

Amnesty International Condemns Johnson Government

By [True Publica](#)

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Amnesty International has catalogued how the actions of Boris Johnson's Conservative government led to the deaths of thousands of elderly people in care homes during the first stage of the coronavirus pandemic.

Amnesty's [report](#) was largely ignored by the media or relegated to inside pages. Yet it presents evidence that the government's policy of herd immunity was responsible for what could easily be [accepted](#) by many families as little more than mass murder. The government was entirely aware of the probable outcome of their policy and went ahead regardless of the risk to thousands of lives.

The report, "[As if expendable: The UK government's failure to protect older people in care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic](#)", details how, between March 2 and June 12, 18,562 residents of care homes in England died with COVID-19. The vast majority (18,168) were aged 65 and over, representing almost 40 per cent of all deaths involving the virus in England during this time frame. Of these, 76 per cent (13,844 deaths) occurred within care homes for the elderly.

In the meantime, the care home industry is literally on the brink – with many going out of business at a crucial time. A typical story was [published](#) recently in the mainstream media about an 85-year-old resident at Newfield Nursing Home in Sheffield, where 25 people living there died with the virus after more than 110 residents and staff members tested positive. The result is that the care home is closing for good, with 38 nurses and carers facing redundancy.

And it is as if the lessons from the first wave were completely ignored, as Boris Johnson has decided that the very same [strategy](#) should take place once again.

Even the right-wing Daily Mail wrote in dismay last week – "*Care homes are once again being asked to take in elderly hospital patients infected with coronavirus to protect the NHS from being overwhelmed this winter. The sensational decision has sparked widespread fears No 10 has not learnt from its catastrophic errors during the first wave of the pandemic, which led to the disease killing tens of thousands of elderly residents.*"

Amnesty International said through its Crisis Response team – "*A series of "shockingly irresponsible" Government decisions put tens of thousands of older people's lives at risk and led to multiple violations of care home residents.*" Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International UK went on to say:

“The Government made a series of shockingly irresponsible decisions which abandoned care home residents to die. ... The appalling death toll was entirely avoidable – it is a scandal of monumental proportions.”

Amnesty International UK has launched a [new campaign](#) calling for a full independent public Inquiry into the pandemic, with an interim phase starting immediately focusing on older people in care homes.

Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International’s Senior Crisis Response Adviser, said:

“It is as if care home residents were seen as expendable. Despite thousands of empty beds they were de-prioritized when it came to getting access to hospital care, and had blanket do not resuscitate orders imposed on them without due process. Such abuses are deeply disturbing. It is imperative that lessons are learned so that the same mistakes are not repeated, and that those responsible for such disastrous decisions are held accountable.”

Amnesty received multiple reports of care home residents’ right to NHS services – including access to general medical services and hospital admission – being denied during the pandemic. Care home staff and relatives told Amnesty how sending residents to hospital was discouraged or outright refused.

The son of one care home resident who passed away in Cumbria said that sending his father to hospital had not even been considered:

“From day one, the care home was categoric it was probably COVID and he would die of it and he would not be taken to hospital. He only had a cough at that stage. He was only 76 and was in great shape physically. He loved to go out and it would not have been a problem for him to go to hospital. The care home called me and said he had symptoms, a bit of a cough and that doctor had assessed him over mobile phone and he would not be taken to hospital. Then I spoke to the GP later that day and said he would not be taken to hospital but would be given morphine if in pain... He died a week later.”

Amnesty received multiple reports right across the country of doctors refusing to enter care homes and only being available for consultations by phone or video call, regardless of a sick resident’s symptoms or even in the case of end-of-life support.

The misuse of ‘Do Not Resuscitate’ forms, inadequate access to testing, insufficient PPE and the devastating impact of prolonged isolation were also highlighted in Amnesty’s report.

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