deal, including nods of approval from allies, was overlooked by party members who seemed more focused on salvaging the party's image than championing pragmatic policy decisions.

Starmer and his colleagues were quick to highlight the precariousness of the Conservatives’ position, contrasting their approach to these issues with that of the Labour Party. They underscored that while the Conservatives wielded their grievances as political capital, they had themselves faltered in addressing pressing social concerns—an insight that resonates deeply with the electorate.

Badenoch's predicament can thus be framed not merely as a failing in debate strategy but as symptomatic of a party grappling with existential challenges. The criticism she faces, not only from the opposition but from within her own ranks, suggests that the Conservatives are at a crucial juncture. The narrative surrounding betrayal—often used to galvanise party base—has begun to lose its potency as internal dissent grows stronger.

As the Conservative Party navigates a changing political landscape amid threats from emerging hard-right factions like Nigel Farage's Reform UK party, Badenoch's leadership is increasingly scrutinised. With calls for a strategic overhaul echoing from within, her position remains precarious as she attempts to steer a course through the challenges threatening to engulf her party.

In a political environment where perceptions reign supreme, Kemi Badenoch finds herself ensnared in a web of criticism that could ultimately define her legacy within the Conservative Party. Looking ahead, the question remains whether she can reclaim her narrative or if the spectre of betrayal will continue to shadow her every political move.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1 - (1), (2)
2. Paragraph 2 - (2)
3. Paragraph 3 - (2), (3), (4)
4. Paragraph 4 - (4)
5. Paragraph 5 - (2), (3)
6. Paragraph 6 - (2), (4)
7. Paragraph 7 - (4)
8. Paragraph 8 - (7)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/22/yeah-but-no-but-surrender-lifes-just-one-big-betrayal-for-kemi-and-co> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/22/yeah-but-no-but-surrender-lifes-just-one-big-betrayal-for-kemi-and-co> - An opinion piece by John Crace in The Guardian, published on May 22, 2025, critiques Kemi Badenoch's performance during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs). The article highlights Badenoch's failure to address Keir Starmer's U-turn on the winter fuel allowance, her subsequent claims of victory, and the Conservative Party's attempts to rewrite history. It also discusses Robert Jenrick's response to the Independent Sentencing Review and the government's Chagos Islands deal, portraying a narrative of denial and misrepresentation within the Conservative Party.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/15/we-cant-change-our-leader-again-tories-despair-at-badenochs-poor-pmqs-performances> - An article from The Guardian, dated February 15, 2025, reports on Conservative MPs expressing concerns over Kemi Badenoch's performance during Prime Minister's Questions. The piece details criticisms of Badenoch's choice of topics and her approach to questioning Prime Minister Keir Starmer, suggesting a need for strategic overhaul and more experienced advisors to improve her effectiveness in parliamentary debates.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2025/mar/06/ministers-criticise-two-tier-sentencing-changes-england-wales> - An article from The Guardian, published on March 6, 2025, discusses the controversy surrounding new sentencing guidelines in England and Wales. Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood criticized the guidelines for potentially creating a two-tier justice system, particularly concerning ethnic minorities and other specific groups. The piece includes statements from Robert Jenrick, the shadow justice secretary, who expressed concerns about the guidelines leading to differential treatment before the law.
5. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/mp/kemi-badenoch/debate/2025-05-07/commons/commons-chamber/oral-answers-to-questions> - A transcript from the UK Parliament's official website, dated May 7, 2025, featuring Kemi Badenoch's exchanges during Prime Minister's Questions. The document provides verbatim accounts of Badenoch's questions to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, including topics such as the winter fuel payment and net-zero policies, highlighting the dynamics of the parliamentary debate and the positions of both leaders.
6. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/mp/kemi-badenoch/debate/2025-03-12/commons/commons-chamber/oral-answers-to-questions> - A transcript from the UK Parliament's official website, dated March 12, 2025, detailing Kemi Badenoch's participation in Prime Minister's Questions. The document includes her questions to Prime Minister Keir Starmer on various issues, providing insight into the parliamentary proceedings and the political discourse between the opposition and the government.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/6015c9f7-a815-47b1-b89c-6be52035a65e> - An article from the Financial Times, published four months ago, examines Kemi Badenoch's challenges as the leader of Britain's Conservative Party. The piece discusses her efforts to revitalize the party following a significant electoral defeat, the rise of Nigel Farage's Reform UK party, and the criticisms she faces regarding her media engagement and political stances, highlighting the complexities of her leadership in a changing political landscape.