

Media Outlets Facing Libel Claims from Kazakhstani Endowment Fund

A free press is important and is one of the cornerstones of our democracy.

The UK Government is committed to protect the right to speak freely, and have brought forward clauses that will tackle strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) that relate to economic crime in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill. These measures will introduce a statutory definition of a SLAPP claim, and an early dismissal mechanism to strike out claims where the claimant cannot show the claim is likely to succeed at trial. Where claims do proceed, defendants will be protected from adverse costs. These measures will give the courts greater powers to deal with lawsuits aimed at stifling freedom of speech and stopping journalists from exposing economic crime, neutralising the chilling effect of exorbitant legal costs. The Government intend to legislate for broader SLAPPs reform when parliamentary time allows.

Beyond legislation, the Government is committed to ensuring that journalists within the UK are able to operate free from violence, abuse and harassment. The UK set up the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists with the goal of ensuring journalist safety in the UK and launched a National Action Plan for the safety of journalists in March 2021.

HMG cannot comment on the specifics of ongoing proceedings.