

# John McDonnell calls on Tories to stop using EU before Brexit to aide tax avoidance

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, calling on the Government not to block tax avoidance measures at the European Parliament following a vote last week when Tory MEPs voted to water down country-by-country reporting, said:

"Last week at the European Parliament Theresa May gave an insight into what a Tory Brexit will truly look like, as Tory MEPs voted to water down measures to clampdown on tax avoidance.

"Once again the Tories have shown their true colours on tax avoidance and evasion by voting to grant potentially permanent exemptions from scrutiny for large multinationals.

"Theresa May could have instructed her Tory MEPs to support public country-by-country reporting but has chosen not to; as she continues not to lead her party, but to be led by it.

"While the Tories say one thing on tax avoidance when they think the public is listening, they do another when they think no one is watching. Because deep down they really just want to turn our country into a tax haven off the coast of Europe.

"The Tories need to commit to stop using the European Parliament as a vehicle to block or hold up measures to clamp down on tax avoidance and evasion.

"Only a Labour Government would be prepared to work with our European neighbours in clamping down on tax evasion and avoidance, and introduce our Tax Transparency Enforcement Programme that would end the injustice where a few big corporations in our country are paying lower rates of tax than many of their employees."

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# Jeremy Corbyn letter to the Prime Minister regarding the independent public inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower

**Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party,** has

today written to the Prime Minister regarding the decision to hold a full and independent public inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower.

Jeremy Corbyn said:

“Whilst the inquiry should be limited to the awful events at Grenfell Tower, it must be empowered to consider all the steps that were, or were not, taken leading up to and contributing to this most terrible incident. It must also identify the urgent steps that need to be taken in relation to fire safety standards for other buildings of this nature.

“In addition to finding facts, the inquiry must be empowered to make recommendations for the avoidance of any similar future disaster – and in so doing, to consider recommendations arising from previous similar fire-related deaths.”

The full text of the letter is below.

Theresa  
May

16 June 2017

The  
Prime Minister

10  
Downing Street

London

SW1A 2AA

Dear  
Prime Minister,

I  
am writing to note your decision to hold a full and independent public  
inquiry  
into the fire at Grenfell Tower and to seek your assurance that the inquiry  
you  
establish will be held under the provisions of the 2005 Inquiries Act.

On  
the assumption that it is your intention to establish a 2005 Act Inquiry, I  
want to share my view that it is vital that the Terms of Reference be drawn  
with sufficient scope for the inquiry to establish all the relevant facts and  
to ensure that all necessary lessons are learned. Whilst the inquiry should  
be  
limited to the awful events at Grenfell Tower, it must be empowered to  
consider  
all the steps that were, or were not, taken leading up to and contributing to  
this most terrible incident. It must also identify the urgent steps that need  
to be taken in relation to fire safety standards for other buildings of this  
nature.

In  
addition to finding facts, the inquiry must be empowered to make  
recommendations for the avoidance of any similar future disaster – and in so  
doing, to consider recommendations arising from previous similar fire-related  
deaths.

It  
is very important that the Terms of Reference are drawn with sufficient scope  
to require the participation of all those with a legitimate interest – this  
should undoubtedly include the bereaved families, survivors and also  
individuals and organisations with a legitimate interest such as the  
residents'  
campaign and representative organisations who were involved in the period  
leading up to these events. Their views and experiences are as important, if  
not more so, as the expert opinions of state actors and their service  
providing  
contractors.

I am also  
very concerned to ensure that this public inquiry is not used to delay any  
parallel actions which might be taken by interested parties. It is important  
that justice is served in as comprehensive and timely way possible. This must  
include, of course, ensuring that legal funding is available to support those  
involved in the inquiry and any inquests. I would also like to support the  
request of the Mayor of London for an interim report to be produced which I  
believe is important for the community to feel as if justice is being done in  
a  
timely manner.

Whilst  
I believe that the policies and priorities of your government in the arenas  
of

social housing and public safety are legitimate targets for my criticism, I hope we both share a determination to discover the truths underpinning this tragedy so to avoid any repetition. For these reasons, in support of my hope to publicly welcome your decision, I would appreciate early consultation on your government's proposed inquiry Terms of Reference.

In response to my question yesterday, the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service made it very clear that survivors made homeless would be appropriately and locally rehoused. This is imperative in order that they be enabled to re-build their lives and have some hope of recovery from these devastating events. It now appears that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea may not be as committed to ensuring that all are re-housed locally. Your public re-commitment to this is imperative as part of an unequivocal, wider statement that the government will do all it can to provide timely practical support to those who have suffered so much. In this context, I note the announcement of the first government investment of £5million. Given the magnitude and scale of the crisis, this will clearly not be sufficient and I therefore await information regarding further funding plans.

On a related matter, I believe that an attitude of generosity and compassion in relation to the costs of funeral expenses and ensuring that it is possible for families living outside the UK to travel here to attend funerals, as well as participate in the inquiry, is also warranted in such a tragic situation. This is particularly the case given the circumstances of many of the Grenfell Tower residents, including the number of bereaved families who may be resident overseas and the costs of burial and cremation. As was also raised at yesterday's brief discussion in the Grand Committee, I would expect that the Home Office guarantees the replacement, as a matter of urgent priority, of all documentation for those affected.

Finally, on behalf of all those in the Labour Party, may I express our admiration for those in the emergency services who responded with the utmost courage and professionalism and share our deepest sorrow at these harrowing events – and commit that we will do all in our power to ensure that this be the last such tragedy of its kind in our country.

Yours  
sincerely,

Jeremy  
Corbyn

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# The Government must lift the housing revenue account borrowing cap to free councils to undertake urgent retrofitting work – John McDonnell

**John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor,**  
commenting on  
the Grenfell Tower fire, said:

"The tragic fire that occurred on Grenfell Tower must never be allowed to happen again. The lessons of Camberwell, Shepherds Bush and Southampton have not been learned, and it is the responsibility of government to provide solutions.

"The Government must now as a matter of urgency lift the housing revenue account borrowing cap to free councils to undertake the urgent retrofitting work required on all existing housing stock found not to meet required safety standards.

"Councils must also be given the power, as Labour's housing manifesto pledges to do, to borrow to invest in council housing on the scale necessary to allow all those living in homes deemed to be unsafe to be properly rehoused.

"The next Labour Government will take any and all steps required to address the critical housing crisis in our country. Labour have pledged to invest to build over a million new homes over the course of the next parliament. Within five years, our manifesto commits to building at least 100,000 council and housing association homes a year for genuinely affordable rent or sale."

Ends

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## Jeremy Corbyn statement- Grenfell Tower fire

**Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party said:**

"I feel very angry that it was possible for the fire to spread in the way it did. I feel very angry that so many lives have been lost when the system didn't work.

"The many residents I met today are very angry too; their concerns about the building were not responded to and their questions were not answered.

"They asked me to speak for them when I get back to Parliament and I will make sure I do, alongside their new MP Emma Dent Coad.

"There are thousands of tower blocks around our country. Every single person living in one today will be frightened. They need answers to provide them with security and peace of mind.

"Kensington is a tale of two cities – it is among the wealthiest parts of this country but the ward where this took place is one of the poorest.

"The judge-led public inquiry must be speedy and all residents should have access to legal aid and the support they need.

"Residents must also be re-housed, using requisition of empty properties if necessary, in the community they love.

"I would like to give thanks to the firefighters who risked their lives to save the lives of others, and the police and the paramedics who did the same.

"Some hard questions need to be answered. It cannot be right that in the 21st century a fire like this happens.

"It's the responsibility of Government to tell us why the lessons of Camberwell, Southampton and Shepherds Bush have not been learned.

"There must be a proper ministerial statement in the Commons when the Commons is once again sitting and the Government must also immediately make sure the families affected have the resources they need."

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## **Labour reaffirms commitment to tackling illegal air quality on National Clean Air Day**

Commenting on the first National Clean Air Day in the UK, **Sue Hayman, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** said:

"With nearly 40 million people in Britain living in areas with illegal levels of air pollution and more than 2,000 schools and nurseries

close

to roads with damaging levels of diesel fumes, the first ever National Clean Air Day today is a timely and welcome reminder of the scale of the problem of illegal air quality in the UK.

“Labour welcomes this first National Clean Air Day to raise awareness about the need to cut harmful vehicle emissions and fight pollution.

“On this National Clean Air Day, Labour reaffirms our commitment to bringing forward a new Clean Air Act and calls on the government to stop ducking and diving on this issue and take responsibility to end the public health scandal of poor air quality.”