

UK Government in Crisis as Public Anger Grows Over Dominic Cummings

By [Johanna Ross](#)

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Boris Johnson and his trusty advisor Dominic Cummings are finished. That's the consensus much of the country has come to as people from all sides of the political spectrum joined together over the weekend to demand Dominic Cummings' resignation. Twitter was swamped by the hashtag #CummingsMustGo, as politicians and the public alike questioned why it was that the Prime Minister's advisor was able to breach the strict lockdown conditions and get away with it? Further still, the Prime Minister and his entourage even went as far as to defend his actions.

The advice from the government at the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak in the UK was clear: stay at home, and only travel if absolutely essential. People were allowed out once a day for exercise and to buy groceries. And if you experience symptoms of Covid-19, you must stay at home for 14 days. But it emerged on Friday that Dominic Cummings, the controversial right-hand man of the Prime Minister, had travelled 250 miles north of his London home in late March this year, to stay with his parents in Durham. Over the course of this weekend, further evidence has emerged that Mr Cummings, far from staying at home, was out and about in the north of England, far away from his London home, where he should have been self-isolating, as according to the government's own guidelines.

On Sunday night a video was published by the Guardian newspaper on Twitter showing police officers approach Mr Cummings' London home, and it has been reported that the aide may be investigated for breaching the lockdown restrictions, after yet another witness came forward claiming to have seen him in town of Barnard Castle on 12th April. If witness statements to date are correct, then Mr Cummings made two separate trips in the 14 day period when he should have been self-isolating from coronavirus.

In his defence, Mr Cummings has said that he needed to visit his parents for childcare reasons, but since then other grounds have been given for why he decided to visit his elderly parents, including the death of a relative. But the reality is that the reasons so far given by Cummings, and cabinet ministers, who have all rallied around him in his defence, are not in keeping with lockdown restrictions. Many have pointed out that Cummings' sister-in-law lives nearby in London and that there are childcare services available in the area where he lives for key workers – which of course he is, as a government employee.

The issue is only escalating. For a public already weary and frustrated after weeks and weeks of lockdown, Dominic Cummings has become a figure of hate. Why should the public adhere to these rules if the elite themselves do not? And at the very moment when the Prime Minister should have put public trust before his advisor's position, he did not. No apology, no condemnation, only excuses from Boris Johnson. The PM at the daily coronavirus

briefing even went as far as to say he believed Cummings had acted with 'responsibly, legally and with integrity' – words that surely Johnson will come to regret. At a time when the country very badly needed to hear that the public were being put before Dominic Cummings, it was told the opposite. A huge PR fail for Boris Johnson.

'Failed' was the very word used by opposition leader, Sir Keir Starmer, who put out a video message on Sunday evening, saying 'This was a test of the Prime Minister and he has failed it. It is an insult to sacrifices made by the British people that Boris Johnson has chosen to take no action against Dominic Cummings.' However it was not just opposition MPs turned against Johnson over this issue. One Tory MP told Sky News' [Beth Rigby](#) much the same: 'Frankly I feel disgusted on how a Conservative PM can treat decent people who have sacrificed so much with such contempt.' Another Minister said that during Johnson's press conference they saw "the PM's authority with the British people drain away before [their] very eyes'.

This is the major point here – that Boris Johnson has now lost the confidence of the British people at a time when it is needed most, when we are being asked to comply with the strictest of measures during a pandemic. Cabinet colleagues have expressed deep concern that the decision to back Cummings could actually '[cost lives](#)' as people no longer feel it necessary to adhere to a lockdown being breached by its very designers. Politically, it's clear that Johnson is '[done](#)'. How can he possibly survive a scandal where he put an advisor before the interests of the public?

There are also questions being raised as to why the PM is so vehemently defending this unelected colleague, who is not even a member of the Conservative party? It's been suggested that in fact, without Cummings, Johnson is nothing, that all along it has been Dominic Cummings calling the shots. He was the Leave campaign strategist who 'secured' a Brexit win, he created the 'Get Brexit Done' message which saw Johnson elected in December. However, these successes have come at a price. On Cummings' watch, the Leave campaign was accused of making up statistics, Johnson effectively lied to the Queen to prorogue parliament during the Brexit negotiations and even before this current scandal, he was facing criticism for reacting slowly to the coronavirus pandemic, favouring instead a policy of 'herd immunity' advocated by Cummings. It is therefore debatable just how helpful Cummings' advice is to Boris Johnson. What is clear though, is that Johnson values it deeply, to the extent of sacrificing his own career as a result.

If Johnson is to have any possibility of a recovery, he simply has to sack Dominic Cummings. But so far there is no sign of this happening. On Monday morning it was reported in the Daily Telegraph there was a 'cabinet reshuffle' to limit Dominic Cummings' influence. However this is not enough for an angry British public, tormented after weeks incarcerated at home. The man who only a few weeks ago was being prayed for as he lay in intensive care is at risk of turning himself into the enemy the British people. He needs to act now, if he is to have any chance of saving his legacy.

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Johanna Ross is a journalist based in Edinburgh, Scotland.

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