# Labour’s Victims and Courts Bill criticised for weak penalties on offenders refusing sentencing



The recent push by the Labour government to introduce legislation aimed at addressing criminals who refuse to attend their sentencing hearings raises alarming questions about their commitment to real justice. The measures included in the so-called Victims and Courts Bill allow judges to impose solitary confinement or revoke perks like television access and gym time for a maximum of three weeks for those who evade court appearances. This is, at best, a superficial response to a serious issue.

The backdrop to this legislative move is a troubling trend where serious offenders, including murderers, choose to remain in their cells rather than face the consequences of their actions. Notably, cases like that of Axel Rudakubana, who shirks accountability for the murders of three young girls, and Thomas Cashman, convicted of murdering nine-year-old Olivia Pratt-Korbel, expose the failures of a justice system that seems to coddle criminals rather than hold them accountable.

A spokesperson from the government labeled these offenders as “cowardly,” but the suggested penalties are inadequate at best. Tory MP Jack Rankin aptly dismissed this approach as laughable, stating, “The idea that taking away TV time or extra gym sessions will deter the country’s most dangerous criminals from behaving appallingly is pathetic.” Such sentiments echo the disbelief many feel at the government's feeble attempts at enacting real change.

Critics like Farah Naz, aunt of murder victim Zara Aleena, have expressed skepticism about the Bill's effectiveness. She raises a crucial point: why would short-term sanctions resonate with individuals already serving lengthy sentences? Instead, she suggests broadcasting sentencing hearings in prisons, allowing offenders to witness the repercussions of their actions, which feels far more appropriate given the gravity of their crimes.

Survivors of high-profile violent incidents, like the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, have voiced their discontent with these token measures. Robby Potter stated plainly, “It’s nowhere near enough. For someone given life, an extra two years is a joke.” Another survivor, Martin Hibbert, called out the Labour government for failing to implement substantial deterrents for violent offenders and terrorists, highlighting the dire need for an approach that holds criminals fully accountable.

Despite Justice Minister Alex Davies-Jones asserting that the measures show a commitment to ensuring victims confront their offenders, the reality is that this government is failing to align its actions with the needs of those who have suffered. The chorus of voices from the community—particularly those affected by violent crime—demands a shift toward more robust and meaningful sentencing that goes beyond mere symbolism.

As we contextualize this Bill within the broader discussion surrounding the previous Conservative government's initiatives, which were ultimately sidelined due to political upheaval, it becomes clear that what the UK truly needs is a serious reevaluation of its criminal justice policies. The Labour government’s insistence on punitive measures that ultimately fall short only perpetuates a system that leaves victims voiceless while criminals continue to evade proper accountability.

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

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.ft.com/content/667cd691-79ee-45aa-8002-1ab88cc428ec> - This report details the sentencing of Axel Rudakubana, who received a life sentence with a minimum of 52 years for the murders of three children in Southport, highlighting the severity of his crimes.
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