



Latest Corruption Index Does Not Reveal Britain's Real Place in Global Crime Wave

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Transparency International (TI) releases its [latest report](#) entitled the Corruption Perceptions Index and continues to find that corruption is rife globally and remains a blight around the world. Overall, two-thirds of the 168 countries on the 2015 index did not fair well.

Denmark took the top spot for the 2nd year running for least corrupt, with North Korea and Somalia the worst performers.

TI states on their website that the goals to aim at for a corruption free country has certain characteristics such as:

“high levels of press freedom; access to budget information so the public knows where money comes from and how it is spent; high levels of integrity among people in power; and judiciaries that don't differentiate between rich and poor, and that are truly independent from other parts of government. Conflict and war, poor governance, weak public institutions like police and the judiciary, and a lack of independence in the media characterise the lowest ranked countries. »

Notably the five countries with the biggest declines in these characteristics in the past 4 years include Libya, Australia, Brazil, Spain and Turkey. The big improvers in its report include Greece, Senegal and surprisingly, the UK.

As it turns out sixty-eight per cent of countries worldwide have a serious corruption problem. Half of the G20 are among them. The G20 consists of the top 20 economies in the world but ranks the EU as one economy even though it is made up of 28 countries alone.

The research shows that half of all the 34 OECD countries are violating their international obligations to crack down on bribery by their companies abroad.

Britain has entered the top ten for the first time behind Denmark (1st), Finland, Sweden, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Singapore, Canada, Germany and Luxembourg. The US ranks 16th. In the EU, other countries not doing so well are; France which ranks 23rd, Spain 36th, Italy 61st and Bulgaria, the last of EU nations at 69th place.

The truth is that Britain has not done better, don't forget this is an index of perception, not actual corruption.

In comments from TI, Britain was found to have conducted an “extraordinarily inept” review

of freedom of information laws. The government's review of the Freedom of Information Act threatens to further undermine trust in politicians and damage democracy. If ever there was a demonstration of the governments intention of transparency, [look no further than](#) Former home secretary Jack Straw, who previously stated he wants the act to be scrapped and rewritten, and Lord Carlisle who accused the Guardian of a "criminal act" in publishing the Snowden leaks, both are on the commission. TI fails to mention this.

Even TI's own UK executive director Robert Barrington said there were "*good reasons why people are sceptical about whether Britain really merits a top 10 ranking*", proving not even he believes this ranking.

He went further by highlighting:

"overseas bribery by UK companies, the laundering of corrupt assets through the City, the lax regulation and lack of transparency in British-controlled tax havens, to say nothing of corruption scandals here in the UK," and mentions the "dropping of significant proposals putting personal responsibility on bankers for money-laundering failings." He continues with "The sequence of petty political scandals around lobbying, the revolving door and party funding discredits the UK in the eyes of the world and gives fuel to the critics who want to portray Mr Cameron's agenda as nothing more than hypocritical and sanctimonious."

Barrington is rightly angry.

The [Independent](#) reported in July that The City of London is the money-laundering centre of the world's drug trade, according to an internationally acclaimed crime expert. In addition, every financial expert now agrees that due to lax financial laws by government, that the [London property market](#) is built largely on laundered money of crime from all over the world involving hidden tax havens, most of which are British.

In March last year, the Financial Conduct Authority (itself replacing the toothless [Financial Services Authority](#) that was funded by the very banks it was supposed to oversee) said that it would conduct a review on whether banking culture was changing after a slew of financial scandals that dogged the industry. Martin Wheatley, the CEO was looking into the rigging of bank lending rates amongst the many crimes perpetrated in The City of London. Chancellor George Osborne then sacked Wheatley as it was clear he was going to do his job and then just a few weeks ago had the [review dropped](#) after replacing Wheatley with a person 'more agreeable' to the banks. This was a cynical move by Osborne to protect the banking industry.

When it comes to press freedom Britain has no bragging rights. Just two years ago the British government's draconian response to the Guardian's reporting of Edward Snowden saw the UK drop five places in TI's report. Shockingly, Britain [languishes globally in 36th position](#) behind countries such as [Belize](#) for press freedom, a country that is rife with lawlessness, corruption, suffers a lack of public, business and press freedom, is mired in accusations of labour abuse, crime and unemployment.

It doesn't help that the Serious Fraud Squad who was investigating high-profile cross-border investigations into business practices at some of the UK's biggest companies had their budget cut so deeply that the [FT reported](#) "*The scale and pace of budget cuts inflicted on*

the SFO will make prosecuting its caseload impossible." It must be clear by now that the government has an agenda to protect these serial corporate offenders.

David Cameron won praise in 2013 after announcing at the [Open Government Partnership](#) summit in London that the UK intended to require companies registered in the UK to reveal the identity of their real owners in public filings at Companies House. This was then heavily watered down after the Queen was warned that her British territories were now the world biggest tax havens, harbouring tens of trillions of illegally stashed cash and assets that was described as a "web of secrecy jurisdictions". The Tax Justice Network (TJN) said Britain now rules the world of tax havens.

Her Majesty's British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies make up around [25 percent of the world's tax havens](#) which are now blacklisted by the European Commission and now ranked as the most important player in the financial secrecy world, hardly a shining example of integrity and morality.

And the extent of these crimes is almost boundless as TJN said :

"The victims of this secrecy include, among others, 2 billion Commonwealth citizens. A recent study of 33 African countries found that they lost over \$1tr in capital flight since the 1970s, of which \$640bn came from 16 Commonwealth countries. These losses dwarf the external debts of 'just' \$190bn for the 33 countries."

In the meantime, Suspicious Activity Reports dealt with by a British specialist police unit focusing on the proceeds of crime and corruption [blocked just seven transactions](#) in an entire year. Transparency International reported that the police unit during the previous year (2014) for seizing corrupt assets was "not fit for purpose". Given the sheer scale of financial crimes and corruption taking place, this performance can only be seen as suspicious itself. In 2015, this police unit required emergency funding.

So widespread is corruption in Britain that [Keith Bristow](#), director-general of the UK's National Crime Agency, said in January that the scale of crime and its subsequent money laundering operations was "a strategic threat" to the country's economy and reputation. *"Many hundreds of billions of pounds of criminal money is almost certainly laundered through UK banks and their subsidiaries each year."* And yet the government facilitates it by actively doing nothing.

When it comes to conflict and war, Britain's international performance is dire. Britain, as we now all know, was heavily involved in the fall and subsequent deaths of over a million innocent Iraqis. Its campaign in Libya has turned the wealthiest and healthiest African nation into a lawless cesspool ruled by terrorism and death. Syria is ongoing. This has manifested itself into a refugee crisis the likes of which has not been seen since the last world war and an escalation of terrorism continues.

The granting of licences by government for the sale of spying equipment and armaments to some of the most oppressive regimes in the world is another scandal that further destabilises world peace.

The Corruption Perception Index does not tackle the issues at hand. It confuses by focusing on public sector corruption, but private corporations are the worst offenders backed

by significant government cooperation. Britain's banking industry is not effectively cited even though it is mired in scandal, facilitates a huge international crime wave backed by money laundering services on an industrial scale along with the tax havens that supports it.

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