

### Deprivation of Nationality as a National Security Measure

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The Home Secretary's powers to deprive British citizens of their nationality are employed to safeguard national security, yet [comparative](#) international experience indicates that such action is **counter-productive**. It fuels the recruitment narrative of terrorist groups which generate propaganda that western societies are inherently unfair. **As the [New Plan for Immigration](#) is proposed, Parliament must review and reverse the way Britain's national security is being undermined by the current approach to nationality deprivation.**

[National security experts tell us](#) that citizenship deprivation '*amounts to another means of (states) avoiding the tough, but necessary, responsibility of dealing with their own citizens... this "hands off" stance will only create greater danger in the future*'. The UK's practice also undermines its international standing. Post-Brexit Britain aims to strengthen ties with the Commonwealth and wider world, so it is imperative that it is seen as a trustworthy partner which helps solve common global challenges rather than adding to them. Depriving UK citizens of their citizenship while they are abroad, in effect, 'exports' the problem to other countries and may impede future prosecutions and convictions. This was also articulated in Canada's statement in the wake of Jack Letts' UK citizenship deprivation: [Canada expressed disappointment](#) "*that the United Kingdom has taken this unilateral action to off-load their responsibilities*".

There has been a significant rise in citizenship deprivations in the past five years, with most decisions being implemented when the British citizen was overseas. Following the 2004 amendment to the 1981 British Nationality Act, deprivation decisions come into effect even before appeals. Parliamentary records show no debate on the implications of [this change](#) on how appeals operate on those deprived of their nationality while abroad. In its recent judgment in the [Shamima Begum case](#), the Supreme Court held that '*the deprivation appeal ... be stayed until Ms Begum is in a position to play an effective part in it without the safety of the public being compromised*'. The Court has thereby permitted a **nationality deprivation order to remain unchallenged indefinitely, with the (former) British citizen stranded abroad, with no access to justice.**

The UK's citizenship deprivation practice disproportionately impacts minorities and those of migrant heritage – under the law, British citizens by birth, with no other citizenship, cannot be deprived of their nationality, whereas naturalised and dual citizens can. UK criminal law and counter-terrorism strategy should be deployed in preference to citizenship deprivation as they are likely to be more effective in keeping the UK safe from future acts of terrorism, they apply equally to all citizens and are reflective of the UK taking responsibility for its own. If the Prevent Counter-Terrorism Strategy works, it should be used to help Shamima Begum. **In view of these points, it will never be possible to prove that citizenship deprivation under the current powers is necessary, proportionate, or has a legitimate aim.**

**Deprivation of nationality for national security reasons has no useful purpose and reduces members of minority communities to second-class citizens.** Discretion to deprive citizens of nationality is also limited by [international law standards](#), including the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of nationality, the prohibition of discrimination and the obligation to avoid statelessness. The [New Plan for Immigration](#) is an opportunity for Parliament to debate the unintended consequences of previous amendments to the British Nationality Act, deliver fairness in British Nationality Law, and bring the law in line with principles of natural justice and international standards. **This is an opportunity for Britain to embrace its responsibilities and become a leader in the international community. To achieve this, Parliament must:**

- **Debate the unintended consequences of previous amendments to the British Nationality Act**
- **Insist that British nationality law is applied fairly to all British citizens**
- **Bring the law in line with principles of natural justice and international standards.**

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