# Calls for urgent reform as Nicola Packer’s acquittal exposes flaws in UK abortion laws



## Calls for Reform Following Nicola Packer's Acquittal

The recent acquittal of Nicola Packer, a 45-year-old woman cleared of unlawfully administering a substance with the intent to procure a miscarriage, has unleashed a storm of criticism regarding the suffocating abortion laws in England and Wales. After enduring a traumatic four-and-a-half-year ordeal, Packer left Isleworth Crown Court relieved but with the scars of an unjust legal system that needs urgent reassessment.

This case starkly illustrates how out of touch the current legal framework is with the realities faced by women. Packer was charged after taking prescribed abortion medication at 26 weeks of pregnancy during the second COVID-19 lockdown—well beyond the arbitrary 10-week limit imposed by antiquated laws. During the trial, Packer's emotional testimony resonated, with her stating, “If I had known I was that far along, I wouldn’t have done it.” This powerful declaration highlights the dangers of a legal system that penalizes personal choices rather than supporting women in distress.

The shocking rise in prosecutions of women like Packer is a flashing red light, prompting healthcare professionals and concerned MPs to demand an overhaul of inhumane abortion legislation. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) condemns existing laws as “cruel and unnecessary,” echoing a broader call for change in a climate where moralistic politics stifle compassionate healthcare.

This situation is deeply alarming and mirrors other cases where women have faced severe consequences due to the outdated 1861 Offences Against the Person Act governing abortion laws. Critics argue that the law solidifies a punitive environment for vulnerable women, reflecting a society that continues to ignore their rights and dignity in health matters.

While Labour MP Stella Creasy positions herself as a champion for legal reform, she represents a party that is slow to act on urgent issues. The proposal for an amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill aimed at decriminalising abortion raises questions about why these discussions are not prioritised, especially when public sentiment urges immediate change. Her assertion that "the right to choose is a human right" underlines a crucial need for legislation that protects women's autonomy rather than vilifying them.

Moreover, Tonia Antoniazzi, another Labour MP, has condemned the indignity faced by Packer during her legal battle. Her remarks echo a growing consensus that until the law is reformed, women will remain in a position of legal inferiority regarding their reproductive health decisions.

The government, however, maintains that altering the administration of abortion law is a matter of personal conscience for parliamentarians, an attitude that reeks of political complacency amidst mounting public outcry for reform. This reluctance to confront the reality of an increasingly vociferous public demanding change underscores a dangerous disconnect between political leadership and the needs of the citizens they serve.

As advocates push for legislative change, the urgent need for laws that reflect contemporary medical practices and societal values becomes increasingly pronounced. Without immediate reforms, women like Nicola Packer will remain at the mercy of an archaic legal system that criminalises personal choices and forces them into a societal corner. The time for change is not just necessary; it is long overdue.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/abortion-case-prompts-calls-for-legal-reform-after-womans-four-year-ordeal-5XRML7DCT5NOLNRUU2NZ2ZCO7I/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/abortion-case-prompts-calls-for-legal-reform-after-womans-four-year-ordeal-5XRML7DCT5NOLNRUU2NZ2ZCO7I/> - Nicola Packer, a 45-year-old woman, was acquitted at Isleworth Crown Court of unlawfully administering a substance to procure a miscarriage. The trial, which lasted two weeks, was described as a culmination of a four-and-a-half-year ordeal for Packer. Healthcare professionals and MPs have called for legal reform, highlighting the outdated and harmful nature of current abortion laws. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists emphasized the need for change, stating that the trial underscores the necessity for decriminalization and modernization of abortion legislation.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jan/12/unprecedented-rise-in-abortion-prosecutions-prompts-call-for-law-change-from-medical-leaders> - Medical leaders, including the British Medical Association and various royal colleges, have called for reform of abortion laws in England and Wales following an unprecedented rise in prosecutions of women and girls for ending their own pregnancies. Over the past two years, six women have appeared in court under the Offences against the Person Act, a significant increase from previous years. The groups argue that the current legislation causes 'trauma and cruelty' and demand immediate action to safeguard reproductive rights.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/15/england-and-wales-abortion-law-has-been-settled-tory-mp-tells-commons> - A justice minister has stated that abortion law in England and Wales is settled and that the government does not intend to change it, following the sentencing of a woman who took abortion pills after the legal limit. The statement came after MPs called for an overhaul of the 162-year-old legislation underpinning abortion regulations, highlighting the need for modernization in light of recent cases.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/13/call-overhaul-out-of-date-uk-abortion-laws-woman-jailed> - Ministers are facing calls to decriminalize abortion in Great Britain after a woman was jailed for terminating her pregnancy. The case has prompted criticism of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, with MPs and women's rights groups urging for reform to prevent such prosecutions in the future.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/nov/07/the-guardian-view-on-abortion-laws-recent-events-strengthen-the-case-for-reform> - Recent events, including multiple prosecutions of women under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, have strengthened the case for reforming abortion laws in England and Wales. The Guardian editorial argues that the current legislation is outdated and calls for modernization to reflect contemporary healthcare practices and societal values.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/17/case-uk-woman-jailed-late-abortion-difficult-both-sides> - The case of a UK woman jailed for a late-term abortion has presented challenges for both pro-choice and anti-abortion activists. The article discusses the complexities of the case and its implications for the ongoing debate over abortion laws in the UK.