

Sent Electronically

Rt. Hon. Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Rt. Hon. David Lammy MP, Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State for Justice

Rt. Hon. Lord Hermer, Attorney General

Rt. Hon. Lisa Nandy MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Rt. Hon. Yvette Cooper MP, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

Rt. Hon. Sir Alan Campbell MP, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons

Mr. Nick Timothy MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Justice

Lord Marks of Henley-on-Thames KC, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Justice

Rt. Hon. Stephen Flynn MP, SNP Westminster Leader

Dr. Ellie Chowns MP, Green Party Westminster Leader

Mr. Nigel Farage MP, Reform UK Leader

Ms. Sarah Rapson, Chief Executive, Solicitors Regulation Authority

Mr. Mark Neale, Director-General, The Bar Standards Board

Mr. Richard Orpin, Chief Executive, Legal Services Board

Dr. Michael O'Flaherty, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr. Jan Braathu, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Representative on Freedom of the Media

Ms. Irene Khan, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

28th January 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

We call on you to include universal Anti-SLAPP provisions in the 2026 King's Speech

We, the undersigned, representing a wide cross section of society - from the legal, media, environmental, anti-corruption, human rights, publishing, and not-for-profit sectors - join the [UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition](#) in calling for the inclusion of universal anti-SLAPP provisions in the next King's Speech anticipated in May 2026. This will ensure those targeted for speaking out in the public interest are able to access justice without being forced out of court by abusive lawsuits, often described as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation, or SLAPPs. Without concerted action, everyone who speaks out - whether to protest the actions of a powerful company, ask questions of someone of influence or speak out on issues important to themselves or their community, will remain vulnerable to costly, stressful and unpredictable legal action.

In the five years since the Coalition was founded, in January 2021, SLAPPs have been documented against journalists, tax transparency experts, online reviewers, patients, environmental campaigners, local residents, sexual violence survivors, whistleblowers, academics, tenants, victims groups and advocates, and social media users, to name a few. In these cases, wealthy and powerful claimants have misused the British justice system and the costs associated with participating in pre-trial and court proceedings to stifle protected speech and public participation. **This is a society-wide issue that requires a society-wide remedy.**

While the inclusion of anti-SLAPP measures in the 2023 Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) was a welcome and official recognition of the problem, the provisions are both limited in scope and flawed in approach. Many of us who have signed this letter know firsthand the impact of being subject to abusive legal threats and would agree with your [description](#) of them as “*intolerable*”. We were further heartened to hear the [commitment](#) made by Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor, David Lammy last December to stop *“the powerful from using abusive lawsuits – so-called ‘Slapps’ – to intimidate reporters, silence investigations, and bury the truth under a mountain of legal threats. Because sunlight is always the best disinfectant.”*

We agree. Now is the time to turn rhetoric into action. By bringing forward universal anti-SLAPP measures in the next King's Speech, Parliament will finally be given the opportunity to establish robust, accessible and universal protections against abusive legal threats and actions.

It is important that the justice system works for everyone. SLAPPs actively prevent a level playing field between those with deep pockets and those for whom affording to mount a defence can draw vital funds away from their families and businesses. The financial inequality so frequently at the heart of SLAPPs can force targets to choose between realising their fundamental rights and economic security. This must end. It is the Government's duty to protect us from this system being weaponised against free expression and everyone's ability to participate fully in society. However, without an effective early dismissal mechanism, an objective test for filtering SLAPPs out of court, and the ability to minimise costs and penalise bad conduct, courts and judges do not have the tools or guidance they need. At a time of unprecedented pressure on our judicial system, court resources should not be wasted on SLAPPs, which are by definition an abuse of the court process.

We appreciate the large list of bills being put forward for the King's Speech represent important and urgent issues. However, it is our belief, informed by testimony from those who have been targeted for realising their rights protected by UK law, that democracy cannot be sustained without everyone being able to express themselves, challenge wrongdoing, or inform others.

Yours sincerely,

Editorial and media senior management

John Witherow, Chairman, Times Media Ltd

Katharine Viner, Editor-in-Chief, The Guardian

Chris Evans, Editor, The Telegraph

Allister Heath, Editor, Sunday Telegraph

Roula Khalaf, Editor, The Financial Times

Geordie Greig, Editor-in-Chief, The Independent
Oliver Duff, Editor-in-Chief, The i Paper
Alessandra Galloni, Editor-in-Chief, Reuters News
John Micklethwait, Editor-in-Chief, Bloomberg
David Higginson, Chief Content Officer, Reach PLC
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Philip Collins, Editor, Prospect Magazine
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