



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – FRIDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2019

Criminal courts

[The Daily Telegraph](#) (p2 and online), [The Independent](#) (p16 and online), [Press Association](#), [Law Society Gazette](#) – The Daily Telegraph reports on the Bar Council’s reaction to the latest Ministry of Justice criminal courts statistics.

The Telegraph reports that the number of criminals being brought to trial has fallen to a record low amid warnings that Britain’s justice system is “grinding to a halt”. Official figures show the number of trials in magistrates’ and Crown Courts is down by a third since 2010 and by 10 per cent in the past year to 152,000. It prompted warnings that a “broken” criminal justice system is letting offenders “walk free” as crime rates rise.

The Telegraph quotes **Richard Atkins QC, Chair of the Bar**. He said: “Criminals are free to walk the streets as the justice system begins to grind to a halt, leaving the British public at risk.

“Criminal justice needs more than simply boosting police ranks. It needs investment in the entire system.”

Mike Penning, a former Conservative police minister, is also quoted. He said: “The CPS won’t put offenders in front of the courts unless they are 100 per cent certain they are going to win rather than let the judge or magistrate decide. They are ignoring the advice of police.”

The Independent, Press Association and Law Society Gazette also quote Richard Atkins QC, alongside the Criminal Bar Association and the Law Society.

Parliament’s suspension unlawful

[The Times](#) (print and online) [The Sydney Morning Herald](#), [The Newcastle Journal](#), [New Law Journal](#), [Western Morning News](#), [Evening Chronicle](#) (Newcastle), [Yahoo News](#) – Further coverage appears of the Bar Council’s response to the Supreme Court decision on the prorogation on Parliament.

The media reports that **Richard Atkins QC, Chair of the Bar**, said: “Following the judgment of the Supreme Court in the Brexit case it is even more important than ever that those in positions of power think very carefully about what they say. The lawyers appearing before the Courts do not express personal opinions but act on behalf of their clients. I very much hope that there will now be a period of calm reflection and that we do not see any comments using inflammatory language or which seek to vilify the judges or lawyers involved in the Brexit (or any) litigation.”

Yahoo News re-runs an opinion piece by the Chair of the Bar which originally ran in [The Independent](#).

Supreme Court independence

[The Times](#) (print and online) – The Times reports that senior judges could face US-style confirmation grillings from MPs before taking up their posts, the attorney-general has suggested as a cabinet divide emerged over attacks on the judiciary.

Geoffrey Cox, QC, told MPs that Brexit could prompt a broad constitutional overhaul including “parliamentary scrutiny” of senior judicial appointments.

Richard Atkins, QC, Chair of the Bar, said he had “seen no evidence of the need for change in the way our senior judiciary are appointed”.

Lord Sumption, former Supreme Court judge, said that he was “strongly against” confirmation hearings. “They seek to establish in advance a person’s political positions on the assumption that the applicants’ rulings will be influenced by those positions,” he said.

Lord Pannick, QC, said: “The independence and impartiality of our judges, so vital to the rule of law, would not be enhanced by greater political involvement in judicial appointments.”

Party Conferences

[Politics Home](#) – Politics Home reports on the Bar Council’s Party Conference briefing and the key messages and asks the Bar Council is taking to the party conferences.

The Bar Council says there is a need for a commitment of politicians on all sides to reinstate a world-renowned justice system.

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