

# PRESS RELEASE

## Safer Renting 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 – For immediate release

### **99 out of 100 Criminal landlords getting away with illegal - one eviction every hour**

Safer Renting has published its second, updated annual count of illegal eviction and harassment cases in England and Wales. The report finds that:

1. In 2021 the number of illegal evictions identified nationally was 7,778, forcing another household on the street every 67 minutes during the pandemic.
2. In 2022, this number rose by over 19% to 8,748 offences under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977
3. Ministry of Justice figures for prosecutions suggest that, take together with this count of offences, 99 out of 100 offenders avoid prosecution

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#### **Karen Buck MP for Westminster North commented:**

"This report by Safer Renting shows more of what is known about the continuing plague of illegal evictions: the data suggests a near 20% increase in offences year on year. Like other forms of domestic abuse, illegal eviction often takes place out of sight, involving violence. It is the most brutal of robberies. It takes away home and it destroys peace of mind. The life-changing consequences stay with adults as well as children. Clauses in the Renters Reform Bill give us a once in a lifetime opportunity to put new deterrence in place for landlords contemplating illegal eviction. This report shows 99 out of 100 landlords who offend in this way get away with it - a new duty on local authorities to prosecute them, will I hope bring an end to this inhumanity. "

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#### **Human impact of illegal eviction and harassment**

It is hard to overstate the dreadful violation and lasting trauma of illegal eviction and harassment, the loss of a home sometimes with no warning, sometimes with possessions including personal ID stolen or left on the street; other times the warning that did come involves weeks of harassment, for example cutting the water, heating or power supply, as well as physical violence.

Many victims of illegal eviction are unable to secure statutory assistance and may be left street homeless; for those who are rehoused, it is often very difficult for them to ever feel safe in their 'home' again.

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## Case Study

Majid, now 40, came to Britain as a refugee 14 years ago after his mother and brother were murdered. He has been working and renting a home in London ever since.

"I have a lot of baggage", he says "but I live my life with grace. Only eternal factors make me angry".

This year a progressive disabling illness which caused such severe pain meant he was offered surgery, but while waiting for the operation, his landlord of 4 years started demanding he move out.

"Landlord had a relative who wanted the room to stay in for her holiday visit from the Philippines. I tried but couldn't find another rental, and I got more and more depressed because I was sick and he was harassing me.

"In September I was at an appointment with my surgeon, I got a text from the landlord saying "Thanks for moving out. I've changed the locks". I went home and kept texting the landlord and calling the police asking to be let in. I couldn't get my medication or inhaler. I thought I was going to die. I couldn't breathe. I was lying on the ground having palpitations. For 5 days I stayed outside and the landlord didn't answer. The police just said 'it's a civil matter.

"On the fifth day the landlord sent his grandson to let me get my belongings which were stuffed in black plastic bags in the hallway, but all my valuables had been taken.

"I couldn't work, I couldn't earn, I couldn't breathe - because of him. I am probably garbage: people can do anything to me."

Majid is now on anti-depressants, staying in temporary accommodation

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## The data

Our data on illegal eviction or harassment has again been collated using information provided by the government's homelessness records, the Legal Aid Agency, Citizens Advice, Shelter and Safer Renting.

This second national count provides our first trend information which shows a 19% increase in the number of recorded complaints of offences under the Protection from Eviction Act. Like the 2021 count, our 2022 count likely underestimates the real scale of the problem because it does not capture data for the very many tenants who did not report the crime at all; the cases where a report was made but the police did not record it; or the cases where victims sought advice from non-statutory agencies where records are not maintained and/or shared with government.

## Safer Renting's call to action

Safer Renting is urging the government to consider the findings of this updated report when considering the final form of Renters Reform Bill into law.

Key clauses in the Bill and support needs include:

1. New statutory duty on local authorities to prosecute cases of illegal eviction and harassment.
2. Landlord Registration scheme to track all who must be held accountable for respecting Renters' rights
3. Resources to bring trained local authority tenancy relations officers to protect private rented sector tenants who suffer illegal eviction or harassment.
4. New commitment from the police to intervene to uphold renters' rights

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**The Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development, Tom Copley, said:**

"This latest report from Safer Renting paints a shocking picture of the scale of illegal evictions across the country. For far too long, rogue landlords have been able to take advantage of the fact that there have been few protections in place to safeguard renters from illegal evictions.

"The Mayor is doing everything in his power to clamp down on criminal landlords and make renting safer for Londoners as part of his work to build a better London for everyone. This includes launching London's first-ever 'Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker' and the flagship 'Report a Rogue Landlord' tool to make it easier for London's 2.7m renters to report rogue landlords. Following work with City Hall and renting organisations, the Met Police have introduced new guidance for frontline officers to protect renters, including a new presumption against eviction.

"The Government must urgently pass the long-awaited Renters Reform Bill in its entirety and ensure that proposals to abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions are implemented immediately, to ensure there are stronger legal protections in place for renters in London and across the country."

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**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

1. Media Enquires: Roz Spencer, 07539 326012 [rspencer@ch1889.org](mailto:rspencer@ch1889.org)
2. To find out more about Safer Renting please visit <https://ch1889.org/safer-renting>
3. Safer Renting is a service established by Cambridge House in 2015 to protect the rights of private rented sector tenants exploited and victimised by criminal Landlords. In 2020 it published the award-winning report "Journeys in the Shadow Private Rented Sector".

Safer Renting:

- Works in partnership with local authorities and the police to intervene in illegal evictions and prevent homelessness.
  - Provides access to justice for victimised tenants.
  - Inform the development of public policy by undertaking research that exposes the activities of criminal landlords and the devastating impact on vulnerable families.
4. Cambridge House was established in 1889 as a social action charity tackling poverty, social injustice and social inequity across London: company number 105006, charity number 265103. For more information please visit: <https://ch1889.org/>

