

Open letter by legal academics in support of immigration lawyers

We are legal academics writing to express solidarity with Jacqueline McKenzie and all other lawyers targeted by the media, the Conservative Party and members of the UK government for their immigration legal work.

Attacking lawyers for advising and representing their clients is an attack on the rule of law and it is disturbing that, as set out in a recent [statement](#) by the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association, members of the government have chosen to do this and that their message has been amplified by sections of the media. It contravenes [internationally accepted principles](#) on the role of lawyers, [endorsed by this government in 2019](#), and it puts individuals at risk of abuse and physical attack for fulfilling their professional obligations. The aim appears to be to deter lawyers from effectively representing their clients. Where there is improper conduct, it is right to notify professional bodies and, if appropriate, the police but that is entirely different to generalised attacks on sections of the profession or the targeting of individuals for their properly conducted professional work.

It is shocking that the Conservative Party has compiled a 'dossier' on Ms Jacqueline McKenzie, a reputable and effective solicitor, and that a media outlet obtained a copy and published the contents. We are additionally concerned because Ms McKenzie is a Black woman. Those responsible must have known that inviting negative media attention would expose her to misogynistic and racist threats from some members of the public. We ask the UK government to:

1. Condemn the compilation of dossiers on individual lawyers, such as that on Ms McKenzie;
2. Cease its unjustified public criticism of immigration lawyers for promoting the interests of their clients in ensuring the government acts lawfully;
3. Clarify publicly that the vast majority of immigration lawyers act properly and within the law when they challenge the government on asylum and immigration matters.

Signed by:

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The following do not work as legal academics but endorsed the letter:

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David Andrews (member of the public)
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