Twitter Thread by Seán Jones

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What if someone invaded my home, tortured and killed me? What would I want to happen?

I would want that person captured, tried and punished. But I would want one of my colleagues at the Bar to represent my murderer and I would want them to do the best job they could. /1

What if they had been motivated by something I had written?
Same answer.

By my politics or religion?
Same answer.

By my sex, race or sexual orientation?
Same answer.
/2

There are some who think that barristers defending cab rank over the past couple of days are arrogant and detached from reality. I disagree. I believe in a right to representation precisely because I *don't* think that the justice should bend to my interests. /3

Nor do I think it is detached from reality. We have seen many real world regimes experiment with fixing the system by denying representation. Right now there are regimes whose response to lawyers acting for victims of oppression is to arrest the lawyers. /4

Lawyers support a right to representation not because they live in a parallel universe of high principle but because they know what happens in this one when certain principles are abandoned. /5

When I acted for @canonjpemberton it wasn't because I believe in #equalmarriage, although I do and said so publicly and loudly. Nor was it because he is one of the finest people I know, although he most certainly is. I acted for him, ultimately, because he asked me to. /6

It was, of course, an honour to act for Jeremy. The same cannot always be said of one's clients. I got the chance to advocate for something I believed in passionately. Again, that is not always the case. But every client deserves (and I try to give them) my best. /7

Sometimes the planets align and you get a wonderful client, a case of real importance and a win and the public reaction is a firehose of positivity. We're human and the temptation is to revel in it. The temptation is to try to make sure all your cases are like that one. /8

But the danger of lawyers refusing to act for any client who is unpopular (whether because of widespread bigotry at one extreme or entirely deservedly at the other) is real and, one would hope, obvious. /9

Let arguments in court be won on their merits. /10

If you are hoping lawyers will only take arguments you approve of or only represent clients you think deserving then my entirely free advice is to be very careful what you wish for. /end