

UK State reply to alert “Lawsuit Against Swedish Outlet Realtid Filed in London”

The case referred to in this alert has been brought in the High Court in London in accordance with established procedures for determining jurisdiction and will be decided by the court on its merits. In general terms, the UK Government believes that the right to speak freely and debate issues without fear of censure is a vital part of a democratic society, and that libel proceedings should not be used to impede and frustrate that debate. For that reason it made significant changes in the Defamation Act 2013 to rebalance the law in England and Wales to offer more effective protection for freedom of speech, including the introduction of a serious harm test, which raises the bar for bringing a claim so that only cases involving serious harm to the claimant’s reputation can proceed. The law also offers a range of defences to defamation proceedings, including defences of truth, honest opinion, and a public interest defence designed to protect responsible journalism on matters of public interest. At the same time, it is important to ensure that people who have been unjustly defamed are not left without effective remedies where their reputation has been seriously harmed. The core aim underlying the Act was therefore to ensure that the right balance was achieved, so that free speech is not unjustifiably impeded, while ensuring that people who have been unjustly defamed are able to protect their reputation.