



**17 May 2023: Judge Silas “Silencing” Reid defeated by show of solidarity for retired social worker arrested for holding up a sign**

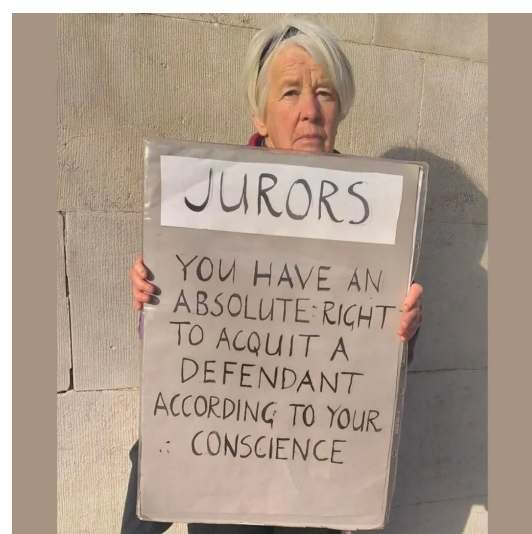


Photo credit: AC

In a historic victory for solidarity and people power, Judge Silas Reid, who has sent people to prison just for uttering the words “climate change” and “fuel poverty” in his courtroom [6][7], has been forced into an embarrassing climb-down.

When Trudi Warner, a 68-year old retired social worker (pictured above right), held up a sign outside Inner London Crown Court, setting out the centuries-old principle that juries can find people not guilty as a matter of conscience, Judge Reid had her arrested too [3], accusing her of contempt of court. He sent her to the Old Bailey (where the same message is displayed on a marble plaque by the original court entrance). Her case is currently being reviewed by the Attorney General. When 3 others followed, Judge Reid did the same thing to them [4].

So when 24 people (a mix of legal and health professionals, a priest, a retired Detective Sergeant, Quakers and others) held up the same sign outside the same court on Monday, the expectation was that they would be arrested too. The group sent Judge Reid a letter [5] explaining their solidarity action, so that there could be no doubt that he was aware of it. But they were not arrested, nor even spoken to or asked to leave.

On Tuesday, members of the group resumed their demonstration and sent Judge Reid an update to the [letter](#):

**“ ... if you considered that Trudi Warner’s protest was an interference with the course of justice, then how much greater the interference when multiplied 24 times. From that perspective, it was surely your duty to intervene.”**

But again, no-one was arrested. No-one was asked to move. No-one was asked to remove their signs. It is clear that Judge Reid has backed down, fatally compromising any attempt to prosecute Trudi Warner.

Tim Crosland, the former Government lawyer, who was one of the sign-holders, said:

***“The growing levels of oppression in this country were publicly exposed during the coronation. People were bundled into police vans just for quietly and peacefully expressing their point of view.***

***In these dark times, it’s good to be reminded that when people come together, in nonviolent resistance and solidarity, we have the combined strength to face down the abuse of power in general and the excesses of Judge Reid in particular.”***

Revd Dr Sue Parfitt, a priest and retired psychotherapist, and another of the sign-holders, said:

***“It’s a serious matter indeed if a jury feels unable to make decisions according to their conscience, just as it confounds the basis for the law in this land when defendants are prevented from telling the whole truth in court. Both rights must be defended.”***

Matt Hutchings KC a Barrister from London said:

***“Our country is in crisis. The root cause is a clash between a government and media bosses who are acting at the behest of the fossil fuel industry, and our citizens, ordinary people who are calling for a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels to green and clean energy.***

***When people are charged with offences which they committed because of their sincere beliefs about the climate crisis, the jury should be allowed to hear evidence about these beliefs. It is not right that juries are prevented by judicial directions from hearing the truth about why the defendants are in the dock.***

***The eminent judge Sir Patrick Devlin wrote in his book 'Trial by Jury' that juries were "an insurance that the criminal law will conform to the ordinary man's idea of what is fair and just". At a time when our democratic values and institutions are under attack, it is vital that we defend one of our sacred democratic principles: the independence of juries.”***

Melinda Janki, Guyana-based lawyer, and winner of the Commonwealth Rule of Law prize, 2023 said:

***"For decades ExxonMobil suppressed evidence that burning fossil fuels would destroy the global climate system. Today we in the Global South are living with the impacts. People are dying. Animals are dying. It is unconscionable and contrary to the rule of law for any judge to seek to suppress evidence of the destructive impacts of fossil fuels."***

Rabbi Jeffrey Newman from North London said:

***"Intention is an ancient concept, fundamental in Jewish & British law, for example in distinguishing between murder and manslaughter. It seems to me, therefore, that we cannot disregard motivation when we come to look at actions and consequences in other contexts."***

***As a Jew, and a rabbi - that is, a Jewish teacher - I have had to think very carefully about issues of obedience to the law and where and when a state may enact laws that a citizen, after careful and honest consideration, decides cannot and should not be obeyed. At such times, courageous protest by posters, placards or leaflet distribution have been prohibited by repressive regimes. Judges have sometimes focussed the attention of juries too narrowly thereby causing much harm."***

***At this time, we must consider with all due wisdom the needs of our planet and all its species and of future generations as we assess the proportionality of protest."***

Dr Juliette Brown, 52 a Consultant Psychiatrist, and one of the sign-holders, said:

***"We're ordinary people, worried about our safety, security, health, the rule of law and a stable, cohesive society. When governments are failing to protect us from harm, we must have the chance to say so, and to explain our actions to a jury of our peers."***

Paul Stephens, 58, a former Police Officer, and one of the sign-holders, said:

***"I joined the police in 1983 to protect the good people from the bad. Simplistic I know but I was 19. The legal system in the UK is doing the exact opposite. They are protecting polluters, allowing increased harm and obscene profits; whilst prosecuting people trying to save life in a way that is so unjust; gagging them from sharing their motivation with the jury. Extinction changes everything and the legal system must wake up and become a force for good."***

Joanna Hindley, 57, a Midwife and a Quaker from Birmingham, and one of the sign-holders, said:

***"I try to live according to the deepest truth I know. This means speaking the truth at all times, including to people in positions of power. As I am guided by integrity, so I expect to see it in public life.***

***I am deeply troubled threefold: that defendants whom I personally know and respect have been sent to prison for telling the truth; that the rights and duty of jury members to decide their verdict on the basis of their collective individual consciences have not been upheld - thereby compromising the fundamental human right to trial by jury; and that those who have sought to uphold jury members' rights to act on the basis of conscience, have been arrested."***

ENDS

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**Images and video available here:**

**[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_gKCO-7Jt6OiTfYEibwIQHdKHTytkm4M?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_gKCO-7Jt6OiTfYEibwIQHdKHTytkm4M?usp=sharing)**

**High quality stills available here:**

**<https://show.pics.io/xr-global-media-breaking-news/search?tagId=6460eb51206fd1000d1da161>**

## **Notes to Editors**

[1] Press Release Monday 15th May Inner London Crown Court:

<http://insulatebritain.com/2023/05/15/breaking-high-noon-at-crown-court/>

[2] Principle of Jury Nullification: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jury\\_nullification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jury_nullification)

[3] Trudi Warner arrested:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/apr/04/climate-activist-trudi-warner-held-sign-telling-jurors-act-conscience-charged>

[4] Cathy Eastburn, Sally Davidson and Oliver Rock arrested:

[https://youtu.be/GQxVU\\_JIB0E](https://youtu.be/GQxVU_JIB0E)

[5] Letter notifying Judge Reid 15th May:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PRA-kYmXcr1yKu1MSsybRFE4Tc4EBulgPSYlav3UqRM/edit>

[6] David Nixon jailed:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/feb/07/insulate-britain-activist-david-nixon-jailed-for-eight-weeks-for-contempt-of-court>

[7] Amy Pritchard and Giovanna Lewis jailed:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/activists-jailed-for-seven-weeks-for-defying-ban-on-mentioning-climate-crisis/>

[8] "Protestors must be allowed to explain motives in court" Times article

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/protesters-must-be-allowed-to-explain-motives-in-court-zhpg2g3gs>