

Amelia Womack warns policing bill would “entrench discrimination” against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities



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- **Amelia Womack says proposed bill is one of the most serious threats to human rights in recent history**
- **Green Party deputy leader tells conference in Birmingham that bill would effectively criminalise group's way of life**
- **Womack: “It's down to all of us to stand with a community that has been pushed to the margins, and whose very existence is under threat”**

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack sharply criticised the Government's proposed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in her speech to conference today [Saturday 23 October], saying it amounts to state-sanctioned persecution of a protected minority group.

Womack described how Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) people have faced decades of prejudice and said the policing Bill would criminalise their way of life. Extending police powers under the criminalisation of trespass, as the Government intends to, will mean GRT people will face having their homes seized simply for living in them, Womack said.

Addressing party members in Birmingham, Womack said:

“The policing bill currently going through parliament is one of the most serious threats to human rights and civil liberties in recent history. The sweeping new powers in this bill would lead to the harassment of young people, especially black and working class people, and would put vulnerable young women at risk of violence.

“If passed, the bill would also entrench discrimination against gypsy, roma and traveller communities even further. This group have had their rights systematically stripped away for decades – and this new bill would effectively criminalise their way of life.”

In the last two years the Court of Appeal and the European Court of Human Rights have separately made rulings which indicate that criminalising the act of trespass would amount to “a potential breach of both the Convention and the Equality Act”, if the government did not provide more legal sites.[1]

Womack told conference:

“Making trespass a criminal offence and giving police even more powers to seize property is essentially a rubber stamp for discrimination against this

group. Making an element of their culture into a crime.

“Decades of prejudice against GRT people have allowed this creeping criminalisation to take place – and let’s be clear: this bill represents nothing less than state sanctioned persecution of a protected minority group.

“It’s down to all of us to stand with a community that has been pushed to the margins, and whose very existence is under threat. We must continue to fight the police, crime, sentencing and courts bill all the way – in the House of Lords and in the Commons – and on the streets.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.politicshome.com/thehouse/article/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-groups-fear-new-government-measures-could-harm-their-nomadic-way-of-life>

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