



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Alex Norris MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary
of State for Justice

Nick Timothy MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

28 October 2026

Dear Nick,

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

I am writing in response to your letter of 1 October regarding the Deputy Chief Magistrate.

As a matter of constitutional principle, the merits of judicial decisions are matters for the courts and, where appropriate, appellate courts, rather than for ministers or MPs. Allegations regarding the conduct of judicial office holders are considered through the prescribed procedures of the independent judicial complaints system, with disciplinary outcomes determined jointly by the Lady Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor.

I am aware that some of the issues you raise have previously been addressed in accordance with established procedures. In particular, the social media incident mentioned in your letter was referred to the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office, and resulted in the Lady Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor at the time issuing a formal warning. This decision was published on the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office website. The judicial decisions made by Judge Ikram are, like all judicial decisions, subject to the ordinary appellate process. It would not be appropriate for me to interfere with or seek to revisit those decisions.

I recognise that people will not always agree with judicial decisions and will want to debate them; this is a healthy feature of a vibrant democracy. But personalised criticism of individual judges, particularly where it relies on selective reporting or omits relevant context, as you have done, risks undermining public confidence in the ability of judges to decide cases independently and impartially.

At a time when judicial office holders, along with others in public life, are facing increasing security concerns, all those participating in public debate should be mindful of the wider environment in which that debate takes place. Judges, unlike politicians, are constrained in their ability to respond publicly to personal criticism. Those of us in prominent positions therefore have a particular responsibility to ensure that legitimate scrutiny does not become personal attack.

Judicial independence is a cornerstone of the rule of law. Whatever our political differences, we have a shared responsibility to defend it, and to ensure that our public debate respects the independence of judges and their ability to decide the cases before them without fear or favour. I would ask that you refrain from mounting this kind of dangerous public criticism in future.

Given that you chose to publish your correspondence to me, and in light of the wider public interest in this issue, I am placing my response in the public domain and will deposit a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

RT HON ALEX NORRIS MP

**LORD CHANCELLOR AND
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE**