

# Cabinet resignations seek ouster of Boris Johnson

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Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Health Secretary Sajid Javid quit their ministerial roles today to force out Boris Johnson as prime minister.

The move comes from two senior cabinet members at various times advanced as leadership challengers. The immediate reason cited is Johnson's appointment of Chris Pincher as deputy chief whip in February this year, despite Johnson knowing of sexual misconduct allegations against him. But it brings to a new pitch the civil war within the Conservative party after months of scandal over drinks parties during lockdowns that have led to the Tories haemorrhaging support even in their heartlands.

Sajid Javid said in his statement that the British people "rightly expect integrity from their government," declaring that the electorate no longer viewed the government as either "popular" or "competent in acting in the national interest... The vote of confidence last month showed that a large number of our colleagues agree."

Sunak announced his resignation within half an hour on Twitter, in almost identical terms, writing, "The public rightly expect government to be conducted properly, competently and seriously."

These resignations alone--and half a dozen more have followed though not yet at ministerial level--make it difficult for Johnson to continue in office. More cabinet ministers will resign and Johnson "will be shown the door", said Tory MP Andrew Bridgen.

The Pincher scandal has been made worse by proving once again that Johnson is a compulsive and serial liar.

On 5 November 2017, Pincher resigned as an Assistant Whip and referred himself to the party's complaints procedure and the police, after being accused of sexual assault by former Olympic rower and Conservative candidate Alex Story. He was also

accused of "touching up" former Labour MP Tom Blenkinsop but was found to have not breached the code of conduct.

Pincher was finally forced to resign as Deputy Chief Whip on June 30 after admitting to groping two men while drunk at the Carlton private members' club, a Tory haunt. Other allegations have since emerged.

Johnson was reportedly so aware of Pincher's behaviour that he called him "handsy", with the prime minister's arch enemy Dominic Cummings saying that he joked, "Pincher by name, pincher by nature" in 2020.

But Johnson once again tried to brazen things out at the expense of his MPs. On July 1, Number 10 said Johnson had not been aware of any "specific allegations" against Pincher before appointing him. Pincher was suspended two days later. Leading allies continued to claim until July 4 that Johnson was ignorant of the specific allegations, but that day his official spokesperson said he knew of previous "allegations... that were either resolved or did not progress to a formal complaint" but "it was deemed not appropriate to stop an appointment simply because of unsubstantiated allegations".

Johnson, through Paymaster General Michael Ellis, was finally forced to admit yesterday to being briefed on previous allegations, while claiming he could not "recall this" after the latest allegations emerged and "bitterly regrets" not acting on the information. He admitted, "About three years ago there was a complaint made against Chris Pincher in the Foreign Office... I was briefed on what had happened and if I had my time again I'd think back on it and I'd realise he wasn't going to learn a lesson and he wasn't going to change." In hindsight, he said, giving Pincher a government role as deputy chief whip "was the wrong thing to do". In a

BBC interview, Johnson blamed his own team for “saying things on my behalf or trying to say things about what I did or didn’t know.”

It is highly likely that this latest scandal could tip the balance of forces against Johnson, although that could still take time. During a cabinet meeting earlier, photographers and reporters were let in. Sebastian Payne, Whitehall editor of the *Financial Times*, said “You could see the faces of [Johnson allies] Jacob Rees Mogg, Nadine Dorries... they were looking stony. Their personal reputations have taken the hit, as well as the prime minister and as well as the rest of the government.” Warning of a domino effect of any prominent resignation before Javid and Sunak acted, he added, “I think eventually the rules of political gravity do kick in.”

The former head of the Civil Service Lord Kerslake said it was “inconceivable” that those around the PM were also unaware of the sexual misconduct claims. He endorsed a letter sent to Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards Kathryn Stone from former Foreign Office official and bitter enemy of Johnson, Sir Simon [Lord] McDonald, saying, “The original No 10 line is not true and the modification is still not accurate.”

Leading backbencher Sir Roger Gale used the same letter to insist that the Conservatives need to change their rules to allow a fresh vote of confidence in Johnson to go ahead. Under the existing rules of the 1922 committee of backbench Tory MPs, Johnson’s surviving a no-confidence vote last month should give him a year’s grace before another can be called. But moves are already underway to change the composition of the committee’s executive in upcoming elections.

The latest scandal has prompted Sir Keir Starmer to call variously for a change in government and for Tory MPs to act in the national interest and remove him, and a call for a general election from Blairite chair of the Commons Standards Committee Chris Bryant.

This raises essential issues for workers.

Johnson’s opponents are demanding even tougher measures against the working class under conditions of the deepest crisis facing British and world capitalism since the 1930s. In his own resignation letter, Sunak indicated his latest disagreement with Johnson was over how far to go in imposing austerity against the working class. “[O]ur country is facing immense challenges. I publicly believe the public are ready to hear that truth,”

he wrote. “Our people know that if something is too good to be true then it’s not true. They need to know that whilst there is a path to a better future, it is not an easy one. In preparation for our proposed joint speech on the economy next week, it has become clear to me that our approaches are fundamentally too different.”

Likewise, the Labour Party is most concerned with proving to the ruling elite that it will do nothing to endanger the “national interest”—a code word for supporting savage attacks on workers and the looting of the economy by the major corporations, suppressing strikes, eviscerating democratic rights and waging war against Russia and China.

Bringing down Johnson and his despised government is the responsibility of the working class. It demands the escalation of the class struggle already being waged by rail and postal workers, civil servants and others to encompass health workers, teachers, council workers and others now demanding action to defend their livelihoods, into a general strike.



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