# Badenoch's push to exit the ECHR signals shift in UK sovereignty debate



The Conservative Party, now under Kemi Badenoch’s leadership, has amped up its rhetoric around ditching the United Kingdom’s obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), framing it as a necessary step to regain control over Britain’s borders and restore sovereignty. Badenoch’s declaration, made just ahead of the party’s annual conference, serves as a stark reminder of how far this government remains willing to go in its obsession with unchecked nationalism and control — even if it means sacrificing fundamental rights and legal protections. This posture aligns with a broader agenda that sees international treaties as impediments, not safeguards, and echoes the core demands of parties like Reform UK, which have long campaigned for the UK to sever ties with the ECHR and similar agreements they claim restrict immigration enforcement.

A recent review led by Shadow Attorney General Lord Wolfson KC brutally laid bare the perceived harms of ECHR membership, claiming it hampers key Conservative priorities such as border security, support for veterans, and the ability to prioritize British citizens in housing and services. Badenoch’s move to exclude candidates who oppose this policy underscores the party’s intention to push through this divisive agenda without compromise — a reckless gamble that ignores the profound legal and moral protections that human rights laws offer. The push for withdrawal is a direct reaction to a populist narrative that views international legal bodies as alien infiltrators threatening Britain’s sovereignty, rather than as vital safeguards against government overreach.

The ECHR’s role in British politics has long been contentious, a battleground of emotions and ideologies. The debate was reignited in 2011 when the European Court of Human Rights struck down the UK’s blanket ban on prisoner voting, prompting visceral objections from then-Prime Minister David Cameron, who described the ruling as making him “physically ill.” Such moments have fueled narratives that the ECHR unwisely restricts Britain’s ability to carry out its own policies, especially regarding immigration and law enforcement. Border communities and patriot groups have long argued that the ECHR hampers swift deportations and leaves Britain vulnerable to endless legal challenges — a claim political opponents dismiss as exaggeration, but which remains central to the anti-ECHR rhetoric pushed by Badenoch and her allies.

Critics such as Oxford’s Richard Ekins KC argue that the convention’s expanding scope has strayed far from its original purpose, with Strasbourg judges increasingly meddling in UK affairs and overstepping their bounds. The case where the European court criticised Switzerland for failing to address climate change, for example, exemplifies how critics see the ECHR as overreaching — an external body that extends its reach into policy domains it should not touch. Such accusations bolster calls for the UK to take back control and to rid itself of an unelected foreign court that, in the view of many, undermines parliamentary sovereignty.

Immigration remains at the heart of the push to leave the ECHR, a cause championed by Reform UK and far-right factions within the Conservative Party who argue that international protections enable abuses, prevent deportations, and hinder efforts to crack down on illegal entry. Yet, evidence shows this narrative is grossly overstated; studies from reputable institutions reveal that less than 1% of foreign criminals successfully appeal deportation orders on human rights grounds, often dismissed or disregarded. Nonetheless, hard-line factions continue to push falsehoods about the ECHR’s supposed role as a barrier to effective immigration enforcement, distorting facts to serve their nationalist, populist goals.

The government’s official stance is more nuanced but ultimately still permissive of radical change. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer’s position — to reform rather than eliminate the human rights framework — rings hollow when contrasted with the aggressive push from Badenoch’s camp, which is hell-bent on unilateral withdrawal. Legal experts warn that doing so would open a Pandora’s box of legal chaos, stripping vulnerable groups of protections and risking damage to Britain’s reputation and international standing. Debates about the Belfast Agreement and the insistence on compliance with human rights laws are dismissed by those who see these protections as obstacles to “sovereign” decision-making, not as essential safeguards.

Removing Britain from the ECHR would send a dangerous message to both allies and adversaries: that the UK no longer values the principles of human rights that underpin stability and justice. Critics argue it would weaken crucial avenues for accountability in cases of abuse and undermine decades of legal progress. The potential diplomatic fallout could diminish Britain’s influence within European and international bodies and embolden extremists who see the country’s commitment to human rights as a hindrance to their agenda.

Proponents, including far-right factions and elements within the Conservative Party, claim that the UK could uphold human rights through domestic legislation, cutting ties with what they portray as an unaccountable foreign judiciary. But this is a guise for abandoning international commitments and legal standards that many argue are integral to fair justice and civic dignity. The focus should be on reforming how existing laws are interpreted, not tearing up treaties that serve as vital protections against government overreach.

Ultimately, Badenoch’s pledge to leave the ECHR encapsulates a broader right-wing obsession: to claim sovereignty at the expense of the rule of law, national security, and human rights. While it may appeal to populist sentiments, such reckless abandonment of international legal safeguards threatens to destabilise the very fabric of civil liberties and social cohesion in the UK. It is a gamble that jeopardizes the rights of the vulnerable and the integrity of Britain’s legal and diplomatic systems, all under the guise of reclaiming sovereignty for the sake of political expediency.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm283eqje03o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.conservatives.com/news/conservatives-announce-echr-exit-policy> - On October 4, 2025, Kemi Badenoch, leader of the Conservative Party, announced that the next Conservative government would withdraw the UK from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). This decision followed a review led by Shadow Attorney General Lord Wolfson KC, which found that ECHR membership created significant barriers to implementing key Conservative policies. The move aims to secure borders, protect veterans, prioritise British citizens for housing and services, enforce tougher sentencing, and prevent activist challenges in planning and energy sectors. ([conservatives.com](https://www.conservatives.com/news/conservatives-announce-echr-exit-policy?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.gbnews.com/politics/kemi-badenoch-echr-rule-conservatives-mp> - On October 5, 2025, Kemi Badenoch confirmed that Conservative candidates opposing the party's plan to leave the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) would be barred from standing as Members of Parliament (MPs) in the next general election. She stated that the Shadow Cabinet unanimously agreed on this policy, emphasising the importance of adhering to manifesto commitments. Badenoch had previously commissioned a review into the feasibility of withdrawing from the ECHR, leading to this decisive stance. ([gbnews.com](https://www.gbnews.com/politics/kemi-badenoch-echr-rule-conservatives-mp?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy0lqzjwqx8o> - At the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham on September 30, 2024, leadership contender Robert Jenrick argued that the party would 'die' unless it advocated leaving the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). He claimed that the ECHR made it 'impossible to secure our borders' and dismissed the idea of reforming the treaty as a 'fantasy', presenting the issue as one of 'leave or remain'. Fellow leadership contender Kemi Badenoch cautioned that leaving the ECHR might not address the root problem and could lead to legal challenges and opposition in the House of Lords. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy0lqzjwqx8o?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/echr-conservative-robert-jenrick-critics-houses-b1231532.html> - In June 2025, Kemi Badenoch expressed increasing support for leaving the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and announced plans to establish a commission to investigate the UK's withdrawal from the treaty. She stated that if the ECHR continued to impede the government's national interests, the UK would 'probably have to leave' the treaty. Badenoch emphasised that her primary concern was making the country safer, richer, and fairer, rather than focusing on international law or treaty arrangements. ([standard.co.uk](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/echr-conservative-robert-jenrick-critics-houses-b1231532.html?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c981lr84013o> - In February 2025, Kemi Badenoch stated that the UK must reconsider its international agreements, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). She indicated that if the ECHR continued to prevent the government from acting in the country's national interest, the UK would 'probably have to leave' the treaty. Badenoch also called for increased defence spending by reallocating funds from development aid, welfare, and scrapping the Chagos deal. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c981lr84013o?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://news.sky.com/story/kemi-badenoch-says-tories-will-quit-echr-if-they-win-next-election-13443937> - On October 5, 2025, Kemi Badenoch announced that the Conservative Party would withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) if it wins the next general election. This decision followed a review on the impact of the UK's ECHR membership conducted by Shadow Attorney General David Wolfson. The review found that ECHR membership had impacted government policy in numerous areas, leading to the conclusion that leaving the treaty was necessary to protect national interests. ([news.sky.com](https://news.sky.com/story/kemi-badenoch-says-tories-will-quit-echr-if-they-win-next-election-13443937?utm_source=openai))