

Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing St
London
SW1A 2AA

15 September 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

One of the defining characteristics of your Government, which is more important now than ever, is its unqualified commitment to the rule of law, human rights principles, and international law.

Given this, we, the undersigned, are concerned that the law is being flouted *en masse* by predominantly overseas tech companies to the fundamental detriment of the UK's £127 billion creative industries and in violation of creators' human rights.

Artificial Intelligence companies have ingested millions of copyright works without permission or payment, in total disregard for the UK's legal protections. Even Ministers have recognised that "*much content has already been used and subsumed by AI models, usually from other territories and under the current law*".¹ This means UK citizens are experiencing consistent and deliberate breaches of their rights under human rights law.

Looking forward, it may well be that the Government seeks to weaken copyright law, and we are closely watching the consultation process; you will know that many have suggested the consultation itself may be subject to legal challenge. However, your Government must answer the need to uphold the human rights of creators, not only in its future plans but right now.

To be clear, the consultation process does not, in itself, constitute a response to the widespread human rights violations happening now, and Ministers have offered no timeline and no planned action with regard to those violations. Indeed, the Government has repeatedly acted to remove amendments which would have empowered copyright holders to exercise their rights during the passage of the Data (Use and Access) Bill. In doing so, they have actively stood in the way of creators' rights being exercised.

What are those rights?

Article 15, paragraph 1 (c) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966 states:

"[e]veryone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is author".

This is a basic, universal entitlement; it does not need to be asserted or claimed.

¹ [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-05-22/debates/B79D3080-C9DC-434E-A988-0348B2755A85/Data\(UseAndAccess\)Bill\(Lords\)#contribution-0296E6DF-F5F7-43C5-B8AB-B494D77F0414](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-05-22/debates/B79D3080-C9DC-434E-A988-0348B2755A85/Data(UseAndAccess)Bill(Lords)#contribution-0296E6DF-F5F7-43C5-B8AB-B494D77F0414)

Article 15 echoes the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, which dates back to 1886, has been updated periodically and is one of the most widely adopted international conventions. The Berne Convention proclaims its signatories’:

“desire to protect, in as effective and uniform a manner as possible, the rights of authors in their literary and artistic works”.

It lays down minimal, internationally-agreed standards for copyright protection. The protection of copyright material is automatic and applies from the moment a work is:

“fixed in some material form”: see Article 2(2). By Article 5(2) *“[t]he enjoyment and the exercise of these rights shall not be subject to any formality...”*

Furthermore, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950 (ECHR), made enforceable here in the UK through the Human Rights Act 1998. Article 1 of Protocol 1 assures everyone’s:

“peaceful enjoyment of... possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law.”²

Where such rights are interfered with by the state, either directly or because of the way it frames, enforces or fails to enforce the law, there must be a meaningful compensation system.

Ministers’ deliberate choice to remove the amendments to the Data (Use and Access) Bill mark a clear breach of UK citizens’ human rights *“to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is author”*. The Government’s formal position has exhibited a shocking indifference to mass theft, and a complete unwillingness to enforce the existing law or uphold the human rights stipulated by the ICESCR, the Berne Convention and the ECHR.

The first duty of any government is to protect its citizens - not to promote corporate interests, particularly where they are primarily based abroad. The failure to do so – apparently driven largely by conflicted advisors, and inadequate understanding of the matter by Ministers – risks yet more breaches of international conventions and of the human rights ‘brought home’ by the Human Rights Act 1998 on a greater scale than is already occurring.

Therefore, we ask you to set out the Government's justification for actively ignoring the rights of UK copyright holders set out above since the general election. We also ask you to explain the reasoning behind Ministers' statements that appear to undermine those rights, and the rationale for standing in the way of the transparency demanded by rights holders that would allow their rights to be asserted, given the clear and consistent breaches of their rights that continues to take place. For clarity, we are not asking for an explanation of the decision to consult on AI and copyright, or the 'preferred option', but rather ask for an explanation of the Government's stated position that no steps will be taken to make the existing law enforceable.

We, the undersigned, believe that the UK Government has so far failed to account for international and UK human rights law regarding the enforcement of UK copyright law, and we ask for a timely response from the Government whilst we consider our further options.

² Possessions’ include copyright, as confirmed in the case of *Neij and Sunde Kolmisoppi v Sweden* Application no. 40397/12.

Yours sincerely,

Creative Organisations

ACID
Association of Authors' Agents
Association of Illustrators
Association of Photographers
Association of University Presses
Barbara Hayes, Chief Executive, Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society
BPI
British Copyright Council
CEO, Bridget Shine, Independent Publishers Guild
Christian Zimmermann, CEO, DACS
Claire Walker & Hannah Essex, Co-Chief Executives, Society of London Theatre & UK Theatre
David Martin, CEO, Featured Artists Coalition
Deborah Annetts, Chief Executive, Independent Society of Musicians & Creators' Rights
Alliance Chair
DMG Media
Ed Newton-Rex, CEO, Fairly Trained
Joanna Prior, CEO, Pan Macmillan
Justine Roberts, founder and chief executive, Mumsnet
LifeScore
Mark Getty, co-founder and Chairman, Getty Images
Music Publishers Association
National Union of Journalists
News Media Association
PICSEL
PPL
PRS
Publishing Scotland
Richard Reeves, Managing Director, Association of Online Publishers
Society of Editors
Telegraph Media Group
The Society of Artists' Agents
Tom Kiehl Chief Executive, UK Music
Tom West, Chief Executive, Publishers' Licensing Services
Voice Swap AI
Writers' Guild of Great Britain

Creatives

Adam Cork
Alecky Blythe
Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber
Annie Lennox
Antonia Fraser
Beabadoobee
Becky Hill
Ben Power

Bobby Gillespie
Caleb Azumah Nelson
Danny Brocklehurst
David Furnish
Don Black
Elton John
Eric Clapton
Gary Barlow
Ian Rickson
Iqbal Khan
Jessie Ware
Joe Murphy
Joe Robertson
Johnny Flynn
Kate Bush
Kwame Kwei-Armah
Lee Hall
Sir Mick Jagger
Moiria Buffini
Nectar Woode
Neil Tennant
Nicholas Hytner
Oliver Sim
Patrick Marber
Sir Paul McCartney
Rachel Fuller
Richard Bean
Richard Eyre
Robbie Williams
Robert Smith
Sam Smith
Sarah Phelps
Skin
Sting
Tom Grennan
Tom Stoppard