

[Press release: Oldham knife murderer has sentence increased](#)

A man who stabbed and killed a passer-by has today had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred it for being too low.

Mohamed Jama, 22, brandished a knife and threatened members of the public as he, Musa Jama and Sadik Djama headed into Glodwick to avenge an attack on Musa Jama. On the way, an argument broke out with Mohammed Nabeel Hassan, 22, who was walking past, and the group began punching and kicking the victim. As the fight escalated, Mohamed Jama stabbed the victim in the chest, killing him. The 3 men then ran off, laughing, and disposed of the knives.

Mohamed Jama was originally sentenced in October to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 18 years at Manchester Crown Court. Today, the Court of Appeal has increased his minimum term to 22 years.

Commenting on the increase, the Solicitor General said:

“Mohamed Jama went out that day armed with a knife, and as a result a young man was killed. The original sentence failed to take proper account of the seriousness of the offence and the harm that can be caused when such weapons are carried. I am pleased the Court has increased the sentence.”

[News story: EU Settlement Scheme rolled out to public test phase](#)

EU citizens living in the UK who have a valid passport will be able to take part in a public test phase of the EU Settlement Scheme.

From 21 January 2019, EU citizens, as well as their non-EU citizen family members who hold a valid biometric residence card, will be able to apply for the immigration status they will need once the UK has left the EU. By applying during this test phase, they will also provide valuable insight into how the system is performing so that further improvements can be made before the scheme is fully rolled out from March 2019.

The public testing follows a successful private beta phase with employees in the higher education, health and social care sectors.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

Securing the rights of EU citizens living in the UK has always been our priority.

We are well on track to deliver a system that will make it easy and straightforward for them to obtain status once we have left the EU and continue to live their lives much as they do now.

This is a completely voluntary test phase, which will give us valuable insight into how the system works and if any changes need to be made before the full launch.

The EU Settlement Scheme will be fully open by 30 March 2019, and EU citizens will have until 30 June 2021 to apply, in line with the draft Withdrawal Agreement.

The expansion has been announced through changes to the Immigration Rules. The Rules are accompanied by some initial findings of how the scheme performed during the second private beta test phase. Feedback during that phase, which ends on 21 December 2018, has so far been positive.

By 13 December 2018, more than 15,500 applications had been made and more than 12,400 of these had been concluded. 71% of the concluded applications were granted settled status and the rest were granted pre-settled status. Many of the applicants received their decision within 24 hours. We will publish a full report in January 2019.

The new, wider test phase will again require applicants to prove their identity by using the EU Exit: Identity Document Check app which is part of the integrated online application process. There will also be support for EU citizens who might need additional help in making their application.

Read [further information on the EU Settlement Scheme](#).

[Press release: World-leading UK Ivory Bill becomes law](#)

One of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales has become law in the UK today as the Ivory Bill gained Royal Assent to become the Ivory Act 2018.

Since the Bill was introduced on [23 May 2018](#) it has rapidly cleared Parliamentary processes, with support from across the House. It is expected to come into force in late 2019.

The number of elephants has declined by almost a third in the last decade and around 20,000 a year are still being slaughtered due to the global demand for ivory.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

It is an extraordinary achievement to have passed this Act of Parliament. The Ivory Act is a landmark in our fight to protect wildlife and the environment. The speed of its passage through Parliament shows the strength of feeling on all sides of the House on this critical issue.

The UK has shown global leadership and delivered on a key commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan. We are determined to end this insidious trade and make sure ivory is never seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol.

Once commenced, the Act will:

- Introduce a total ban on dealing in items containing elephant ivory, regardless of their age, within the UK, as well as export from or import to the UK.
- Create narrow and carefully defined set of exemptions.
- Establish a new compliance system to allow owners to continue to trade in exempt items
- Introduce tough new penalties for those found guilty of breaching the ban, including fines and possible imprisonment.

During October 2018, the Environment Secretary, Michael Gove launched a coalition of political leaders, conservationists and celebrities dedicated to defeating the illegal trade in ivory and establishing ivory sales bans in other countries around the globe. It is called the [Ivory Alliance 2024](#).

Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand said:

I am delighted to see the UK's domestic ivory ban is now law and to be part of the Secretary of State's Ivory Alliance 2024, which will tackle the demand side of the severe poaching crisis we have seen in the past decade. This crucial agenda has my strong support, and I look forward to playing my part by engaging government leaders on strong legislation and enforcement.

This show of leadership from the UK comes at a crucial time for wildlife conservation internationally – and will go a long way towards influencing countries, including New Zealand and Australia, on movement towards their own bans.

Support from Non-Governmental Organisations working in international conservation:

Will Travers OBE and Virginia McKenna OBE, Co-Founders the Born Free Foundation, said:

Protecting wild elephants from the ravages of the bloody ivory trade requires anti-poaching; intelligence gathering; trafficking interception; deterrent sentencing; public education in market countries; and ending the trade in ivory – all ivory. The measures taken by the Westminster government to bring near-complete closure to the UK's domestic ivory market – one of the largest in the world – are fully endorsed by the Born Free Foundation and have overwhelming support in the country. They are not only practical, workable and effective, but send a powerful signal that we no longer value the teeth of dead elephants, but champion the compassionate conservation of wild, free-living elephants and the habitats they rely on.

Professor Lee White CBE, director of the Gabonese National Parks Agency said:

This is an important step towards taking action to protect our precious elephants in Africa. At the Giants Club summit in April, Gabon along with many of our African partners called on Europe to implement a ban on commercial ivory sales. I am delighted to see the UK has listened to us in Africa and has continued to be a key partner, with Gabon, in this fight against the Illegal Wildlife Trade.

Old or new ivory and its continued sale around the globe helps to fuel the illegal killing of Forest Elephants in Gabon, as it creates a demand for this commodity. We must stop it by encouraging more domestic sales bans, like the UK has introduced.

I want to congratulate the UK for showing leadership on this important issue.

Charlie Mayhew, Founder and CEO of Tusk Trust said:

The significance of Royal Assent for the Ivory Bill should not be underestimated as we continue our fight to save one of the planet's most iconic species. Tusk has worked closely with DEFRA and Government Ministers over the last three years to introduce this legislation, for which there has always been overwhelming public support. Whilst recognising the need to include pragmatic exemptions to protect items of important historic, artistic and cultural value, this Bill sends a clear message that there is no place for the use of ivory in the 21st century.

The UK Government has once again taken a lead on tackling the trade and reducing the poaching that has decimated elephant populations over the last three decades. We sincerely hope that this move will now persuade the EU and other countries to follow suit and bolster vital efforts to halt all illegal wildlife trade.

Paul De Ornellas, Chief Wildlife Advisor at WWF said:

Stopping the brutal trade in ivory is crucial to end trafficking and ensure a future for elephants. The UK government has listened and is showing decisive leadership. Now, we need China, the major destination for illegal ivory in recent years, to resolutely enforce its trade ban. It's also equally important, for other countries on the Chinese border, to commit to closing their ivory markets.

John Stephenson, Stop Ivory CEO said:

We welcome the new Ivory Act. It represents an important milestone in the eradication of the ivory trade, a trade responsible for the poaching that threatens the very survival of elephants as a species.

The new law is exactly what African governments on the front line of the poaching crisis have been calling for.

The 19 African countries that form the Elephant Protection Initiative see this law as a breakthrough in their struggle to save their elephants.

We urge those remaining governments which continue to allow the ivory trade, including the EU, to follow the UK's leadership and hasten the day when ivory is no longer valued as a commodity. When the buying stops, the killing will stop.

Head of Policy and Campaigns at IFAW, David Cowdrey, said:

The UK ivory ban is a momentous victory for elephant conservation. With populations being decimated by the poaching crisis at the rate of one elephant slaughtered every 26 minutes, it is vital that we close down ivory markets. The British public are strongly rejecting ivory ownership in favour of elephant protection and we are delighted that the UK Government has succeeded in putting in place one of the toughest ivory bans in the world. We hope that others will follow their lead so that in future, ivory is only valued on a live elephant.

Matt Walpole, Director of Conservation Programmes at Fauna & Flora International said:

This ban sets a global standard and, by removing opportunities for trade in ivory, sends a clear message that elephants are more valuable alive. Poaching for trade in ivory is arguably the

greatest threat to elephants today. Other countries with legal ivory markets must now follow suit so that elephants will be one step closer to a brighter future.

Background

Ivory Act 2018

Create narrow and carefully defined exemptions to the ban for:

- Items with only a small amount of ivory. Such items must be comprised of less than 10% ivory by volume and have been made prior to 1947
- Musical instruments. These must have an ivory content of less than 20% and have been made prior to 1975
- Portrait miniatures. A specific exemption for portrait miniatures – which were often painted on thin slivers of ivory – made before 1918
- Sales to and between accredited museums. This applies museums accredited by Arts Council England, the Welsh Government, The Scottish Government or the Northern Ireland Museums Council in the UK, or, for museums outside the UK, The International Council of Museums
- The rarest and most important items of their type. Items of outstanding artistic, cultural or historic significance, and made prior to 1918. Such items will be subject to the advice of specialists at institutions such as the UK's most prestigious museums

Ivory Alliance 2024

- The ambition of the [Ivory Alliance 2024](#) is to reduce the illegal killing of African elephants by at least one third by the end of 2020, and two thirds by the end of 2024, a decade on from the 2014 London Declaration committing governments around the world to fight the illegal wildlife trade.
- Our ambitions for the Ivory Alliance are based on data from the CITES Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme.
- Tracking and measuring elephant poaching and populations is a complex science. We are setting up a Group of Specialists that will inform the [Ivory Alliance campaign](#). The first task of this group will be to determine the most robust and appropriate metric to measure the success of the Ivory Alliance against its target ambition.

[Press release: Trio of justice bills become law](#)

- mobile network operators now able to directly block phone signals in prisons

- drivers to see lower car insurance premiums as a result of fewer spurious whiplash claims
- judges' time will be freed up to focus their expertise on the most important issues

Illicit mobile phones in prisons will be blocked, motorists will save money through lower car insurance premiums, and courts will run more efficiently after the bills all passed Parliament on the final sitting day before Christmas recess.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

These important new laws will help us to deliver safe, decent prisons and a fair, efficient justice system that puts the people who use it first.

Days like today show that – despite the current squeeze on Parliamentary time – this is a department getting on with business as usual and delivering real change.

The Prisons (Interference with Wireless Telegraphy) Bill means mobile network operators can now detect, block and investigate illegal phone use in prisons – joining the government in the fight against criminals who fuel violence behind bars. The Secretary of State will be able to authorise mobile network operators to interfere and block phone signals in all prisons across England and Wales.

Prisons Minister Rory Stewart said:

A mobile phone in prison effectively allows a prisoner to jump the prison walls: they can transfer money, record videos and intimidate witnesses.

I thank my colleagues Maria Caulfield MP and Baroness Pidding for their work in sponsoring this Bill, which will help us to find and seize these illicit devices.

This is just one in a series of measures we have implemented this year, showing our commitment to restoring stability and security to the prison estate.

This builds on legislation delivered earlier this year by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), including the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Bill which doubled the maximum prison sentence from 6 to 12 months for anyone found guilty of assaulting a prison officer. MOJ has introduced a number of other additional measures throughout 2018 to restore stability to the prison estate, including a £70 million investment in safety, security and decency. This includes £16 million to improve conditions for prisoners and staff and £7 million for new security measures, such as scanners, improved searching

techniques, phone-blocking technology and a financial crime unit to target the criminal kingpins operating in prisons.

Meanwhile prison officer numbers are rising, with more than 4,300 now recruited and staffing levels at their highest since 2012, and there has been a significant focus on prisoner rehabilitation. The launch of the Education and Employment strategy this year created a system where each prisoner is set on a path to employment from the moment they arrive in custody.

The Civil Liability Bill, also passed today, will ensure spurious or exaggerated whiplash claims are no longer an easy payday. Compensation will be capped, and settling claims without medical evidence will be banned – with insurers promising to pass on savings to hard-pressed motorists through lower insurance premiums.

The Bill also makes important changes to how the personal injury discount rate is set. Under the reforms, the rate will be reviewed in a more regular, transparent way, ensuring claimants suffering life-changing injuries still receive full and fair compensation. The changes will also reduce the burden of over-compensation on defendants, in particular the NHS, and will make the system fairer for all – including taxpayers and motorists.

The third bill passed today, the Courts and Tribunals (Judiciary and Functions of Staff) Bill, will allow appropriately qualified and experienced court and tribunal staff to deal with routine matters, freeing up judges' time to focus their expertise on matters that need it most. It will also allow the judiciary to be flexibly deployed across jurisdictions where they are most needed, allowing judges to gain experience of different types of cases, helping with their career progression.

Justice Minister Lucy Frazer said:

This Bill supports our fundamental transformation of the justice system, making courts easier to use, more efficient and fit for the digital age.

By enabling judges to hear cases in different jurisdictions and giving court staff powers to deal with routine issues, we will make our courts more efficient and effective, while making better use of taxpayers' money.

As well as delivering new laws in Parliament, MOJ has introduced a wide range of other measures throughout 2018, including:

- A Victims Strategy, which ensures support for victims is aligned to the changing nature of crime, and boosts services at every stage of the justice system.
- A Female Offender Strategy which delivers dedicated support to vulnerable female offenders – diverting them away from short prison sentences wherever possible. This includes £5 million of funding in community services as well as establishing five pilot residential

women's centres across England and Wales.

- Increasing transparency of the parole process, by legislating to allow the Parole Board to provide summaries of its decisions to victims, media and the wider public.
- Launching a consultation on no fault divorce, to remove the acrimony created by forcing couples to attribute blame when a marriage ends.
- Move more court processes online, saving time and money as part of the government's ambitious £1 billion court reform programme, bringing new technology and modern ways of working to the justice system. This includes a new fully accessible online civil money claims service giving the public the ability to make small claims online – with more than 37,000 claims made since its launch in March and user satisfaction at 90% – and a new system for applying for divorce online, which has cut errors in application forms from 40% to less than 1%.
- Introducing the 'Upskirting' Bill, protecting victims by making this invasive behaviour a criminal offence punishable by two years in prison.

[News story: NHS and schools in England will provide expert mental health support](#)

The new mental health support teams will be based in and near schools and colleges in 25 areas and will start giving support in 2019.

Each designated team will support up to 8,000 children and young people in around 20 schools and colleges in their 'trailblazer' area.

Mental health support teams will:

- build on support already in place from school counsellors, nurses, educational psychologists and the voluntary sector
- support children and young people with mild to moderate mental health issues
- help children and young people with more severe needs to access the right support, and provide a link to specialist NHS services

The Department for Education will also fund training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges to ensure a 'whole school' approach to mental health and wellbeing.

The first mental health support teams will begin their training in January 2019 at 7 universities nationwide.

The trailblazer sites will be set up in between one-fifth and one quarter of the country by 2023 to 2024.

One in nine young people aged 5 to 15 had a mental health condition in 2017. Teenagers with a mental disorder are more than twice as likely to have a mental disorder in adulthood.

Plans for further expansion of children and young people's mental health services will be set out in the NHS long-term plan.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

Children and young people with mental illness should receive the same level of support as those with physical illness.

Made possible by the extra £20.5 billion we are investing in the NHS, today's announcement will see the health and education systems come together so our children can access the help they need at school, and takes us a step closer to achieving our goal of parity between mental and physical health.

Minister for Mental Health, Inequalities and Suicide Prevention Jackie Doyle-Price said:

Early intervention is crucial when it comes to mental ill-health and today's announcement will ensure that young people can immediately access life-changing support when the signs of mental health issues first appear, helping to prevent these problems from escalating further into adulthood.

Encouraging young people to think about their mental wellbeing in the same way they do their physical aches and pains is a vital part of our goal to put mental and physical health on equal footing, and will help ensure no young person is left to suffer in silence.

It's estimated 1 in 4 of us has a common mental disorder at any one time – I'm confident that, by introducing improved access to critical care at a young age, we are delivering on our promise to help people lead healthier lives for longer and build an NHS that's fit for the future, which will be set out further in our long-term plan.