



THE  TIMES

Home

UK

World

Comment

Life & Style

Business & Money

Sport

Culture

Travel



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Times letters: Challenges to Keir Starmer's leadership of Labour

• NEW

[Letters to the Editor](#) | Thursday November 13 2025, 12.01am GMT, The Times

Military lawfare

Sir, It is not the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill that will weaken our armed forces, it is the calls for the UK to come out of the European convention on human rights (ECHR) — which would amount to a huge diminution in rights protection for our service personnel — that pose the greater threat (“Generals decry lawfare’s effect on warfare”, Nov 11; [letter, Nov 12](#)). Moreover, it is wrong to make special pleading based on the egregious mistakes of the early years of the Troubles or indeed until the Afghanistan review has reported.

The UK’s armed forces must operate within the bounds of national and international law, including the ECHR, and they have the training and accountability mechanisms to do that: something that was clearly absent in the early years of the Troubles. The ECHR does not second-guess a tactical commander’s decisions. Rather, it protects our forces fighting overseas and at home; requires that they be given reasonably safe equipment; ensures proper investigations into alleged abuse; and allows bereaved military families to get answers when their loved ones (like Jaysley Beck) die during service. It also protects those we detain with good reason. One need only think about the torture and killing by British soldiers of the Iraqi hotel receptionist Baha Moussa, or some of the allegations being investigated at the inquiry into UK special forces in Afghanistan, to appreciate how vital it is that allegations of abuse are independently investigated.

Our armed forces work hard to uphold the rule of law, which underpins their values and standards. They accept that they are both bound by it and protected by it.

Brigadier (ret’d) John Donnelly, chair of trustees, and **Emma Norton**, director, Centre for Military Justice