

## [Transcript] The News Agents / A nightmare verdict for Suella's dream

This is a global player original podcast.

I encourage all of my critics to actually visit Rwanda before they cast dispersions and throw around incredibly prejudiced and snobbish opinions about what this beautiful country has to offer.

Yeah, that was Suella Braverman, the Home Secretary, back on the 19th of March, talking about the beautiful country Rwanda.

Today, some rather significant people disagreed with her analysis of the safety of the place.

There are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk that persons sent to Rwanda will be returned to their home countries where they faced persecution or other inhumane treatment when in fact they have a good claim for asylum.

That was the Court of Appeals ruling on Suella Braverman's, the government's Rwanda policy, their signature Rwanda policy, Rishi Sunak's solution to the small boats crisis in the English Channel.

They were saying that it was unlawful that Rwanda is not a safe country.

It leaves that signature policy in tatters.

But is that the last word that we are going to hear on the Rwanda policy?

Is it dead and buried?

No, there's still a little way to go.

Welcome to the News Agents.

The News Agents.

It's John.

It's Lewis.

And later in the podcast, we're going to France to try and find out what is happening there with the social unrest following the shooting dead of a teenager in a car who refused to stop for police and the unrest is just fanning out across cities and towns, across the country.

Yeah, but first we're going to dig into, as we were saying, the Court of Appeals verdict.

And look, you're probably familiar with this policy.

Everyone talks about it as being Suella Braverman's policy.

It is, of course, famously her dream to see the planes with asylum seekers leave the UK for Rwanda.

But of course, it's actually got a much longer vintage than that.

It was Pretty Patel's policy when she was Home Secretary, it was Boris Johnson's policy when he was Prime Minister.

This has basically been the solution, so-called, of a series of Conservative governments to deal with what they call a crisis in the English Channel in small boats with undocumented arrivals coming from all over the world, which of course is causing all sorts of problems.

And we have seen the tragedy that can take place with multiple fatalities on the English Channel.

And we're seeing it elsewhere in the world on the Mediterranean as well, people trying to cross in unsafe boats.

And the sort of long, short-potted history of this is that some months ago, this went to the High Court and the High Court ruled that it was lawful.

This has since been appealed by various people in institutions, including lawyers representing several asylum seekers themselves.

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And what has happened today is that the Court of Appeal has ruled by a quite unusual majority verdict, so it's two to one rather than unanimous.

They threw out quite a bit of the case.

They didn't rule the policy completely unlawful, but they did say it fell foul of a particular provision which said they ruled that Rwanda is not, as the government has claimed, a safe country.

So people cannot be sent there, according to the Court, because it violates their human rights, as stipulated in the European Convention on Human Rights, that potentially in being sent there, they may come to harm.

And what we've heard since that ruling is Rishi Sunak coming out and saying the government intends to appeal.

He said, while I respect the Court, I fundamentally disagree with their conclusions.

I strongly believe the Rwandan government has provided the assurances necessary to ensure there is no real risk that asylum seekers relocated under the Rwanda policy would be wrongly returned to third countries.

And he has said that Rwanda is a safe country.

The High Court agreed that the UNHCR have their own refugee scheme for Libyan refugees.

In Rwanda will now seek permission to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court.

And it's anyone's guess how it will go, because as you say, Lewis, it's been to the High Court, one verdict.

It's been to the Court of Appeals, another verdict.

It now goes to the Supreme Court.

But of course, what's in the background to all of this is something important you said about the ECHR, the European Court of Human Rights.

And so there's a certain amount of harrumphing going on from some Tory MPs that say, well, we shouldn't be bound in any way to the European Court of Human Rights.

I think that anybody who's watched this policy knew that this was always going to be on the outer edges of legality.

We know that because the Prime Minister himself, Rishi Sunak, had said that they were pushing to the boundaries of what would be acceptable under agreed international law.

Not to say that it was over it, but they themselves conceded that this is pushing the boundaries.

And look, the Court heard from the UNHCR, no less, that Rwanda had a record of human rights abuses towards refugees within its borders, including so-called refaement.

So that is the name given to forced removal to countries where those people are at risk, expulsions, arbitrary detention, and a country with a pretty checkered record on LGBT rights as well.

So I think that although we should caveat this by saying, it is absolutely true to say that Britain is not the only country which is struggling with this problem.

It is affecting most of the countries of Western Europe.

Different countries like Denmark are themselves looking at policies like this.

They themselves have signed an agreement with Rwanda.

So Britain isn't completely alone on this.

But by the government's own admission, if you propose a, quote unquote, solution that is pushing the boundaries of legality, then don't be surprised if the courts end up telling

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you something is unlawful, because this is exactly what has happened. And the very fact that different courts have thought and agreed different things about this indicates exactly what the Prime Minister initially said, which was this is on the outer edges of legality.

And it really is a matter of judgment as to whether it is or not.

And of course, that means, where is it all going to end up in the court that in the end the buck stops with?

And that's the Supreme Court.

What's so interesting about the policy is that it's unbelievably costly.

I mean, we had figures out this week that it will cost roughly £169,000 per person to send them to Rwanda, the cost of the legal bits and all the rest of it.

So it's fantastically expensive thing to be doing.

The impression was created that this would be a policy that would, you know, thousands of people would be on planes regularly going to Kigali.

It's just not the reality.

There'll be very few who will qualify because of the safeguards that are put in place to go.

And you kind of feel that given how few people will go, this is about sending a message.

It's almost a press release to the tabloid press to get them salivating about this policy.

And yeah, we're going to take tough action and we're going to stop the small votes rather than any substantive change to the policy.

And I wonder whether the government is almost thinking, even if we lose, we win because it will be seeing that we're trying to do everything we can to deal with this problem and it's those pesky bloody lawyers that are stopping us, those judges and all the rest of it.

So I think there's two things to say about that.

One is on this narrative that's out there, this rather tedious narrative about lefty lawyers and so on.

Look, the crux of our legal system is that anyone with a case has the right, often that they can afford it or they can get legal representation, but they have the right to have their day in court.

This isn't about lefty lawyers or right wing lawyers, it's about different interpretations of the law.

And as I say, if you yourself create a policy which is by your own admission on the outer edges of legality, then don't be surprised if it ends up being ruled unlawful.

It isn't about lefty lawyers or right wing lawyers, it's about the very fact that your own policy is on the outer edges of what is acceptable.

I mean, it's a bit like, I mean, I'm exaggerating here, right?

But in terms of, I could say, oh, I've got a money problem.

So my solution is I'm going to rob a bank.

It's not much of a solution, right?

Because it's illegal, right?

That's the thing.

And okay, I could give it a go.

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I could give it a go.

I mean, you know, it's a bit of a career change, but I could definitely give it a go.

I could see you in a nice balaclava going in with your shooter.

That's my November gear.

That's my November dress.

Well, as you know, I usually wear a polo neck in the winter, so it'd be a bit of a cat burglar kind of look, right?

But let's seriously, I mean, if you propose something as a quote unquote solution, which it is, you know, potentially going to be struck down by the courts, then it isn't much of a solution.

And this is the thing.

I get the narrative, and this has been a long established thing, this idea that, oh, well, the government doesn't even really, they're not serious about it.

It's just signaling.

I get that.

And I think there's definitely some merit to that.

The only problem with it is, is if you attach your political credibility as Rishi Sunak has done to the idea of being a fixer, of being someone who gets things done, and you put up in lights that this is something I'm going to solve, because of course it is one of its five pledges, and then you don't get it done.

You can blame everybody else all you like, but the fact is the public are just going to keep seeing pictures of those boats arriving, and we know that it is the Conservatives own coalition, its voting coalition, who are most exercised about it.

So I think just basically saying, oh, well, we would have done something, but basically we're completely impotent, we can't do anything about it, isn't actually much of a political message.

The whole lefty lawyers thing I find really, really annoying, because we don't talk about righty lawyers, they're lawyers.

They're lawyers who are challenging the law.

That is their job.

I mean, it's like saying that today's ruling in the Appeals Court is from lefty judges.

They're not lefty judges.

They are just applying the law as they see fit.

And this is the way our legal system work, and the sort of popularising it and traducing it to that level of conversation just seems to me vaguely repellent.

The reporters that are using the term lefty lawyers, as though that is a legitimate piece of reportage, I really think should think again, because it's ugly.

Well, lawyers represent everybody.

Exactly.

I mean, lawyers represent murderers.

Yeah.

Doesn't mean they're murderer lawyers.

That is their job.

To represent their clients, and also to interpret the law, and put their interpretation and

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analysis of the law for their clients as best they can.

That is their job, and that is what they're doing in this case.

And it's the judge's job to a judge, which is what they've done.

And you know, it may well be that the Supreme Court actually agrees with the High Court, and that's completely fine.

And in fairness, actually, I mean, what is quite striking, I think, from the reaction from both Sunak and Braverman, is that there's clearly been an effort within government to take down the temperature a little bit.

It's striking that in both their statements, Sunak and Braverman, that their first line is that, I respect the court.

I fundamentally disagree with their conclusions, but I respect the court.

Now I think if we had been still in the Johnson-Pattel period, I'm not convinced that would have been the first line.

So there is at least an attempt to dial down a bit from the front bench, some of the rhetoric, although, as you say, John, from elements of the back benches, I don't think that's going to be there.

Well, let us pivot slightly away from the ruling today, because you mentioned what Boris Johnson's judgment might have been.

And we've had a privileges committee report, a sort of adjunct to the original one, which kind of absolutely threw the kitchen sink at Johnson, to one today, throwing the kitchen sink at what was seen to be a systematic attempt to undermine the findings of the committee and the work of the committee, and names and shames a number of parliamentarians as a result of it.

And we discussed on the podcast at the time that some of the language being used, it's a kangaroo court.

Well, hang on, is it a kangaroo court, or is it just coming up with a verdict you don't like?

Why is that phrase even fraught?

Kangaroo court?

It's so weird.

The kangaroos go to court?

I mean, that's the problem.

We should never mind the lefty lawyers.

It's the kangaroo lawyers or the kangaroo courts we should have a problem with.

I think we should do a podcast on the origins of kangaroo courts.

Someone is going to tell us.

Someone will tell us.

Someone will tell us.

If you know, use agents, tell us.

So the report has come out today, piling, giving a good old kicking to Nadine Dorris and Jacob Riesmog and a handful of others.

And on this podcast...

Sir Jacob, John.

Sir Jacob Riesmog, please.

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Sir Jacob.

Sir Jacob.

Please.

He's at the cricket today, apparently.

We shouldn't disrespect him.

Sir Jacob.

Right.

So we have, at times, given these people a bit of a kicking for some of the ridiculous things and outrageous things they have said.

However, is there something a little bit chilling about a committee saying we are above criticism because that sort of seems to be the overreach direction in which they're heading?

Yeah.

I think it's as tricky on this.

I think what you can clearly see is a group of people on the committee who feel, I think rightly, you know, that they did a judicious job, a fair job, that they bent over backwards to try to be as fair to Boris Johnson as possible, to be as open as possible, to be as transparent as possible, and to do what the House had asked them to do.

This wasn't just a sort of random collection of MPs who had decided to get together of their own volition.

This is what the House of Commons unanimously tasked them with doing and what the government at the time, under Boris Johnson, tasked them with doing.

And such was the outrageous reaction from Boris Johnson and the attempt to undermine their integrity, to besmirch them, to slander them.

I can completely understand why they felt stung by it.

I completely understand why they would be concerned that this apparent concerted attempt by Johnson's allies to undermine the processes and the credibility and legitimacy of Parliament is a problem.

I think, though, that what a lot of these people like best is to feel and to project that they are somehow being persecuted and that they are martyrs.

And I think that the sort of thing that they will say, that this has a sort of feel of the sort of Spanish inquisition, that it has a feel that they are being told not only what to say, but what to think, I think it really plays into their hands.

And I wonder whether it would have been best to just allow it to settle.

Johnson has gone, he's paid a price, rightly, and the committee, most sensible people agree that the committee did a very good job and acted beyond reproach.

There were only seven people voted against the committee report when it came to the vote in the House of Commons.

Yeah, indeed so.

I just wonder whether this just allows that narrative of overreach, which these people were already trying to push, whether it gives a little bit more ballast, a little bit more weight.

Although, like I say, I can understand the feeling that they might have had when their process and their report was being clearly undermined in that way.

I suppose the defence to it would be, because I kind of thought, oh, you know, you've done

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your work, you've got the result that you wanted, the Commons backed the conclusions that you reached.

So your work has been done.

But it was hideous, the idea that members of Parliament who sit on the committee with a Conservative majority, let me add, felt the need to have personal security because of the abuse and the threats that were coming in was a new low for Westminster politics. I mean, you know, I saw a lot of it in America where, you know, a certain congressman will attack Trump, Trump goes after them on Twitter, and they suddenly need protection. I think in British politics, under our parliamentary system, and we are trying to promote the sovereignty of Parliament now that we've left the European Union to find that there are irresponsible politicians who are stirring it up and cranking up the volume to such a level that these people need security, that did need calling out.

Yeah, and I suspect that they slightly had some of the sort of American phenomenon in mind, I think, when they were being so vociferous in their response, because there was this central, as you're alluding to, that they needed to in some way sort of draw a line in the sand and respond fiercely.

I think there's two things that struck me about it, though, in particular.

One was the sense of overreach potentially when they were talking about, when they commented on the fact that, say, Nadine Doris, who they criticised very strongly, when she was suggesting that Conservative MPs might be deselected as a result of this.

Again, I'm not sure what that has to do with Parliament, really, and the Provincial Justice Committee.

That is ultimately, I mean, it would be a pretty outrageous thing to happen if Conservative MPs were deselected as a result of that.

It would indicate there was something pretty unhealthy going on within the Conservative Party. But ultimately, that is a matter for the Conservative Party internally, it's not really a matter for Parliament.

So I'm not entirely sure what that has to do with them.

One other thing struck me in the report, though, is when they said, referring to Rhys, Mogg and Doris, and again, this does have echoes of the American situation, the report saying, this whole matter is made more difficult because two of the members mounting the most vociferous attacks on a committee did so from the platform at their own hosted TV shows.

So they weren't even saying it on the floor of the House of Commons, where, of course, you have privilege, but also you could other MPs can intervene on them and can hold them to account or the speaker could say something.

But of course, it just highlights one of this is quite new novel situation that we're in now and I think potentially a pretty problematic one where you've got senior serving, not former senior serving politicians having their own television shows where they can just say whatever they want without critique, without anyone putting the other side, without anyone being able to fact-check it or so on.

They can just say unadulterated what they want and launch, as the committee said, vociferous attacks on the integrity of Parliament itself on national television.

That is a very separate issue about OFCOM and how it decides what is a news programme or a news channel and what is entertainment and the distinction between the two that would

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allow the MPs, like Nadia Doris or Jacob Riesma.

And she's still an MP, of course.

Yeah, she's still an MP.

So we've been talking about a resignation.

It hasn't come yet.

It's the longest goodbye since Bette Middler.

But the other thing about it is, again, just kind of worth underlining that this is a committee which has majority Conservative support and those Conservative MPs on the committee have issued a document today attacking other Conservative MPs.

And you just think the kind of blue on blue attacks just go on and on and on.

I was talking to a cabinet minister last night who was saying, it's just bloody awful at the moment that we're all going after each other.

We can't present that to the British people.

Even since that day, there has been this, well, it's clearly a coordinated attempt to attack members of the committee itself, suggesting that they were at parties, that they've lied about things it's trying to bring in Bernard Jenkins even trying to bring in now Theresa May and, you know, whatever the rights or wrongs are, all of that.

It speaks to, as you say, John, now the bloodlust, which is in the Conservative party.

And as we've said on the show before, they've got to that point now, which I'm sure you remember in the 90s and the Conservatives happened to Labour as well in the late 2000s.

They just start hating each other more than they hate the opposition.

And once that has happened, there's just very little way back.

Well, who did John Major refer to as the bastards?

It wasn't the Labour opposition.

It was his own Tory backbenchers.

Three of his own.

Three of his own cabinet who were desperate to supplant him.

Well, she's seen that probably thanks God, if there were only three, only just three.

We'll be back after the break and we'll be going to France to find out what is happening there.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back.

Well, France is burning again.

It doesn't seem so long ago since the news agents were there during the protests that consumed France as a result of President Macron's pension reforms.

There have been huge riots across French cities over the last 24 hours or so, but for a very different reason, although not an unfamiliar one in France, involves a police officer who is apparently involved in the fatal shooting of a 17-year-old boy.

He's been placed under formal investigation, so that's the equivalent here of being charged for voluntary homicide.

Macron has had to have a crisis cabinet meeting on Thursday after a second night of riots and rioting across France in Lille, Dijon, Lyon, Toulouse and the Paris suburbs.

And it is consumed France again.

There is this idea and accusation of more police brutality against ethnic minority young men



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and this is reminiscent of previous stories in France back in the mid-2000s. There were huge, huge riots after a similar sort of thing happened and it took weeks at that time for the French government to contain.

Yes.

I was out there covering those and the uneasy relationship between those who live in what's called the Banlieue, the suburbs of France, which is where the public housing is, where there is the greatest deprivation.

If you've been to Paris and you have this kind of picture postcard sense of all these beautiful boulevards and all the rest of it and you go to the suburbs, it feels very different.

And an awful lot of people just don't see that bit of France and I think it's going to be really interesting now to talk to Nabila Ramdani, extraordinary commentator on France and has a book coming out which I've read called Fixing France and Nabila, I know you're normally based in London, but I think you're back in France right now.

Is that right?

Yes, absolutely.

Thanks for having me on, John.

And I mean, your introduction and Louis' introduction is absolutely spot on and I happened to be in Nanterre at the moment.

And it's very tense across the whole of France at the moment and not just in Nanterre, where of course the shooting happens two days ago.

And there I say it's very interesting to note already that the French president Emmanuel Macron remained silent about this terrible death for four, 24 hours.

And this was in fact in keeping with convention because presidents traditionally sent out the ministers to deal with specific incidents like this one.

Well, isn't it right that Macron has caused fury among the police unions for coming out and more or less saying this was an unlawful killing, clearly?

Precisely.

It was a rare rebuke actually from the president, including his ministers, the interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, and only this morning, the spokesperson for the interior minister spoke on French radio saying as much that the killing was unlawful.

And in this case, Emmanuel Macron investigated the evidence himself.

And he concluded after watching that shocking video that Nahel had indeed been unlawfully killed in the most horrific manner possible by a serving police officer.

Police unions are already criticizing Mr. Macron for saying this.

And quite fairly, they are saying that the executive should not be interfering in judicial process.

But a police officer has now been identified only as a 38-year-old Florian.

And he's in custody and expected to be charged with murder very shortly.

But Mr. Macron clearly agrees that this is a terrifying scandal which boils down to an officer of the state allegedly murdering a citizen.

The thing that shocked France is that this young teenage boy was shot in the chest.

He pulled away from the police who said they were trying to stop him for traffic infractions.

And the police initially said that one officer had shot the teenager because he was driving

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his car at him.

But that version of events was itself actually quite quickly contradicted by a video circulating on social media, which seemed to show that that wasn't the case.

Yes, absolutely.

And as you quite rightly pointed out, you and John, you know, this is not the first time that the shooting of a young person from a North African background or from an Arab or Black background has happened in France.

And where it not for passerby capturing what appears to be the crime on video, the original police excuse which was reported to the headquarters, i.e. he tried to run us over, might have well provided all the mitigation that the alleged assailants needed.

And it's quite, you know, it's a classic tactic, there I say, of blaming and trying to criminalize the victim itself.

And France has a long track record of doing that, especially against its, there I say, Algerian community.

Yeah.

I mean, what's so interesting about it for me, having kind of moved back from America is that I think when I moved to the States, one of the first stories I covered was the shooting by a policeman of Michael Brown, a young Black guy in Ferguson, Missouri, that sparked riots that became nationwide.

And that is what seems to be happening in France today.

And I suspect as well, the underlying causes, the alienation felt by a lot of young people who are from the minority background, who feel that the police are against them and that there is just this very, very uneasy relationship.

Well, absolutely.

Nahel is, of course, from an Algerian background.

And this has in fact exposed the treatment of similar French citizens.

There have been tensions between Algerian communities and the French police going right back to the days when Algeria was a French colony.

Algeria won a very savage war of independence, which ended in 1962.

And this has caused huge anger and grievance among millions of French nationalists who wanted to hang on to Algeria.

And there is no doubt that racism against Arab Muslims from an Algerian background persists to this day, not just within the police, but in many other parts of society, and not least of all, within the national rally, the national front.

Do you think that Macron is going to be able to contain this violence?

Maybe it was the risk that this becomes even worse in the next couple of days.

President Macron held an emergency meeting this morning and he's putting out 40,000 extra police on the street, 5,000 deployed in Paris only.

So that suggests that they are expecting more trouble tonight, but also in the days to come.

I can assure you I've been out on the streets of Nanterre this morning, and there are of course rioters who are determined to express the anger and their dissent by any means possible. But there's also a huge march organised in Nanterre, which is bringing together people from all different backgrounds.

It's called the Marche Blanche or the White Marche honouring Nahel, it was organised by

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his mother.

And I have to say today's march is entirely peaceful and involves people of every age and every background.

But there's no doubt that Macron expects more trouble in the coming days.

And that's why he's deploying more police officers on the streets, including paramilitaries, and deploying measures that effectively go back to the Algerian War, special measures dating back to 1955.

Nabila, fantastic to have you with us.

Thank you very much indeed for taking the time.

Thank you.

I know you're really busy reporting there from Nanterre, so we're really grateful to you.

Thank you.

Thank you, John.

Thank you, Louise, for having me.

Bye.

Our pleasure.

Bye-bye.

I mentioned there in the interview covering the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. And that was so shocking in America, because I think people thought that by electing Barack Obama as president, the country had dealt with racism.

And what's your excuse was one of the phrases that was put to the African-American community, look, we can have a black president.

So stop making excuses about why life is tough for you.

Just get on with it.

And then you suddenly saw this uprising and this sense of anger that was still felt by large sections of the black community.

And France went through a very similar thing, I mean, different not because of an election, but when it won the 1998 World Cup, and you have people like Zinedine Zidane on the team and people from North Africa, and you have black players as well.

And it was suddenly like France was accepting its multiracial dimension that maybe it had struggled with after the Algerian War and the rest of it.

But yet you've kind of find, well, no, there are no easy solutions to these things, and they are very deep rooted and embedded in the society.

And it doesn't take much of a spark to get the flames burning.

No.

And look, like you having lived in Paris, but also gone to Paris many times to cover stories that in some way related to French race relations or laicite, this idea of French secularism, this idea which is at the heart of the French Republic, which is to have a brick wall between the state and any religious affiliation, or even any embodiment of religion in any way, even if it's even wearing or having any symbols of religion.

I mean, I covered back in 2015, Charlie Hebdo, and then covered the Bataclan.

And you know, I spent some time after that sort of working at the BBC on various different stories and spent quite a lot of time with the Muslim community in northern Paris.

And I remember doing a story, which I thought to me really exposed some of the limitations

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around laicite, which was this, which was it's very, very difficult to even build new mosques in parts of Paris, right?

Because there is this concept of whether any of this should be accommodated by the state or facilitated by the state.

And I remember going to this makeshift mosque in northern Paris.

I mean, it was literally basically kind of like cargo containers, trying to make a minaret of the most kind of basic materials.

And you saw these Muslim local populations of trapeze in day after day after day, only a few miles away, they could see all of these extraordinary old churches that of course were built before the secular laws were introduced in the early 20th century in France.

But from their point of view, it's like, hang on, all of these things are still getting public funding, these churches, because they are historic sites and so on.

But we can't even get permission to build a new mosque here.

And I remember the Imam there saying, and you wonder why some of our people get radicalized. I'm not saying Britain necessarily has a perfect model either in countries that have multi-ethnic populations struggle with this.

But we have seen repeatedly some of the limitations of the French approach laicite, which is very deeply felt, that French republicanism, it's very deeply felt.

But nonetheless, you know, you can see where, and this is not necessarily connected with that, but you can see some of the long standing problems which exist when you live there.

That's so interesting.

So when I was the Paris correspondent, one of the stories I did was the, when they tried to ban hijabs and they tried to ban Sikh kids from wearing a turban in school.

And they said, look, when you go to school, you are a child of the French republic.

You are not a child of Islam.

You are not a child of Sikhdom.

You are not a Jew.

You are just a child of the Fifth Republic.

And there should be no religious symbols in buildings that belong to the republic.

And so we went along to a school which the government had said, you can go and film here.

And it was December time, and we walk into the school where the head teacher is going to talk to us about how it's vital that there are no religious symbols in schools.

We walk in and there's a Christmas tree.

Now, a Christmas tree is pagan, I know, but it's the symbol of the festival marking the birth of Christ.

And they didn't see any contradiction in that.

And as you say that, policy of laïcité, it's incredibly well meaning, but its implementation can be really blunt and also really offensive to a lot of people.

I love the idea of French republicanism, actually.

But where the rubber hits the road, it can be really problematic.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back, and I was reading this morning that the king apparently is turning down the radiators in various palaces.

Times tough in Buckingham Palace.

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Times are tough, and they've overspent the budget and big losses.

And so just like the rest of Britain having to tighten their belts, I don't think the mortgage rate increase maybe is the biggest problem they've got.

We shouldn't have spent all the money on all that bloody ermine, and all the orbs and all that stuff, all that magic water and oil, should he, a few months ago, if he's got a problem?

I'm not sure he did, I think.

No, we did.

Sorry, we did.

Sorry, we did.

Sorry, I think you might have that wrong.

Mind you.

Shall I tell you what?

The person who really wouldn't like that would be Emily Maitlis.

She's always complaining it's too cold in here.

Well, now we can just say to her, look, sorry, we're just aping his majesty.

Exactly, we're just tightening her belts.

Anyway, I won't be back tomorrow, but someone else will be.

I can't imagine who that would be.

The king, probably.

Bye-bye.

Bye-bye.

This has been a Global Player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.