



U.K.'s "Swift Courts" to Replace Jury Trials

The U.K. Labour government under Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Justice David Lammy announced on December 2 that — in a shocking dismantling of centuries-old liberties — jury trials for crimes carrying sentences [under three years will be eliminated](#).

Instead, judge-only tribunals known as "Swift Courts" will free up "Crown Court time for the most serious offences." Magistrates' sentencing powers will expand to 18 months, with the ability to go up to two years if necessary.



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Cases for serious offenses such as murder, rape, and grievous bodily harm will retain juries — for now — but the reforms empower courts to override criminal defendants' right to a jury trial. [Lammy said this will](#) "prevent defendants from gaming the system."

Opposition to the Change

Shadow Justice Secretary Robert Jenrick said Lammy's goal is to remove the British people from the justice system, [stating in a video on X](#): "Despite what he claims, he isn't doing this just to cut costs or clear the court backlogs, he is doing it because he doesn't trust the British people. He would rather one judge administer justice, rather than twelve ordinary citizens."

Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch noted: "For over 800 years we have enjoyed the right to a jury trial in this country, but David Lammy has just announced he is slashing jury trials and ripping up that ancient liberty."

Centralizing Power

By denying the right to a jury of one's peers for criminal prosecutions, the government centralizes power in the hands of unelected judges, eroding the fundamental bedrock of common law [enshrined in the Magna Carta](#). These "reforms" are a totalitarian attack disguised as "improved efficiency."

The Free Speech Union [noted that defendants invoking](#) free-speech defenses are nearly twice as likely to be acquitted by juries than by magistrates, who are often aligned with Establishment politics. In speech-related offenses, magistrates acquitted 14 percent of defendants, Crown Courts 33 percent, and juries 75 percent of not-guilty pleas.

The group [launched a petition](#) calling for the government to reject these reforms and guarantee jury trials for all speech cases, warning that eliminating them would threaten free speech, silence dissent, and replace trials by a jury of one's peers with state-imposed judgments.

Lammy's move paves the way for a Soviet-style system plagued with inevitable abuse, where state-appointed judges decide guilt, abolishing due process. Without jury trials, justice becomes whatever the regime decrees.



Written by [D. Michael DeRidder](#) on December 17, 2025

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