

Hi everyone, I will try to keep my speech brief but today I would like to touch upon a more serious topic:

What do you think of when you think of children? Probably innocent, carefree and safe from harm. However, this is far from the truth. According to the Youth Justice Statistics 2021 an outstanding 15,800 children were cautioned or sentenced for crimes and of these were 3,500 proven knife and weapon offences committed by minors. These are extremely unsettling numbers and they refer to minors who intentionally committed crimes but were intervened by the police. Imagine how many went unnoticed or didn't even make it out of the interrogation room simply because they were under the age of 18. I believe that it is time to make a change.

The Jamie Bulger case perfectly demonstrates my point. On the 12th of February 1993, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson kidnapped 2-year-old Jamie Bulger from outside the New Strand Shopping centre in Bootle after his mother took her eyes off him momentarily. They then proceeded to bludgeon, assault and rape him and then dumped his body on train tracks in Walton, Liverpool, 2 miles away from where he was initially abducted. As I'm sure you can agree, it was a disgusting crime committed by monstrous people. The hideous crime shook the world, however, the issue arises when you find out that Venables and Thompson were only ten years old. What demon could ever possess two 10-year-olds to kill a child? The CCTV footage clearly showed the two casually observing children, selecting a target, treating the afflicted child like a game. Many have defended Venables and Thompson accusing the mother for leaving Jamie unsupervised and for not being more aware of the dangers. But it is vital that you understand that when the incident occurred the world was a different place: People let their children roam their towns freely and let their children be independent because the communities were bonded by trust and a feeling of security. The Jamie Bulger case changed all of that; breaking the trust and security they had never even doubted in the first place. A mother that would never see her child again because of two minors. Three brothers that would never be able to play outside with their sibling ever again because of two minors. How would you ever allow people like that to continue walking on the same streets as you? The answer? You wouldn't. I believe that they should be removed from our communities so that we can go back to the simpler time where walking down the street was never a worry. It starts once we recognise that no crime should ever be taken lightly, to progress our justice system and keep our world secure.

Of course, minors should only be treated as adults for major crimes as minor crimes were more than likely a misjudgement on the child's part as mental development is still not at its peak. Though common sense still exists. Major crimes are committed with intention and planning (or premeditation) beforehand. By trying them as adults it creates responsibility and accountability for their actions and it is therefore less likely to happen again in the future. It is unfair for children to get away with crimes so easily just because of their age. On a daily basis, the majority of children complain

that it is unfair that they are not treated as adults; what makes this any different?
This is the way forward.

Recently, you may have heard of another case: The Belgrade Shooting in Serbia. A teenager ruthlessly murdered eight of his fellow classmates and a security guard in the Vladislav primary school in Vracar. How could you ever feel safe after a massacre in your school? A school is meant to be a protected environment where you should never have to worry about a crime of such a violent magnitude or even any crime at all. Prior to the massacre the teen devised a 'kill list' of the children he wanted to target and the classrooms he would enter. In addition, the gun the teenager used was so easily accessible and even had a legal permit. It is devastating. However, he could not be tried as an adult for his infraction because he was under the age of 14. And he knew this. So in an address to the country the president suggested that the age for criminal liability will be lowered to 12 years old and in my opinion this is the deserved action. As you know, every action has a reaction and in this example the reaction is likely to be a court case. According to a research report at the University of California, eighty-two percent of juveniles released from prisons were re-arrested and it is why I believe trying minors as adults for major crimes is necessary because consequences are how you learn. Whether it be for good or bad it is how you progress.

In conclusion, I believe that juveniles should be treated as adults for major crimes as it creates maturity and prevents further adversity in the future. If you don't treat things seriously now it may not ever happen. It will improve our current justice system by forcing minors to learn from the consequences and will therefore create further trust and safety in our society.

Thank you for listening to my speech, are there any questions?