

UK post office scandal over faulty computer system

Vocabulary Match

prosecuted ● sub-postmasters ● settlement ● campaigners ● convictions ● miscarriage ●
● branch managers ● taken to court ● error ● judgements ● activists ● payment

Article

The UK Post Office faced a major issue with its Horizon computer system, made by Fujitsu. Over 900 sub-postmasters were wrongly prosecuted for theft due to errors from this system.

Between 1999 and 2015, the Post Office itself took 700 cases to court, with another 283 cases from other government bodies. Many sub-postmasters went to prison and suffered financial losses.

In 2017, 555 sub-postmasters sued the Post Office, settling for £58 million in 2019, mostly spent on legal fees. A draft report revealed the Post Office spent £100 million on legal battles despite knowing its defence was false.

Though campaigners pushed for case reviews, only 102 convictions were overturned by March 2024, leading to the scandal being labelled the most widespread miscarriage of justice by the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

Quiz

1. What happened to over 900 sub-postmasters?
2. How much did the Post Office settle for in 2019?
3. How many convictions were overturned by March 2024?

Conversation

A: It was system errors! They made me look like a thief!
B: People think you stole money from the Post Office!
A: I know! It's a mistake. The computer system messed up.
B: But everyone thinks you're guilty! What will you do?
A: I'll fight this in court, believe you me!
B: Well, you've got my backing. You've got to stand up for what's right!

Discussion

1. Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do?
2. Are you good with computers? What problems have you had with them?
3. If you went to prison for years, but were innocent, what would you do after your release?