# Attorney General warns UK withdrawal from international courts echoes dangers of 1930s Germany



Attorney General Richard Hermer has ignited significant controversy by equating calls for the UK to withdraw from international courts to the perilous political climate of Nazi Germany. During his speech at the Royal United Services Institute, he branded the idea of the UK disregarding its international obligations as a "radical departure from the UK’s constitutional tradition." His dark comparison to early 1930s Germany highlights not just a fear of neglecting international law but the rising tide of complacency in the face of populist pressures that challenge the rule of law.

This rhetoric comes as the Conservative Party grapples with the implications of international agreements like the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). While Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch stops short of advocating for a full exit from the ECHR, her suggestions that the UK reassess its commitments if they inhibit the government's action reflect a growing unease within the party. In stark contrast, figures from the right, notably advocating for a clean break from the ECHR, argue that this is essential for regaining control over national borders. The Attorney General's insistence against this viewpoint is concerning, suggesting that rejecting international treaties not only undermines the rule of law but also emboldens adversaries like Vladimir Putin, putting both national and global stability at risk.

In a recent interview, Lord Hermer elaborated on his philosophy of "progressive realism," asserting that true sovereignty relies on the observance of international law rather than its dismissal. His approach aims to navigate complex international issues, including the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict and the backlog plaguing the UK's judicial system. Yet, there’s a growing consensus that the real reforms needed should not only modernize the country’s legal framework but empower its citizens rather than limit them.

Hermer’s commitment to uphold the rule of law speaks to the historical role the UK has played as a defender of a stable, rules-based international order. Critics contend that dismantling or ignoring these legal structures might lead to chaos, putting the UK at a strategic disadvantage. As the new Labour government steers the country toward appeasement, with its weak-kneed policies toward international law, the stakes for asserting a coherent legal strategy are monumental.

Given these heated discussions, Hermer's historical references serve as a chilling reminder of the potential disasters that await nations straying from legal commitments. His perspective underscores the urgent need for an approach that emphasizes both the preservation of international agreements and the push for necessary reforms—a middle ground that this new government's lack of direction sorely misses. As the political climate intensifies, the calls for a robust legal strategy reveal the critical need to resist the allure of regression in favor of a more assertive national stance.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/attorney-general-compares-calls-to-leave-international-courts-with-nazi-germany-X3Z44B6TMRKAFG2TN47UWCQXBA/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/929a6597-28ab-4b44-bee3-b906c34e9e57> - In a recent speech, UK Attorney-General Richard Hermer criticised Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch's suggestion that the UK should prepare to leave the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Hermer argued that abandoning international treaties like the ECHR could embolden adversaries such as Vladimir Putin and undermine the West. While acknowledging the need for treaty reform to reflect shifting public sentiment and political realities, he emphasised that international law should not be seen as replacing politics. Hermer reaffirmed his support for the ECHR and its court, noting there's no contradiction between backing reforms and defending fundamental rights like Article 8, which the Conservatives have criticised. Despite facing criticism from political opponents for placing international law above national interests—especially in the UK's decision to transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius—Hermer defended the move as a necessary step to avoid legal challenges. He described the government’s approach as “progressive realism,” asserting that true sovereignty depends on adherence to international law, not rejection of it. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has similarly committed to remaining in the ECHR.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/eadeb257-de36-4748-a6ea-1bd76806b8a0> - An opinion piece in the Financial Times discusses the UK's commitment to the rule of law under Attorney-General Lord Hermer. The article highlights Hermer's firm stance against populist calls to lift judicial constraints on the government, emphasising the importance of international courts, human rights laws, and the ECHR. Critics argue that the UK's strength in global politics is diminished without adherence to established legal frameworks, which were originally shaped by the UK. The piece concludes that efforts to dismantle international law could lead to a more chaotic world order, leaving the UK at a disadvantage. Britain's self-interest lies in maintaining the rules-based order for economic and political stability, and Hermer's work, although contentious, is indispensable to this goal.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/3731eb2c-a3de-45bb-a9b3-ed936c4f6067> - An article in the Financial Times reports on Lord Richard Hermer KC's commitment to restoring the UK's reputation as a leader in upholding the rule of law. In his first interview since assuming office in July, Hermer criticised the previous Conservative government for actions that compromised Britain's legal standing, including attempts to breach international law over Brexit and the Rwanda asylum scheme. He emphasised the importance of trustworthy international agreements for encouraging investment. Hermer's focus also includes navigating several international and domestic challenges, such as the Israel-Hamas conflict and a significant backlog of criminal cases. His appointment, coming directly from the Bar, underscores Labour's intent to fortify the UK's legal and economic credibility. Despite the unexpected nature of his role, Hermer vows to ensure the government complies with all international legal obligations.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/respect-for-international-law-has-never-been-more-important-uk-statement-in-the-un-general-assembly> - In a speech at the United Nations General Assembly, UK Attorney General Lord Hermer KC emphasised the importance of respecting international law. He expressed gratitude to the International Court of Justice for its commitment to the sound administration of justice and the peaceful resolution of international disputes. Hermer highlighted the UK's dedication to the international rules-based order and reaffirmed the country's support for the values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/attorney-generals-speech-at-the-international-institute-for-strategic-studies> - In a speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, UK Attorney General Lord Hermer KC discussed the evolution of international law in response to global challenges. He highlighted the adaptability of the legal system in addressing new forms of criminality and protecting the rights of the vulnerable. Hermer emphasised the UK's commitment to a rules-based international order and the importance of defending national interests within the framework of international law.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/attorney-generals-remarks-to-the-venice-commission> - UK Attorney General Lord Hermer KC delivered remarks at the Venice Commission, reiterating the UK's commitment to the values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. He emphasised the importance of proactively supporting the international legal order and institutions like the Venice Commission. Hermer highlighted the government's top priorities, including resetting the UK's relationship with Europe and supporting the international legal order.