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General's  
Office

**Rt Hon Lord Hermer KC**  
Attorney General

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Defend Our Juries  
By email [info@defendourjuries.org](mailto:info@defendourjuries.org)

04 October 2024

Dear Defend Our Juries,

### **RECENT CORRESPONDENCE**

Thank you for your letters dated 20 and 27 September 2024 in which you set out your concerns about the sentences imposed on the Just Stop Oil protestors on 18 July 2024 and upholding the rule of law.

At the outset, I want to say that I am very keen to engage with non-government organisations as part of my commitment to emphasise the importance of our key institutions and the rule of law as themes that bind us all together. This Government is committed to tackling the Climate Crisis. This Government is also committed to the rule of law and human rights, including the freedom of speech and the right to protest, which are essential elements of a functioning democracy. A key priority for me as Attorney is to be a leader in rebuilding the political consensus to secure the long-term resilience of the rule of law and fundamental rights.

Notwithstanding my commitment to engagement, I regret that I do not consider it appropriate at this juncture to accept your invitation to a meeting. I want to explain my reasoning for this, not least to stress why I do not consider a meeting would be consistent with my commitment to uphold the rule of law.

Judicial independence is a prerequisite to the rule of law and a fundamental guarantee of a fair trial. It is vitally important in a democracy that individual judges and the judiciary as a whole are impartial and independent of all external pressures so that those who appear before them, and the wider public, can have confidence that their cases will be decided fairly and in accordance with the law

The cases that you have raised are either currently subject to appeal or might be the subject of permissions to appeal. They are therefore currently a matter for the courts. I do not consider it appropriate for politicians to interfere in a judicial process, whether by passing public comments or by holding external meetings to discuss sentences in ongoing cases.

I should add for completeness that I do have the power to refer sentences for certain offences passed in the Crown Court to the Court of Appeal for review. However, this only applies if I consider that the sentence imposed appears unduly lenient. I therefore have no power to review or intervene in relation to sentences which do not appear unduly lenient. Where a person convicted of an offence considers their sentence to be manifestly excessive, they have the right to appeal to the Court of Appeal against their sentence to seek to have it reduced.

In these circumstances I hope you will understand, it would not be appropriate for me to meet with you to discuss the sentences to which you refer and others where there is the possibility of judicial consideration of this matter.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'LH' followed by a horizontal stroke.

**RT HON LORD HERMER KC  
ATTORNEY GENERAL**