

# Cameron joins calls to stop vulnerable hacker's extradition to USA

Conservative leader seeks review of the law

DAVID CAMERON yesterday joined the growing call for a review of extradition laws after computer hacker Gary McKinnon failed in his bid to avoid removal to America.

The 43-year-old from Wood Green, London, who suffers from Asperger's syndrome, is wanted for trial on charges of hacking into US military networks.

Campaigners seeking to block his extradition say his only crime is being a "UFO eccentric" who searched for evidence of extra-terrestrials. They claim he acted through "naivety" as a result of AS – a form of autism which leads to obsessive behaviour – and should not be considered a criminal.

But yesterday at London's High Court two judges refused to block his removal, even though they conceded he might find extradition and prison in the US "very difficult indeed".

They accepted there was impressive medical evidence his mental health would suffer – "and there are risks of worse, including suicide".

But the "severity" of his case did not amount to a breach of his human rights following assurances from the US that he would be given "appropriate care".

Later the Conservative leader said: "Gary McKinnon is a vulnerable young man and I see no compassion in sending him thousands of miles away from his home and loved ones to face trial."



Suggesting he should be tried in this country, Mr Cameron added: "This case raises serious questions about the workings of the Extradition Act, which should be reviewed."

There is growing discontent in many quarters over the UK's "unequal" extradition arrangements with the US.

While UK authorities must provide details of the evidence against US citizens they wish to put on trial, US prosecutors only have to explain the charges to force Britons to America.

Mr McKinnon's mother, Janis Sharp, made an impassioned appeal to US President Barack Obama to halt extradition "and make this world a more compassionate place".

She expressed fears her son could face a 60-year sentence in a



**PLEA:** Janis Sharp, mother of Gary McKinnon, left

tough US jail and would be at real risk of suicide because of his medical condition. She also fears she would never see him again.

Lord Justice Stanley Burnton and Mr Justice Wilkie, sitting at the High Court in London, dismissed the hacker's appeal against the decisions of successive Home Secretaries to allow extradition to proceed.

They also ruled Keir Starmer QC, the Director of Public Prosecutions, was right to refuse to put him on trial in the UK on charges of computer misuse – charges he admits.

A UK trial would allow him to avoid extradition. But the judges ruled extradition was "a lawful and proportionate response" to Mr McKinnon's offending, and said the Home Secretary was entitled to accept US assurances that he would receive "appropriate care" in America.

Lord Justice Burnton said: "Of course, these assurances do not amount to cast-iron guarantees of appropriate care during the claimant's sentence.

"But they are the considered assurances of a friendly state, indeed of a state with which this country has close relations."

The judge admitted Mr McKinnon would find extradition, trial and sentence and detention in the US "very difficult indeed".

He added: "His mental health will suffer. There are risks of worse, including suicide."

But his case did not approach the level of severity which would amount to inhuman and degrading treatment under the European Convention on Human Rights.

After the judgement, Home Secretary Alan Johnson made clear that he had no plans to stop Mr McKinnon's removal.

Mr McKinnon's solicitor, Karen Todner, said she would appeal against the High Court's decision within 28 days and, if possible, take it to the UK's new Supreme Court and to Europe.

A letter has been sent to the US President signed by 40 British MPs asking him to step in and "bring this shameful episode to an end".