

Fascist Tommy Robinson jailed for jeopardising rape trial in Leeds

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Fascist demagogue Tommy Robinson was sentenced to nine months in prison yesterday, after the High Court found him guilty of contempt of court. But his sentence was reduced to 19 weeks due to time already served, and he will be released in half that time.

Robinson arrived at his sentencing hearing backed by hundreds of far-right demonstrators, wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the words “Convicted of journalism.” But the High Court’s ruling confirmed that Robinson’s provocative actions jeopardised an ongoing rape trial in Leeds, infringing the due process rights of all parties. His sole interest in the case was to incite anti-Muslim hatred.

Robinson was found guilty of contempt on three grounds: for breaching court reporting restrictions, for livestreaming outside the court’s entrance in a manner that risked impeding the course of justice, and for his aggressive actions towards defendants “thereby directly interfering with the course of justice.”

He was arrested in May 2018 for “aggressively confronting and filming” defendants at a child grooming trial at Leeds Crown Court. Robinson defied temporary court reporting restrictions to livestream a fascist rant against “Muslim paedophiles” and “Muslim rapists” while the jury was considering its verdict.

Robinson’s livestream risked aborting the trial—the second of three “linked” child grooming cases in Huddersfield—with the judgment stating that “counsel for two of the defendants applied unsuccessfully for the discharge of the jury, relying among other things on the way in which the respondent had confronted the defendants and the allegedly prejudicial nature of what had been said.”

According to press reports, Robinson came close to collapsing the trial after a jury member “mentioned”

Robinson’s actions. The *Independent* reported that counsel for five of the defendants appealed for the jury’s dismissal, telling the judge it was “inconceivable” that Robinson’s livestream had not come to the jurors’ attention. Judge Marson QC rejected their request and refused to question the jury on the matter.

Robinson’s actions were an assault on fundamental democratic rights. He incited violence against defendants who were legally entitled to the presumption of innocence. The judgment quoted excerpts from Robinson’s livestream in which he appealed to viewers, “You want to harass someone’s family? You see that man who was getting aggressive as he walked into court, the man who faces charges of child abduction, rape, prostitution—harass him, find him, go knock on his door, follow him, see where he works, see what he’s doing.”

His appeal to lynch-mob “justice” was clear. In an exchange that was subsequently viewed more than 3.5 million times, a passerby tells Robinson of a male defendant he has just attacked on camera, “hang him.”

Robinson’s actions created a “real and substantial” risk of violence against the defendants, the court found. One defendant did later abscond after a protest by Robinson’s supporters, with the High Court finding “there was plainly a real risk that the defendants awaiting jury verdicts would see themselves as at risk, feel intimidated, and that this would have a significant adverse impact on their ability to participate in the closing stages of the trial. That in itself would represent a serious impediment to the course of justice.”

The High Court rejected Robinson’s “elaborate” and “inconsistent” claims to have “researched” and “made enquiries” about whether court reporting restrictions were active. Robinson claimed he had looked online

and sent a colleague to check screens and a court door inside the building before he started filming at 8:32 a.m.—a claim he made for the first time in October 2018, “months after the event.” The High Court found Robinson’s scenario was a physical impossibility. Moreover, Robinson had stated in his livestream, “Now there is a reporting restriction on this case.”

Robinson deliberately courted his own arrest. His livestream included the following admission: “I am walking a thin line because basically the police put on a suspended prison sentence...if the police can pin anything on me, I’ll be going to jail for three months.”

Later that day, Robinson was found guilty of contempt with Judge Marson imposing a 13-month custodial sentence. This was overturned on procedural grounds with the case referred to the attorney general, who ordered fresh proceedings in the public interest.

Over the past 14 months, Robinson’s contempt case has been seized on by an international network of fascist and far-right politicians who have boosted him as a “free speech martyr.”

Ezra Levant’s Rebel Media, US think tank the Middle East Forum and the Gatestone Foundation, backed by key Trump supporters, have funnelled money and support to Robinson. Their repeated claims that Robinson is the “victim” of a state conspiracy to protect Muslims from “justice” have been used to boost Robinson’s bank account, with the former English Defence League founder having raised an estimated £2 million since May last year.

On Monday, Robinson issued a video appeal to US President Donald Trump calling for “political asylum.”

“I feel like I’m two days away from being sentenced to death in the UK, for journalism,” Robinson claimed. “I’m calling on the help of Donald Trump, his administration and the Republican Party to grant me and my family political asylum in the United States of America.”

Robinson’s video underlined the backing he enjoys from the world’s most powerful state, reaching into the office of the president of the United States. In May of last year, Trump’s son Donald Jr. tweeted in support of Robinson while former Trump adviser Steve Bannon described Robinson as “the backbone of this country.” Since his arrest in Britain, Robinson has been hired by UKIP leader Gerard Batten as a political adviser.

In Monday’s video to Trump, Robinson recalled that

“Congressmen from the Republican Party” had “stepped in to put pressure on the British government” over his jailing last year. “Now it’s not pressure that’s needed—I need evacuation out of this country.”

His video was launched on the fascistic InfoWars channel presented by Alex Jones. The segment’s filthy fascist rantings included claims that British Muslims were killing English girls and selling their flesh in doner kebabs. Underscoring the connections that exist between the Trump White House and a myriad of far-right networks, Jones promised that Trump and his fascist adviser Stephen Miller would “probably get five minutes to watch this.”

Robinson’s appeal to Trump for political asylum forms an obscene contrast to the ongoing state persecution of WikiLeaks journalist Julian Assange. Hailed by Robinson as the “leader of the free world,” Trump heads an administration that has brought Espionage Act charges against Assange with a prison term of 175 years. In 2010, Trump stated that Assange should face the death penalty.



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