

Amber Rudd resigns after misleading Parliament

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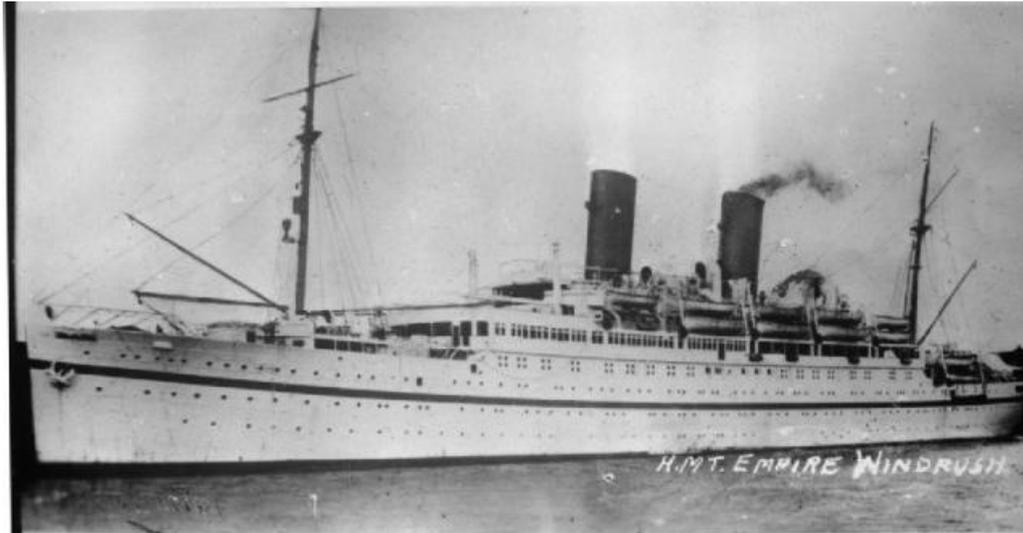


Image: Royal Navy official photographer

Amber Rudd was forced to resign from the Cabinet on 29 April after admitting that she “inadvertently” misled Parliament about whether the Home Office had removal targets for illegal immigrants. The former Home Secretary had been facing increased pressure from the Opposition over the Windrush scandal and the accusation that she had strengthened the “hostile environment” towards illegal immigration in the Home Office.

The Windrush scandal revolves around the immigration of workers from former British colonies to Britain following World War II, as Britain faced a major labour shortage. These immigrants under the British Nationality Act of 1948 were given full rights of citizenship and residency in the UK, however over half a century later these immigrants found themselves being told they had to prove they were British despite many not having any of the necessary documents. Multiple British citizens were nearly deported and it’s unclear if any have been wrongly deported. Public outrage at the scandal has grown as it has become more apparent that the same generation that came to help re-build Britain, leaving all they knew behind, are not being treated like the heroes they are. Instead, they are being treated as potential illegal immigrants and in some instances are being denied access to health-care, even having to prove their nationality in order to rent a house or open a bank account. It was after being summoned to the Home Affairs Select Committee for questioning about this scandal that Amber Rudd said that the Home Office did not have specific deportation targets, saying “that’s not how we operate.” However, shortly after, a leaked memo prepared for Rudd and other high-ranking Home Office officials contradicted this, which read: “we have exceeded our target of assisted returns.” Rudd faced a further blow when a letter signed by her and sent to the Prime Minister was leaked in which Amber Rudd stated she had the “aim of increasing the number of enforced removals by more than 10 per cent over the next few years.”

Later that night Amber Rudd resigned, stating that she had “inadvertently” misled parliament following revelations about local targets for assisted removals. Unfortunately for Rudd this was a checkmate situation; if she was aware of the targets she purposefully lied to Parliament and if she wasn't then there would be claims that she didn't know what is going on in her own department and wasn't in control. One thing this does confirm is just how dangerous the Home Office is for politicians, as Amber Rudd – formerly seen by some as a potential party leader – becomes the latest to have their career brought down while in the role of Home Secretary.

The resignation of Amber Rudd is a blow to Theresa May, and marks the loss of arguably her closest ally in the Cabinet which will now be dramatically different following the promotion of Sajid Javid as the new Home Secretary, notably the first BAME person to hold this position. Contrary to Rudd, Javid has not shared a close relationship with May, he was one of her most fierce critics at the first cabinet meeting following the disastrous 2017 General election result and has already stated that May's phrase “hostile environment” is “a phrase that is unhelpful and does not represent the values as a country.” This willingness to openly challenge May's legacy at the Home Office could prove challenging for May, who has lost four cabinet ministers in the past six months, three of whom were close allies. Rudd's departure from the cabinet also removes one of the most vocal Remainers, tilting the balance of the cabinet ever so slightly towards a harder Brexit. As a new Home Secretary arriving in the midst of a scandal Sajid Javid has his work cut out, however he may be the first step in the Conservatives drawing a line under the Windrush scandal. Javid spoke of how, when he heard about the scandal, as the son of a Pakistani immigrant he thought that it could've been his family being threatened with deportation.

This empathy will resonate and help the Party recover and improve its image among minority groups. Looking ahead Javid has some large challenges: as Home Secretary he is responsible for keeping safe a country whose terror level is at 'Severe', a country facing a 20 per cent year on year increase in violent crime according to police figures and will be closely involved in the continued investigation into the Salisbury nerve agent attack. Javid only needs to look at his predecessor to see how risky the position of Home Secretary is, but if he looks at the predecessor before that he can also see the opportunities and doors this position can open.



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