Keir Starmer Blasts Johnson for 'Mismanaging' Post-COVID Reopening, Urges to 'Get Grip' on It

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Keir Starmer assumed the UK's ongoing lockdown relaxation, the stages of which were announced weeks ago, has to do with Downing Street's attempts to "deflect" public attention from the Dominic Cummings furore, as the prime minister's "svengali" travelled 260 miles from London during the height of the nationwide lockdown.

In an interview with The Guardian, Keir Starmer launched a verbal attack against Boris Johnson saying he has undermined public trust in the government's handling of the coronavirus crunch, insisting No. 10 will be held responsible if the infection rate climbs up again.

In an outspoken manner, the Labour head blasted Johnson for "winging it" with regard to the easing of the lockdown, claiming he has made an already "difficult situation 10 times worse" and needs to get "a grip" on the crisis.

He separately speculated on the timing of some of Whitehall's decisions over the easing of the lockdown rules, assuming the relaxation could be meant to "try to deflect attention away" from the Dominic Cummings matter, in which Johnson, Starmer said, proved to be indecisive. "The Cummings factor, the sense of one rule for them and one rule for everyone else", the politician said, led to a tremendous fall in public confidence, thereby referring to the outcry recently triggered by allegations that Johnson's right-hand man "hypocritically" breached the self-isolation and lockdown rules, which he himself helped to craft.

"They obviously took a decision to try and deflect attention away from the Cummings affair", Starmer said. "There are questions that the government needs to answer about the precise timing of the measures it put in place".

"It's blindingly obvious to me that the prime minister is just too weak to sack [Cummings]".

Starmer pointed out they had called for an exit strategy, noting he had even written to Boris Johnson two weeks

ago suggesting parties along the entire political spectrum join their effort, however the prime minister didn't reply to him, the Labour leader admitted,

"What we appear to have got is an exit without a strategy. We want to see society reopen, we want to see more children back at school, obviously people want to see their families and we want to see businesses open", Starmer explained, further outlining the deep concerns of many individuals:

"But like many people across the country, there is a growing concern the government is now winging it. At precisely the time when there should have been maximum trust in the government, confidence has collapsed", he noted.

He blasted "mismanagement" in what he says is the government's sudden decision to lift shielding restrictions for 2.2 million people without duly notifying public health directors or GPs, and voiced concerns about the test and trace system now in the making,

The Labour leader also cited a failure of leadership over the decision to get schools to reopen (stage 1 of the lockdown easing) without proper consultations with unions, teachers, and parents.

Starmer said he would go on engaging constructively with Downing Street, insisting the he was bitterly criticising Downing Street not just for the sake of it.

The UK started easing the mid-March lockdown restrictions on 1 June, in line with the previously announced roadmap, which oversees the staged re-opening of public places and businesses.
Proposed Post-Lockdown Quarantine

Home Secretary Priti Patel announced quarantine measures for new arrivals in the UK, aimed at curbing new imported coronavirus cases. Under the soon-to-be-voted-on scheme, those coming to the UK by air, train, or ferry would be required to come up with full contact details about where they will be staying in Britain and self-isolate for 14 days.

While critics say the measure is useless at best, and at worst - ruinous for the slowly reviving tourism and hospitality sectors, Patel, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, and a few others believe it is critical for preventing a second wave of the new coronavirus. Whitehall is, meanwhile, full-on working on an air corridor scheme, due to be in place by late June in a bid to open air connections with regions with low virus rates.

Britain's NHS has to date confirmed around 277,985 COVID cases through formal diagnostics, 39,369 of whom have died, as of 5 p.m. on 1 June. As of 9 a.m. on 2 June, 4,615,146 tests have been carried out across the nation.