

Starmer Calls Teen Rape Sentences Appalling, Review Ordered



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LONDON, May 25 – UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has described a court decision sparing custodial sentences for three teenage boys convicted of raping two girls as “appalling,” adding the case is now under urgent legal review.

The ruling at Southampton Crown Court saw the boys given Youth Rehabilitation Orders instead of detention after convictions over two separate rape incidents in Hampshire.

The victims were aged 15 and 14 at the time of the offences, which took place between November 2024 and January 2025 in Fordingbridge. Another younger boy was also convicted for involvement in the second attack.

Starmer said the victims showed “extraordinary bravery and strength,” stressing it was right for the Attorney General to review the sentences.

The judge said he aimed to avoid unnecessarily criminalising the children and imposed community rehabilitation orders, which can include supervision, curfews, and treatment.

One victim told the BBC the ruling felt like a “rock straight in my face,” saying it appeared to minimise the seriousness of the crimes.

The Attorney General has 28 days to decide whether to refer the case to the Court of Appeal, though officials say the review could come sooner.

Cabinet minister Darren Jones said the government wants a swift decision, adding victims and families “deserve justice.”

Legal experts said the sentences were unusual but noted the offenders’ age influenced the ruling.

Critics have raised concerns about protections for victims of sexual violence.