

UK journalist Asa Winstanley raided by police over Israel-Palestine reporting

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British journalist Asa Winstanley's home in north London was raided by police Thursday morning, acting on the authority of the Terrorism Act (2006). Roughly 10 officers took part, entering the house before 6 a.m. Electronic devices were seized.

A letter was then sent to Winstanley by the Counter Terrorism Command of London's Metropolitan Police explaining that officers were "investigating possible offenses" under Sections 1 and 2 of the Terrorism Act, which relate to the "encouragement of terrorism". All of this took place without Winstanley even being charged.

The raid is another act of blatant political harassment by the British state, aimed at intimidating a prominent reporter and opponent of Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. Winstanley is associate editor at *The Electronic Intifada*, and has also written for *Declassified UK*, *Middle East Monitor*, *Middle East Eye*, *The National*, and *Jacobin*, and is the author of *Weaponising Anti-Semitism: How the Israel Lobby Brought Down Jeremy Corbyn*.

He has more than 100,000 followers on X. According to one of the officers who raided his home, it was his activity on social media that served as the pretext for the warrant.

Among Winstanley's recent posts—indicating what the police and the Labour government would like to outlaw—was a picture of the horrific scenes at Al-Aqsa Hospital in Gaza, where patients were burnt alive in their tents by Israeli bombing, with the caption, "The only definition of Zionism that matters". Another post promoted a livestream discussion of his article on Israel's employment of the Hannibal Directive, "How Israel killed hundreds of its own people on 7 October".

Winstanley is at least the third journalist reporting on Israeli crimes, and British complicity in them, to have

been targeted by police under the Labour government in its less than four months in power.

In August, Richard Medhurst, with over 470,000 followers on X and 330,000 subscribers on YouTube, was arrested at Heathrow Airport under section 12 of the Terrorism Act (2000), relating to the expression of "an opinion or belief that is supportive of a proscribed organisation". He was held for nearly 24 hours, and his electronic devices seized.

Barely more than a week later, Sarah Wilkinson, who writes for *MENA Uncensored*, was arrested in her home by Counter Terrorism police officers, who also searched and seized devices from the premises. Chillingly, under conditions in which the Israeli military is carrying out targeted assassinations, and has murdered over 140 journalists and media workers already, Wilkinson was asked to give up details of her contacts in Gaza; and refused to.

Medhurst and Wilkinson's arrests followed the detention last October of independent journalist Craig Murray under schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act (2000), which allows the police to stop anyone crossing the UK's borders "to determine whether they may be involved or concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism."

Murray was interrogated at Glasgow airport for an hour, with no lawyer or right to remain silent, about his activity in support of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and in opposition to Israel's war. His phone was withheld for "further investigation".

Amid overwhelming popular revulsion and hostility to the war crimes and ethnic cleansing in Gaza, the ruling class in Britain and internationally are resorting to police-state measures to crush opposition. Journalists are particular targets in an effort to draw a veil of silence over the genocide and block serious challenge

to the lying narrative that Israel is “defending itself”.

The draconian “anti-terror” legislation brought in under Tony Blair’s Labour government in the early 2000s is now being put to its always-intended use under Blair’s successor, Sir Keir Starmer. By designating Hamas a terrorist organisation and declaring any opposition to Israel’s war support for Hamas, the British state has a dragnet with which to harass anti-war, anti-imperialist journalists and protesters.

It does not matter to the police and the government that these cases, at this stage, would not stand up in court. They have powers to detain, seize and access devices, and impose stringent bail conditions well before bringing the matter anywhere near a trial.

This is an assault on democracy in which the British ruling class, closely connected with its role in the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, has taken a lead internationally. Right at the start of the UK’s detention of Julian Assange more than 12 years ago—in which Starmer played a key role as Director of Public Prosecutions—the *World Socialist Web Site* made the warning that his treatment was about setting a precedent for the persecution of all journalists who got in the way of imperialism and its allies.

As we summarised after his extradition hearing in October 2020, “The imperialist powers intend to make truth the first casualty of new and even bloodier wars and regimes to come... The growth of rampant militarism and imperialist oppression abroad has advanced in lockstep with a turn to dictatorship at home.”

Countless examples confirming this analysis can be pointed to internationally. In Britain, significant cases include the detention and later arrest of publisher Ernesto Moret at London St Pancras International in April 2023, again under counter-terror laws, in connection with contemporary French protests over the raising of the retirement age.

The next month, *Grayzone* writer Kit Klarenberg was detained at Luton Airport under the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act (2019), following his publication of a significant article on the British connection with the bombing of the Kerch bridge to Crimea. The law allows the questioning of a person at a border to determine if they are or have been engaged in “hostile activity”.

Winstanley’s targeting highlights another imperialist

campaign in which the British ruling class played a pioneering role: the slandering of anti-Zionists as antisemites.

The *Electronic Intifada* reporter has been a hate figure of the Blairite majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party for years for his exposures of their efforts to witch-hunt left-wing members and remove Corbyn from leadership and then the party. Winstanley’s own membership fell victim to the purge in 2019, with the details of the suspension leaked to the *Jewish Chronicle*.

Later that year, his press credentials for covering the Labour Party conference were revoked without explanation. Corbyn, still Labour leader at the time, said nothing to oppose Winstanley’s exclusion.

The fight to oppose attacks on democracy, above all the outlawing of political opinions and independent journalism, is an essential element of the struggle by the working class against imperialism and war.



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