

Oppose the detention of Kit Klarenberg! End British state intimidation of anti-NATO journalists!

WSWS International Editorial Board
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The *World Socialist Web Site* denounces the police detention of British journalist Kit Klarenberg at Luton Airport on May 17, after he arrived from Belgrade, Serbia, where he lives. Klarenberg, a writer for *The Grayzone*, was interrogated; had his bank cards, electronic devices and SD cards seized; and had his fingerprints, photo and DNA taken, under Schedule 3 to the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019.

Klarenberg was targeted for his journalism exposing the criminal activity of British imperialism and the NATO powers. *The Grayzone* noted in its report of these events published Wednesday how, in the past year, Klarenberg has “revealed how a cabal of Tory national security hardliners violated the Official Secrets Act to exploit Brexit and install Boris Johnson as prime minister,” exposed “British plans to bomb the Kerch Bridge connecting Crimea to the Russian Federation” and reported “on the CIA’s recruitment of two 9/11 hijackers.”

In June of last year, Klarenberg used leaked emails to detail British warmonger Paul Mason’s scheming with influential figures in and around the British and American states to shut down *The Grayzone* and other anti-NATO publications and organisations. Mason reported Klarenberg to the police.

The next month, Klarenberg’s attendance was requested at a police station to be questioned regarding “allegations against you relating to offences of harassment, malicious communication and offences under the computer misuse act.” He was informed in September that the case had been closed with “insufficient evidence to proceed.”

A copy of the Notice of Detention provided to Klarenberg explains that he was detained so that officers could determine “whether you appear to be a person who is or has been engaged in hostile activity.” Such an examination can be made of anyone at a UK port, airport or border crossing.

The definition of “hostile activity” given in the law includes any act that “threatens national security” or “the

economic well-being of the United Kingdom in a way relevant to the interests of national security” and which “is or may be carried out...in the interests of a State other than the United Kingdom.”

The law states that it is “immaterial,” firstly, “whether a person is aware” that they are engaged in “hostile activity,” and secondly, whether the state “in the interests of which a hostile act is carried out” is in any way “aware of the carrying out of the act.”

Klarenberg’s detention notice further explains, “You are not under criminal investigation and are not under arrest on suspicion of having committed an offence. For this reason you are not being issued with a caution and do not have the right to remain silent.”

He was instructed that he had to “answer questions,” “give the examining officer any information in your possession which the officer request” (including “PINs and passcodes”) and to “cooperate with any search of your person or property,” or else face arrest and prosecution for failing to comply. The maximum sentence is 51 weeks imprisonment or a £2,500 fine.

A legal no man’s land is created by the law, in which a person is under pain of arrest but without the fundamental protection of the right to remain silent. Even the right to legal consultation before questioning can be denied if “the examining officer reasonably believes that postponing the questioning until then would be likely to prejudice determination of the relevant matters.”

The law is a naked pretext for political intimidation and surveillance worthy of the Gestapo, and that is exactly how it was used.

Klarenberg’s article on the Kerch Bridge attack explains, “At almost precisely the time that London reportedly sabotaged peace talks between Kiev and Moscow in April this year, British military intelligence operatives were drawing up blueprints to destroy a major Russian bridge crossed by thousands of civilians per day.” The state is

treating Klarenberg as a Russian agent, attempting to intimidate and silence him from conducting such deeply compromising exposures of British imperialism.

The Grayzone reports that during his detention Klarenberg was asked a “series of unfounded questions related to Russia: Does *The Grayzone* have an agreement of any kind with Russia’s Federal Security Bureau (FSB) to publish hacked material? Has Klarenberg knowingly been in contact with any FSB operatives? Is he in touch with current or former personnel of Russian state media? Who owns *The Grayzone* and is it sponsored by Russia?”

The police also questioned how much he was paid by *The Grayzone* and into which bank account, who owned the site, and how much contact he had with editor Max Blumenthal.

That Klarenberg’s detention was aimed at policing political opinions was made clear by questions, again as reported by *The Grayzone*, such as: “Was he involved in any activist causes in Belgrade? What did he think of the Russian government? Did he have an opinion on Russia’s arrest of Evan Gerskovich of the *Wall Street Journal*? What did he think of Rishi Sunak? One officer complained incessantly about Keir Starmer being ‘useless,’ prompting Klarenberg to wonder if the comments were a dangle aimed at drawing him out.”

Upon his release, Klarenberg’s tablet and two SD cards were withheld for a week. One of the cards remains with the police on the grounds that it may be “relevant to criminal proceedings.”

This is the second time in less than two months that UK police have used counter-terror legislation to intimidate political opposition. Last April, French publisher Ernest Moret was picked up in St Pancras station on his way to the London Book Fair and questioned in connection with his participation in protests against the Macron government—in that case under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

The precedent for Britain’s arbitrary detention of journalists and publishers was set by the seizure and imprisonment of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on behalf of the United States—seeking his extradition under the Espionage Act. Journalism that undermines the lies used to justify imperialist military aggression and human rights abuses is being outlawed. Assange is still in Belmarsh maximum security prison, his life at risk, for reporting on leaked US state secrets; Klarenberg is harassed by UK police for doing the same with British secrets.

Worse punishments are being prepared, with these police-state measures justified by branding political opponents and serious investigative journalists agents of foreign powers.

The UK’s National Security Bill, in its final stages before becoming law, creates a life sentence for anyone who “obtains, copies, records or retains protected information, or

discloses or provides access to protected information” deemed “prejudicial to the safety or interests of the United Kingdom” on the condition, given in the explanatory notes, “that the person is aware that their conduct will benefit” any “foreign power.”

A fourteen-year sentence can be levelled against anyone who “engages in conduct” that they “ought reasonably to know” is “likely to materially assist a foreign intelligence service.”

Assange was specifically referenced and denounced by Labour and Conservative MPs alike during the Bill’s passage through Parliament.

The bipartisan support for a crackdown on anti-war activity extends to the corporate media, which loyally reproduces NATO’s narrative and is viciously hostile to genuinely independent journalism. At time of publication, no major news site has reported Klarenberg’s detention.

In fact, it was the mainstream press that created the conditions for black-guarding oppositional journalists, with the *Guardian* painting Assange as a Russian stooge in articles now fully exposed as fabrications.

The Espionage Act 1917 used to prosecute Assange in the US was enacted to suppress opposition to the First World War, above all the activity of socialists giving political expression to the revolutionary movement in the international working class that threatened to topple the capitalist warmongers from power. As the world moves toward a Third World War, the same ruling class fears motivate the use of the “national security” and “counter-terror” legislation being deployed against political opponents.

A movement in the working class against the NATO-Russia war must confront and demolish the battery of anti-democratic legislation built up by capitalist states. The WSWS calls on workers and youth internationally to demand the immediate dropping of the trumped-up investigation against Klarenberg and freedom for Julian Assange, as part of the struggle to build a mass socialist anti-war movement.



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