

Justin Carter released on bail after anonymous donation

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Justin Carter, a Texas teenager jailed as a “terrorist” for a Facebook post, was released pending trial earlier this month after an anonymous donor posted his bond.

On the basis of a Facebook post, Justin Carter was arrested on February 14 and charged with making a “terroristic threat” to “impair public/government service.” He faces up to 10 years in prison. A SWAT team later raided his apartment, seizing his computer and a gaming console.

Justin Carter was 18 at the time of his arrest. He had a job at an audio-visual company in New Braunfels, Texas, near San Antonio, and aspired to a career in a technical field. He was living in an apartment and supporting himself, and never previously had any trouble with the law.

In an Internet jousting session related to an online game on February 13, another player accused Justin of being crazy. His sarcastic response was, “I’m f---ed in the head alright. I think I’m shoot up a kindergarten and watch the blood of the innocent rain down and eat the beating heart of one of them.” Then Justin wrote, “j/k” (which means “just kidding”).

Police arrested him at work the following day. Subsequent police searches and investigations yielded no weapons, no plans to acquire weapons, no motive, no target, no intended victims, no conspiracy, no membership in a terrorist group, and no plans to carry out an attack on a particular day or at a particular place. Justin Carter is being prosecuted on the basis of the Facebook post alone.

The judge vindictively set the bond for Justin Carter’s release at \$500,000, implying that the teenager was a serious threat to the community. The high bond was also calculated to encourage Justin and his family to accept the prosecutor’s offer of a guilty plea in return for eight years in prison.

While in prison, Justin was repeatedly assaulted by

other inmates. At one point he was placed in solitary confinement, which involves being locked in a windowless room for 23 out of 24 hours a day. He turned 19 in jail.

Bond agents usually charge a fee of ten to fifteen percent to post a bond. According to Justin’s father, the donor, who remains anonymous, donated the full half million to cover the fee.

Justin Carter’s legal troubles are by no means over. His trial is scheduled for next year, and he still faces up to ten years in prison if convicted. His lawyer, Donald Flanary III, has indicated that he intends to fight the charges and may even file a civil rights case against the government. Flanary has volunteered to represent Justin Carter free of charge.

Justin Carter’s case has attracted wide international attention, with 173,900 signatures as of this writing on an online petition for Justin Carter’s release. At the time the *World Socialist Web Site* interviewed Justin Carter’s mother last month, the petition had gathered around 1,000 signatures.

“Justin and his family are overjoyed at his release and tremendously thankful to an anonymous Good Samaritan who has posted his half-million dollar bond. He also wishes to thank his supporters all across America including those who have been signing the petition on Change.org,” Flanary stated in a press release on behalf of the family.

“While Justin acknowledges the insensitivity of his words of February 13th, he looks forward to vigorously defending his First Amendment rights to free expression on the Internet.”

The prosecution of Justin Carter is part of a disturbing trend in the US that involves young people being arrested and charged as “terrorists,” including in connection with their online activities.

In May, Massachusetts teenager Cameron D’Ambrosio

was arrested and charged with “terrorism” for posting rap lyrics to his Facebook account. He was subsequently released when a grand jury refused to indict him, but not before he spent several weeks in jail.

Earlier this year, Michigan high school student Alex David Rosario was arrested and charged with “domestic terrorism” for allegedly making threats on Twitter about his co-workers at a Subway restaurant.

Two teenage girls in Louisiana were arrested in January and charged with 10 counts of “terrorism” for emails they sent to other students and faculty at their high school.

Also in January of this year, an undercover government agent convinced 18-year-old New York resident Justin Kaliebe, who suffers from autism, to board a flight to Yemen. In February, Kaliebe pled guilty to a charge of providing “material support to a terrorist organization.”

Josh Pillaut, 19, of Oxford, Mississippi faces “terrorist” charges for a conversation that took place on the online game Runescape, during which another player allegedly goaded him into saying that he would shoot up the local school. A SWAT team involving FBI and ATF agents raided the teenager’s house several days later, dragging his parents out into the front yard. No weapons were found. Josh Pillaut has been in prison for the past nine months, and, like Justin Carter, faces a sentence of up to ten years.

Online postings such as Justin Carter’s, regardless of their content, are one hundred percent protected free speech under the First Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights. In an earlier period, it was well established in cases such as *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969) that speech by itself, including “mere advocacy” of terrorism, is “immunized from governmental control.” These legal protections are now under deliberate and relentless attack.

“We are over the moon,” Jennifer Carter told the WSWS, referring to her son’s release. “Justin is doing well but we are giving him time and space to adjust to being out in the world. We still have a court battle ahead of us and getting Justin independent again.”



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