

Unmesh Desai AM
London Assembly Member for City and East
Chair of the Police and Crime Committee



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The Queen's Walk
London
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Rt Hon. Robert Buckland QC MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1A 9AJ

(Via email)

12 June 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Backlog of criminal cases in the Crown Court

I write on behalf of the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee to ask you to take urgent action to tackle the growing backlog of criminal cases waiting to be dealt with in the Crown Court. These are the most serious cases and it is vital for victims, witnesses and defendants that such cases proceed as soon as possible.

The Metropolitan Police Service has been targeting serious offenders in the capital to remove danger from our streets. It is important for both the public and the police that this work is supported by these cases getting to court so the offenders can be brought to justice. It is known that time delays add pressure to victims and witnesses and raise the case attrition rate.

The Committee understands the difficulties and delays that the Covid-19 crisis has caused, however, the country is now adapting to a new normal and that must include the criminal justice system.

You will of course be aware of the legal maxim that justice delayed is justice denied, and in that spirit we ask you to acknowledge that the backlog of cases building in the Crown Courts is reaching an unacceptable level and needs to be addressed urgently. This requires action to not only ensure a return to cases being dealt with promptly, but also how to erode the backlog.

I urge you to work with the judiciary to ensure that our criminal justice system is seen to be dealing with serious offenders swiftly and effectively to ensure that the public at large can see justice being done. I would be grateful if you could let the Committee know what steps you and your department will be taking to resolve this by 10 July 2020.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Unmesh Desai', with a horizontal line underneath.

Unmesh Desai AM
Chair of the Police and Crime Committee