

Britain outlines new “anti-terror” laws

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3 September 2014

Prime Minister David Cameron has outlined further drastic attacks on democratic rights, under the fraudulent pretext of combating “extremism” and upholding “British values”.

Fundamental democratic norms are being obliterated in a manufactured atmosphere of fear in preparation for more predatory wars. The Conservative Party leader asserted the need for new “anti-terror” measures based on information the intelligence agencies had on Friday. Without giving any details whatsoever, the terrorist threat level in the UK had been raised from “substantial” to “severe”.

Addressing parliament Monday, Cameron said it was necessary to confront the threat of “Islamic extremism” in Iraq and Syria: “We must use all the resources at our disposal—our aid, diplomacy and military—and we need a firm security response, whether that means military action to go after the terrorists, international co-operation on intelligence or uncompromising action against terrorists at home.”

The police would be given new statutory powers to confiscate the passports of suspected “terrorists” at UK borders, said Cameron. Existing powers, under which “the Home Secretary already has the discretion to issue, revoke and refuse passports under the royal prerogative if there is reason to believe that people are planning to take part in terrorist-related activity,” were not adequate, he declared. A “targeted, discretionary power to allow us to exclude British nationals from the UK” would be put forward.

Cameron said the police at the UK border only have “limited stop-and-search powers... we will introduce specific and targeted legislation providing the police with a temporary power to seize a passport at the border, during which time they will be able to investigate the individual concerned.”

The justice system in the UK would be muzzled, he claimed, if there was any successful challenge to the

current legislation, adding that “if there is any judgment that threatens the operation of our existing powers, we will introduce primary legislation immediately so that Parliament, not the courts, can determine whether it is right that we have this power.” Even ahead of any such ruling, “[W]e will start preparing the primary legislation and consult Parliament on the draft clauses.”

The government will move to prevent Britons “who declare their allegiance elsewhere” to be barred from returning to the UK. Such a measure would be contrary to international and British common law, as it would make someone with sole British nationality stateless. The details of this plan would be discussed “on a cross-party basis,” said Cameron.

To enforce who can and cannot travel to and from the UK, new legislation will mean, “Airlines will have to comply with our no-fly list arrangements, give us information on passenger lists and comply with our security screening requirements. If they do not do so, their flights will not be able to land in Britain.”

Further powers are to be put in place “to manage the risk posed by suspected extremists who are already in the United Kingdom,” said Cameron. He proposed a return to the Control Orders first brought in by the Labour government of Tony Blair in 2005. They gave authorities the power to permanently relocate a suspect, who may not have been charged or convicted of anything, to another part of the country and to ban them from certain areas. In 2011 Control Orders were rebranded and slightly modified as the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measure (TPIM). Under TPIMs an individual’s movements were restricted for two years, a period which can be continually renewed by the Home Secretary.

The proposed legislation follows a raft of authoritarian measures introduced by successive governments. Under the guise of fighting “terrorism”

and “extremism” their real target is to suppress growing opposition to savage austerity and imperialist war.

What is now defined as “extremism” proves this. The December 2013 report of the “Prime Minister’s Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism” defined “extremism” in the broadest terms possible. The report states extremism is “vocal or active opposition to *fundamental British values*, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. *There is a range of extremist individuals and organisations, including Islamists, the far right and others*” [emphasis added].

Outlining the new legislation Cameron said, “Dealing with the terrorist threat is about not just new powers *but how we combat extremism in all its forms*. That is why we have a new approach to tackling radicalisation, *focusing on all types of extremism, not just violent extremism*” [emphasis added].

“Adhering to British values is not an option or a choice; it is a duty for all those who live in these islands,” he added.

Cameron cited the increase in the threat level and that “we now believe that at least 500 people have travelled from Britain to fight in the region” [Syria and Iraq] as why new laws curtailing democratic rights were essential.

Whom is he trying to kid? In the first place any Briton travelling to Syria and Iraq to fight will likely already be very well known to the intelligence agencies. This is especially the case given that the Cameron government was actively promoting the “rebel” forces in Syria against the government of President Bashar al-Assad. Were Britain to have participated in Washington’s planned air strikes against Assad last year, they would have done so in alliance with the very same forces now described as “extremists.”

Cameron announced that UK military action against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces could take place without any parliamentary vote. “The British government must reserve the right to act immediately and inform the House of Commons afterwards,” he said.

Prior to his statement, Cameron was ensconced in talks over the weekend with Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, leader of his Liberal Democrat coalition partners. The BBC and *Guardian* had claimed that Clegg was averse to endorsing some of the proposals and would be a restraining influence on the Tories.

Within hours of Cameron’s statement, Clegg said he was signed up to virtually everything being put forward. Asked if he opposed powers taking away the citizenship of Britons returning to the UK, he told the BBC’s Today programme that the Liberal Democrats had not tried to block such action. He issued instead an equivocal statement that it was “right to examine the options,” continuing, “we are not going to do something that flouts international and domestic law”. But regarding whether or not passports would be removed, he said, “It is not a question of whether I will let it happen. It is important to underline this is not an argument between two political parties.”

It was possible, Clegg went on, to “square the circle” by giving the police greater powers to temporarily confiscate passports.

He lauded “new measures that will stop people arriving in the first place,” saying “if there are people who we don’t want to board an airplane and we don’t even want that airplane to land in the United Kingdom, we can do that.”

Clegg also endorsed military strikes in Iraq without the authorisation of parliament, saying, “the state reserves the right to do that.”

The opposition Labour Party fully backed Cameron, with Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper stating, “I’m glad the government has admitted it was a mistake to weaken counter-terror powers four years ago, and has agreed to our call for the return of the stronger powers we had before.”



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