



Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer
 10 Downing Street
 London
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February 11, 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

Over the last fifteen years, the UK has become a world outlier in citizenship stripping. The use of this power is an affront to the British values of fairness and equality before the law. It damages the sense of belonging of British communities by making some people’s citizenship worth less than that of others. We, the undersigned organisations and individuals, are today launching a campaign calling on the UK government to abolish citizenship stripping, and urge you to take action to remove this power from UK law.

Since 2010, more than 200 people have been stripped of their British citizenship for the so-called ‘public good’.ⁱ According to the available data, only Nicaraguaⁱⁱ and Bahrainⁱⁱⁱ have stripped more people of citizenship during that same time period. The UK is the only G20 nation to strip citizenship in bulk. This policy has given unchecked power to the Home Secretary, betrayed our commitments to international law, and denied vulnerable British nationals the protections that should be guaranteed to them by British citizenship.

Our citizenship stripping law is fundamentally racist – it discriminates between people based on their heritage. This creates a two-tier citizenship regime that is at odds with the foundational British principle of equality before the law. It tells Britons with a connection to another nationality, however remote, that their passport is worth less and their rights less secure than others.

Under these powers, around nine million people in the UK could be stripped of their citizenship at the say so of the Home Secretary. Three in five people of colour are vulnerable, compared to just one in twenty white people.^{iv} An inquiry by a cross-party group of parliamentarians found that citizenship deprivation powers have been used almost exclusively against Muslims, mainly of South Asian, Middle Eastern, and African heritage.^v

Recently, the leaders of two mainstream political parties have called for the application of these powers to be expanded. There have been calls for dual nationals to be stripped if found guilty of a crime^{vi}, and for people to be stripped of citizenship for the content of historic social media posts.^{vii} The powers are so broad and the ‘public good’ test so vague that this is not merely a theoretical possibility.

Across the world, pro-democracy protestors are being characterised as threats to national security. For the nine million Britons with a connection to another country, these powers are a matter of grave concern. If the next UK Government deems them to be a security threat, perhaps for attending a protest or for something they post online, under current laws they could be stripped of citizenship.

By abolishing these powers, this Government could promote a positive vision of British citizenship, fostering a sense of belonging and a shared identity among Britons of all backgrounds. Faced with those who would divide us and stoke racial division, we must say no to a two-tier regime that discriminates against ethnic minorities. We have to make sure that every citizen is equally British before the law.

Citizenship stripping is an extreme measure that deprives British nationals of crucial legal rights at a stroke of the Home Secretary's pen. This power makes a single politician judge, jury, and executioner. Deprivations require no judicial approval and can be carried out without even notifying the person being stripped in some cases. While people stripped of citizenship have a right of appeal, they and their lawyers are often prevented from seeing the evidence against them.^{viii}

In the aftermath of the Second World War, citizenship deprivation fell almost entirely into disuse, in revulsion at the Nazis stripping the citizenship of Jewish citizens of Germany.^{ix} Following the war the UK came together with the other countries of the world to create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to ensure that the horrors of that period were never repeated. The Declaration enshrines the right of people to their nationality and to protecting nationality from arbitrary deprivation. Little could be more arbitrary than our allowing a single politician the power to take away our citizenship.^x

Our use of these powers despite these international commitments made after the Second World War undermines the UK's global standing and international law. UN human rights experts have consistently criticised these powers^{xi} and the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights recently raised concerns that these powers establish a "parallel justice system" for individuals who have not been charged with a crime.^{xii}

Citizenship deprivation has devastating consequences for families. British children are growing up in unlawful detention abroad because the government has stripped their mothers of citizenship, abandoning them to face torture, disappearance, and death. Some families have been left unable to live together anywhere in the world as they hold different nationalities, whilst children of British parents have been left effectively stateless.

Despite security being the central justification for the policy's existence, it has made us less safe and not more. A serving U.S. Government Coordinator for Counterterrorism told UK parliamentarians in 2022 that "revocation of individuals' citizenship defers the problem and puts the burden on local partners and the international community, which has neither the mandate nor the tools needed to successfully resolve such cases."^{xiii} A recent UN report stated that there was 'limited evidence' that citizenship stripping protected public safety, and that in practice it can be counterproductive to national security by feeding narratives used by armed groups to exploit individuals vulnerable to trafficking and abuse.^{xiv}

Citizenship stripping is cruel, racist and ineffective. It has created a sense of insecurity among communities across the UK who feel that their British citizenship has been devalued and is now conditional. We urge you to abolish citizenship deprivation for the so-called 'public good' and restore the equality and value of British citizenship for all.

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Reprieve

The Baroness Bennet of Manor Castle
The Rt Hon the Baroness Warsi
The Lord Dubs

Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP
Richard Barrett CMG OBE

Black Equity Organisation
British Pakistani Welfare Association
Child Rights International Network
European Network on Statelessness
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association
IMPACT Law for Social Justice
Institute of Race Relations
Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
Latin American Women's Rights Service
Liberty
Operation Black Vote
Praxis

Public Law Project
Refugee and Asylum Seeker Voice
Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London
Rights and Security International
Right to Remain
Runnymede Trust
Sikh Council
The 3 Million
The Ubele Initiative
Voice of Voiceless Immigration Detainees
Yorkshire

ⁱ House of Commons Research Briefing, *Deprivation of British Citizenship and Withdrawal of Passports*, 19 May 2023, available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06820/>; This figure excludes where citizenship was mistakenly given to someone to not entitled to, or fraudulently obtained and subsequently removed for those reasons.

ⁱⁱ The New York Times, *Nicaragua Strips Citizenship from Hundreds Days After Prisoner Release*, 17 February 2023, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/17/world/americas/nicaragua-strips-citizenship-dissidents.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, *Instrumentalising Citizenship in the Fight Against Terrorism*, 7 March 2022, available at: https://files.institutesi.org/Instrumentalising_Citizenship_Global_Trends_Report.pdf p.19.

^{iv} Stripped: The Citizenship Divide, Dec 2025, Reprieve and the Runnymede Trust <https://reprieve.org/uk/2025/12/11/stripped-the-citizenship-divide/>

^v *Report of the Inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Trafficked Britons in Syria*, February 2022, available at: <https://appgtraffickedbritons.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Report-of-the-Inquiry-by-the-APPG-on-Trafficked-Britons-in-Syria.pdf>; <https://irr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Deprivation-of-citizenship-Final-LR.pdf> p.6.

^{vi} The Times, *All criminals with dual nationality must be deported, say Tories*, 8 December 2025, available at: <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/criminals-dual-nationality-deported-conservatives-0mvt3fwll?msocid=0d0eba515c616f0d1d97acd65d7a6ecf>

^{vii} CNN, *A political prisoner's return to the UK was lauded by the government. Now 'shocking' tweets have sparked calls to deport him*, 29 December 2025, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/12/29/uk/alaa-abd-el-fattah-starmer-deport-tweets-intl>

^{viii} House of Commons Research Briefing, *Deprivation of British Citizenship and Withdrawal of Passports*, 19 May 2023, available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06820/>.

^{ix} Matthew Gibney, "Deprivation of citizenship through a political lens" in *The World's Stateless: Deprivation of Nationality*, Institute of Stateless and Inclusion, March 2020, available at: https://files.institutesi.org/WORLD'S_STATELESS_2020.pdf p.207-8; and *The Nuremberg Race Laws*, Holocaust Encyclopedia, available at: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nuremberg-race-laws>.

^x Article 15, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

^{xi} *Communication from the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls to the UK Government on Clause 9 of the Nationality and Borders Bill*, 11 February 2022, available at: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=27073> p.8.

^{xii} Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *A/HRC/57/29: Terrorism and Human Rights*, 7 August 2024, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5729-terrorism-and-human-rights> p.6.

^{xiii} *Report of the Inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Trafficked Britons in Syria*, February 2022, <https://appgtraffickedbritons.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Report-of-the-Inquiry-by-the-APPG-on-Trafficked-Britons-in-Syria.pdf> p.23.

^{xiv} Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *A/HRC/57/29: Terrorism and Human Rights*, 7 August 2024, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5729-terrorism-and-human-rights> pp.13-14.