

Law around non-consensual taking, making and sharing of sexual images to be reviewed

- Cyber-flashing', 'deepfake' and revenge porn among issues to be examined
- a public consultation will be launched to help assess whether the law needs to change

Laws around the making and sharing of non-consensual intimate images are to be reviewed under plans to ensure protections keep pace with emerging technology.

Justice Minister Paul Maynard and Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright have asked the Law Commission to examine whether current legislation is fit to tackle new and evolving types of abusive and offensive communications, including image-based abuse, amid concerns it has become easier to create and distribute sexual images of people online without their permission.

The review, which will be launched shortly, will consider a range of disturbing digital trends such as 'cyber-flashing' – when people receive unsolicited sexual images of someone over the phone – and 'deepfake' pornography – the degrading practice of superimposing an individual's face onto pornographic photos or videos without consent.

The move builds on government action in recent years to better protect victims and bring more offenders to justice, including making 'upskirting' and 'revenge porn' specific criminal offences.

The review will also consider the case for granting automatic anonymity to revenge porn victims, so they cannot be named publicly, as is the case for victims of sexual offences.

Justice Minister Paul Maynard said:

No one should have to suffer the immense distress of having intimate images taken or shared without consent.

We are acting to make sure our laws keep pace with emerging technology and trends in these disturbing and humiliating crimes.

This review will build on our recent work to make 'upskirting' and revenge porn illegal to protect victims and ensure perpetrators feel the full weight of the law.

DCMS Secretary of State Jeremy Wright is to announce the review during a speech at the NSPCC conference today (26 June 2019). Speaking ahead of the event he said:

Too many young people are falling victim to co-ordinated abuse online or the trauma of having their private sexual images shared. That's not the online world I want our children to grow up in.

We've already set out world-leading plans to put a new duty of care on online platforms towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator with teeth. This Review will ensure that the current law is fit for purpose as we deliver our commitment to make the UK the safest place to be online.

Tackling sexual offences is a priority for this government, and in many cases this behaviour will already be caught by a number of existing offences such as 'voyeurism' under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

However, ministers are committed to ensuring the right protections are in place for the modern age, and alongside the review, a public consultation will be launched on strengthening the law – seeking views from victims, groups representing them, law enforcement, academics and anyone else with an interest in the issue.

This review is part of joint work between the Ministry of Justice and Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport to consider reform of communications offences, examining the glorification of violent crime and the encouragement of self-harm online, and whether co-ordinated harassment by groups of people online could be more effectively addressed by the criminal law.

Professor David Ormerod QC, Criminal Law Commissioner at the Law Commission said:

Behaviours such as taking, making and sharing intimate images without consent or co-ordinated online harassment causes distress and can ruin lives.

If the criminal laws are not up to scratch, we will propose reforms that simplify the current patchwork of offences to provide more effective protection for victims.

Notes to editors

The Law Commission Review

The [Terms of Reference for the Review](#) will be published on the Law Commission's website.

- The review will commence on July 1st 2019 and report back in the summer of 2021.
- During Report stage of the Voyeurism (Offences) (No.2) Bill in the House of Commons, former Justice Minister Lucy Frazer announced that we would be asking the Law Commission to take forward a more detailed review of

the law around the non-consensual taking and sharing of intimate images, following the completion of the current DCMS commissioned review into online abuse.

- The Law Commission published Phase 1 of their review of Abusive and Offensive Online Communications on 1 November 2018. The Ministry of Justice and DCMS are now jointly engaging the Law Commission to conduct Phase 2 of this report, assessing the law on offensive and abusive online communications, including the non-consensual taking and sharing of intimate images specifically
- This review will consider the meaning of terms such as 'private' and 'sexual' in the context of the taking and sharing of images without consent.
- The review will not make recommendations about the existing law on the creation and dissemination of indecent images of children, including communication with or of anyone under the age of 18 years, as these laws are already appropriately robust, extensive and well-established.

Further guidance:

- In many cases, this behaviour will be caught by the offence of voyeurism under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which criminalises certain non-consensual photography taken for sexual gratification. It carries a 2-year maximum prison sentence and, in some circumstances, sexual offender notification requirements
 - Disclosing private sexual photographs and films without consent and with intent to cause distress (behaviour often known as posting 'revenge pornography') was made a criminal offence under section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.
 - While we feel the law in this area is robust, we are not complacent and continue to keep it under review.
 - The government launched, and supports with £80,000 of annual funding, the Revenge Porn Helpline to support victims which has received over 14,000 contacts since it opened in February 2015.
 - Social media companies are expected to take down obscene and offensive material that contravenes their terms of use. Twitter pledged to introduce tougher rules for removing this sort of material.
 - Publication may also potentially fall foul of the Section 127(1) of the Communications Act 2003, s.1 Malicious Communications Act 1988, or the Obscene Publications Act 1959 in some cases.
 - If a person discloses the image with the intention of causing distress to the person in the image, then this behaviour could potentially be captured by section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, commonly known as the 'revenge porn' offence.
-

Gove delivers new bill to punish animal abusers

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has announced a new bill to enable tougher prison sentences for the worst animal abusers which will be introduced to Parliament today (Wednesday 26 June).

The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill means that animal abusers could face up to five years in prison, a significant increase from the current maximum sentence of six months.

This will make it one of the toughest sanctions in Europe, strengthening the UK's position as a global leader on animal welfare.

The Bill follows a [public consultation last year](#), in which more than 70% of people supported the proposals for tougher prison sentences. It means the courts will be able to take a tougher approach to cases such as dog fighting, abuse of puppies and kittens, or gross neglect of farm animals.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

There is no place in this country for animal cruelty. That is why I want to make sure that those who abuse animals are met with the full force of the law. Our new Bill sends a clear message that this behaviour will not be tolerated, with the maximum five-year sentence one of the toughest punishments in Europe.

I am committed to making our country the best place in the world for the care and protection of animals.

The RSPCA received 1,175,193 calls to their 24-hour cruelty hotline in 2018 with a call every 27 seconds.

There have also been a number of cases in the last few years in which the courts said they would have handed down longer sentences had they been available.

Recent examples include a case when a man trained dogs to ruthlessly torture other animals, including trapping a fox and a terrier dog in a cage to brutally attack each other.

Animal Welfare Minister, David Rutley, said:

These increased maximum sentences will act as a serious deterrent against cruelty and neglect in the future. This step builds on recent positive action we have taken to protect animals, including plans to ban third party puppy and kitten sales and banning the use

of wild animals in circuses.

Claire Horton, Chief Executive of Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, said:

The introduction of this bill is a landmark achievement, which will make a profound difference to dogs and cats in England and Wales.

We, and many other rescue centres, see shocking cases of cruelty and neglect come through our gates and there are many more animals that are dumped and don't even make it off the streets. Research shows that tougher prison sentences act as a deterrent to would-be criminals, so today's announcement should prevent the suffering of many animals in the future.

Chief Executive for the RSPCA, Chris Sherwood, said:

This reform is long overdue. Those responsible for extreme cruelty towards animals or those criminal gangs involved in organised animal crime will now face the tough justice they deserve.

We need to better protect our animals and the RSPCA hopes that this new Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill will give courts the powers they need to punish those responsible for the most unimaginable cruelty to animals.

We also believe this will act as a much stronger deterrent to others and help us stamp out animal cruelty once and for all.

Today's announcement complements [Finn's Law](#), which came into effect earlier this month and provides increased protection for service dogs and horses. It was named after a German shepherd named Finn, a police dog stabbed in the head and chest in 2016 while trying to catch a man suspected of robbing a taxi driver at gunpoint.

If passed into law, today's Bill means that that someone who attacks a police dog could face a sentence of five years in prison.

PC David Wardell, Finn's handler said:

I've always been hugely supportive of animal welfare. Hence my campaign for #FinnsLaw after our incident. I was also keen to support the government's call for increased sentencing for all animal welfare cases so that we can send out the important message that our animals matter.

To hear the announcement today that the government is set to increase maximum sentences, #FinnsLawPart2, tenfold is fantastic news and will of course ensure that all animals, including our

amazing service animals, will have the best protections available in law.

I thank the public for their amazing support with this second and vital part of our #FinnsLaw campaigns. It has been refreshing to see people get involved, politely, in politics and bring real and positive change.

The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill will be introduced into the House of Commons, before moving through to the House of Lords. If passed, it will come into effect in two months after it receives Royal Assent.

[Video content of a case study of a dog from Battersea which suffered abuse is available for download](#) and publication by media outlets.

[Humanitarian workers in Syria deserve our efforts to protect them](#)

Thank you very much, Mr President, and thank you to our briefers. I think David Lillie you are right to challenge us. Humanitarian workers deserve our praise and our thanks and admiration. But above all, they deserve our efforts: the efforts of this Council to protect them. And I am sorry that that has been found wanting. And I'll come on to that in a minute.

Mr President, I wanted first just to support the French and German representatives on what they said at the start before the debate began. We believe it's important for the Council to hear from all sides of a conflict so we didn't on this occasion object to the invitation issued under Rule 39 to the Russian Reconciliation Centre and to General Bakin. We are very strong supporters of freedom of speech but we prefer it to be truthful speech, Mr President. And we believe that truth is indeed the first casualty of war; that's a very good saying. And I don't like being told that we can't trust UN information, or we can't trust the assessment of this Council and instead, we are to trust Russian uniformed personnel, even though Russia is a party to the conflict.

Mr President, it is obvious that there is also a conflict of interest. So I just wanted to explain all that before I go on to the substance. Our agreement to hear briefers from one side of a conflict – military briefers – in a humanitarian context shouldn't be taken for granted in future for the reasons I've set out.

I'd like though today, Mr President, to particularly focus on the hospitals, on the issues that Mark Lowcock raised and on deconfliction. And I really want to try to get to the bottom of this. I said last time that I keep asking

questions until we got answers. And General, I hope very much that you will be able to help the Council get answers with the problems it has with the attacks on the hospitals, because these are very serious matters that we just don't seem to get any progress on.

So if I may, Sir, I'd like to ask you some questions;

I'd like to know why 30 hospitals have been attacked?

Why the ambulance was a direct target.

And I'd like to know why, given what we've heard from David Lillie, and what we've heard from the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, and what we know of international humanitarian law; why do you believe that the attacks on the terrorist eclipse the needs of civilians? Because to us, they don't look proportionate and they don't look like they're preserving the principles of IHL.

And if you believe that the hospitals are legitimate military targets, then I think we would like to see some of the information that underpins that belief.

And in particular, we would like to know where are the warnings that under the Geneva Conventions need to be given before a hospital can be treated as a military target?

I'd like to know how you see, or how Russia sees, the de-confliction mechanism working for the reasons the Under-Secretary-General set out.

I have three more questions, if I may Sir?

One is about the ceasefire; why is it so difficult, given that both you and we support the Turkish efforts in Idlib? Why is it so difficult to get a cease fire? And what needs to change on the ground in order to get a cease fire?

What is happening to investigate and to hold accountable the people responsible for the attacks on hospitals?

And finally General, please may we have the names and designations of the Russian and Syrian units involved in the attacks on the hospitals?

Mr President, I have points also to make on Rukban where I share colleagues concern about the deteriorating situation and humanitarian access. We too support the need for a third aid-convoy to be allowed in as a matter of urgency. We support unfettered access for aid across Syria.

And in respect of Al-Hol, we continue to support the UN's efforts to scale up its response and we continue to provide aid to humanitarian organizations operating in IDP camps, including Al-Hol.

A number of speakers have raised the political situation, Mr President. And as a number have noted, Mr Pedersen will brief us later this month. I'm just

going to refer to what the French representative said, and say that that represents the United Kingdom's view also, as does his statement on the use of chemical weapons.

Thank you, Mr President.

[PM calls for new design laws to ensure high-quality homes](#)

The Prime Minister will today urge new design standards to ensure high-quality homes, more social housing, and further tenant rights as part of an ongoing housing revolution.

Addressing the Chartered Institute of Housing conference, she is also expected to set out next steps on the Social Housing Green Paper agenda, with an action plan expected in September.

Her intervention comes as figures indicate that, by autumn, a million homes will have been added in under five years.

In Manchester, the number of extra homes being created is up 12 per cent, in Nottingham by 43 per cent, and in Birmingham by 80 per cent. The number of affordable housing starts has also increased to nearly 54,000 this year.

Welcoming these figures, the Prime Minister said:

This is a government with a bold vision for housing and a willingness to act on it.

A government that has delivered radical reforms for today, and the permanent structural changes that will continue to benefit the country for decades to come.

But she will also warn against complacency, saying:

The housing shortage in this country began not because of a blip lasting one year or one Parliament, but because not enough homes were built over many decades.

The very worst thing we could do would be to make the same mistake again.

Last year, more additional homes were delivered than in all but one of the

previous 31 years.

But the Prime Minister is clear the quality of housing must not be compromised by the drive to build more homes.

She will call for new regulations to mandate developers to build higher-quality housing.

Currently, some local authorities make Nationally Described Space Standards a condition of granting planning permission.

But many do not – and even where standards are applied, they are not mandatory.

The Prime Minister will say this has resulted in an uneven playing field, with different rules in different parts of the country, leaving “tenants and buyers facing a postcode lottery.”

Mandatory regulations would be universal, and provide a clear, national standards – potentially leading to increased housebuilding.

The Prime Minister will say:

I cannot defend a system in which owners and tenants are forced to accept tiny homes with inadequate storage...

Where developers feel the need to fill show homes with deceptively small furniture...

And where the lack of universal standards encourages a race to the bottom

She will also confirm plans to end so-called “no-fault” evictions, with a consultation to be published shortly.

The Prime Minister will announce the timetable for further action on the Social Housing Green Paper agenda, calling for more high-quality social housing, better tenant rights, and demanding landlords demonstrate how they have acted on concerns raised.

Whilst admitting there is more to do, the Prime Minister will say reforms have made it easier to get homes built in the right places – including via the £5.5 billion housing infrastructure fund, and by giving local authorities greater freedom to use brownfield sites.

Further progress made in the housing market includes:

- 80% of first time buyers taken out of stamp duty altogether
- £2 billion of extra funding into the Affordable Housing Programme to build homes for social rent
- capped rent deposits and abolished letting fees, cutting the amount tenants have to find up front and making it harder to exploit house-

hunters.

- ending “no fault evictions” to stop landlords evicting tenants at short notice

We must not let down the people of South Sudan

Thank you, Mr President. Thank you also to our briefers. And let me just signal our strong support for SRSG Shearer and for the men, women serving in South Sudan on behalf of us all here, for all that you are doing on the ground.

Mr President, the United Kingdom has welcomed on many occasions the genuine hope for a peaceful South Sudan that came with the signing of the peace agreement last September. And it was inspiring to hear from David Shearer about the enthusiasm and the desire of people all over South Sudan for that peace agreement to turn into a substantive and lasting peace. And I want to set out again today the strong and unwavering support that the United Kingdom has for the people of South Sudan. The briefers today have reminded us, of course, and in particular, I pay tribute in this respect to Ms Minagono, that the people of South Sudan can't be expected to wait any longer for the implementation of a lasting peace. Not least given the still high numbers, almost seven million according to a report last week from the IPC, who face acute food insecurity. And I am struck by the fact that 89% of those surveyed believe a lasting peace is possible by the end of the year. Despite the fact that 79% of those surveyed knew of someone in their family who had been killed or forced to flee. So there is a real opportunity still in South Sudan.

However, despite a promising start, crucial tasks remain unsolved. In particular on security sector reform, agreements on state boundaries and the unification of forces. And I want today to urge all parties to make the compromises needed to unlock progress in these areas. We supported the agreement in May this year to extend the pre-transition period. As a sign of the parties desire to continue to work towards peace. And I would now echo the SRSG's call and those of other Council members for Salva Kiir and Riek Machar to meet and to redouble their efforts to ensure that the Transitional Government is formed in November. There should be no more delays, Mr President. And there need be no more delays.

I'd also like to thank the SRSG for his efforts and those of his team to support the hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese still living in protection of civilian sites. We share the aspiration that these sites should reduce in size as the peace agreement delivers genuine improvements on the ground. And of course, we recall that the Government of South Sudan has the primary responsibility for creating a conducive environment for returns. And

so urge them to play their part in creating the stability necessary for the safe, durable and dignified return of IDPs and refugees.

Now, the United Kingdom also shares ASG Gilmour's concerns set out today about the restrictions of political and civic space. Despite the extension to the pre-transition period, progress on justice and accountability continues to stall. And defense and security forces, including the NSS, continue to threaten and intimidate those perceived as critics. The South Sudan Panel of experts' findings on responsibility for the abduction and killing of human rights activist Dong Samuel Luak and writer and IO-member Aggrey Idri, at the highest level within the NSS are deeply troubling. As is the failure of the Government to investigate or sanction those involved. So we urge the Government of South Sudan to meet its commitments, to take steps to end the culture of impunity and of course, in particular, to sign the necessary agreements with the African Union to establish the hybrid court.

Mr President, Ms. Minagona's presence here today is an important reminder to us all the vital role of civil society in the peace process. And she set out a number of areas where we need to see action to deliver the agreement. As I said before, her account and the account of the SRSG show that people across the country after decades of violence are starting to make rapprochement and build peace. The dire situation in South Sudan has been of serious concern to this Council for some time. But the peace agreement that was signed represented a new start, a new dawn. We all desperately, round this table, want to see progress and there is still time for that progress. But it must not be wasted. There should be no more delays. The two main actors, Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, have a responsibility to their people: to come together and resolve the outstanding issues. The region, and all of us around this table must support them. We must not let down the people of South Sudan who still have such hope in their hearts.

Thank you, Mr President.