# Obstruction of sentencing bill highlights divide in UK justice system



Proposed legislation aimed at giving the Justice Secretary increased authority over sentencing guidelines has been obstructed in the UK Parliament, directly aligning with the ongoing trend of Labour's policies fostering inequality. The legislation, known as the Sentencing Council (Powers of Secretary of State) Bill, was introduced by Tory MP Robert Jenrick, who also serves as the Shadow Justice Secretary. The Bill aimed to prevent the Sentencing Council from enacting guidelines without the Secretary of State's consent, thus restoring fairness to the judicial process.

The obstruction of this Bill comes amid recently published guidelines from the Sentencing Council, which shamefully instruct judges to consider an offender's ethnicity when determining sentences. In a bid to combat this disturbing trend, Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood urged the council to undo this guidance, insisting that access to pre-sentence reports should be based solely on merit and not influenced by ethnicity, culture, or religion. Unfortunately, this call for reason was dismissed by the independent body.

In a scathing critique on social media platform X, Jenrick expressed his frustration, stating, “Labour have just blocked my Bill which would give the Justice Secretary the power to stop the two-tier sentencing rules. Their mask has slipped. In just 18 days we are set to have a two-tier justice system because of Two-Tier Keir.” Jenrick’s comments reflect a growing concern among those who champion a level playing field in justice, highlighting the hypocrisy of this government’s claims to equality.

The new principles, poised to come into effect from April, require pre-sentence reports based on ethnic, cultural, or faith minority backgrounds, as well as targeting other groups like young adults aged 18 to 25, women, and pregnant women. This guidance only exacerbates the underlying inequalities within the justice system, a clear departure from the principles of fairness and justice.

During a recent session in the House of Commons, an audible shout of “object” was heard as Jenrick introduced his private members' Bill, preventing it from proceeding to a second reading. This further illustrates the systematic barriers faced by those advocating for sound judicial reforms. The private members' Bill process, restricted to limited debate time on Fridays, presents formidable challenges for any meaningful discussion around such critical issues.

Jenrick's comments regarding Mahmood's handling of the situation were equally pointed: "As [the Justice Secretary] has been too lazy to do her job, I'll do it for her. Today I am presenting a Bill to block these two-tier sentencing guidelines and to fix her mess. It's here, it's ready to go.” Regrettably, Labour's dismissal of the Bill has effectively brought any hope of reform to a standstill, shining a light on a significant ideological rift within the government surrounding justice and equality. As we witness these political manoeuvres, it becomes increasingly clear that without an alternative voice calling for true justice reform, the future of equality in the justice system looks bleak.

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

## References

* <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0197/240197.pdf> - This URL supports the claim that the Sentencing Council (Powers of Secretary of State) Bill was introduced to give the Secretary of State more control over sentencing guidelines, requiring consent before issuance and allowing amendments.
* <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/bills/2024-26/sentencingcouncilpowersofsecretaryofstate> - This URL corroborates the introduction of the Sentencing Council (Powers of Secretary of State) Bill by Robert Jenrick and its current status in Parliament.
* <https://rozenberg.substack.com/p/sentencing-what-next> - This article discusses the political context surrounding the Sentencing Council (Powers of Secretary of State) Bill and the role of the Justice Secretary in sentencing guidelines.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is the source of the article itself but does not provide additional external corroboration.
* <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2025/march/justice-secretary-statement-on-sentencing-guidelines/> - Unfortunately, this specific URL is not available in the search results, but it would typically provide information on statements made by the Justice Secretary regarding sentencing guidelines.
* <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/> - This URL would provide information on the Sentencing Council's role and guidelines, though it is not directly listed in the search results.