UK government considering a formal apology for role in trans-Atlantic slave trade.

2 NOVEMBER 2026

Cleo Hatton-Papaioannou



Palace of Westminster

Apology, but not no reparations.

Ahead of the Commonwealth leaders meeting this week in the Caribbean, Burnham wrote in a column for the Guardian that he is open to issuing an apology over Britain's involvement in the slave trade, although he has ruled out reparations. Instead, he has said he will push for measures to restructure the debt of the poorest members and to provide more favourable conditions for repayment.

King Charles, who has also been in the Caribbean, admitted past injustices have occurred, although he did not issue an apology on behalf on the monarchy.

While Caribbean leaders have welcomed the prime minister's openness to dialogue, opposition leader Kemi Badenoch has criticised the move. In an interview with Sky News, the tory leader claimed the calls for apologies and reparations are a result of economic challenges facing the Commonwealth countries.

Controversial but necessary move?

From the 1560s until 1807, more than 3 million Africans were transported and sold into slavery. Many were sent to British-owned Caribbean plantations. Britain outlawed slavery in 1833.

The Commonwealth provides the UK with a significant soft power at a time when Western countries are losing global influence. However, Britain risks losing its grip on the institution if it does not acknowledge its history. While the government has ruled out financial compensation, it should work alongside leaders to address the developmental consequences of slavery felt to this day.

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