

Craig Murray, defender of Julian Assange, detained under Britain's anti-terror laws

Statement by the Socialist Equality Party (UK)
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The Socialist Equality Party denounces the British authorities' menacing detention of Craig Murray under repressive anti-terror laws. The human rights activist and former British diplomat was detained and questioned under the Prevention of Terrorism Act at Glasgow Airport on Monday.

Murray was returning from Iceland where he met with senior figures in the Julian Assange defence campaign. On Sunday, he joined a protest called by the Palestine Solidarity Committee outside the parliament in Reykjavik against Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.

Murray has campaigned prominently for the freedom of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange, incarcerated without charge in London's HMP Belmarsh maximum-security prison. Assange faces imminent extradition to the United States, under the Espionage Act, for his courageous exposure of US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. The charges against him by the US government carry a prison term of 175 years, effectively a death sentence.

Three unnamed counter-terrorism officers interrogated 65-year-old Murray for an hour, seizing his laptop and electronic devices.

Murray told *Grayzone* he was questioned intensively about his political beliefs, "First, they grilled me about the private Assange Campaign meeting... all the questions were financial," including "whether I get money for my contributions to the Campaign, if I get paid by WikiLeaks, Don't Extradite Assange, even Julian's family."

He answered "no" to each of these questions, telling reporter Kit Klarenberg, "My sources of income and where my money comes from were of particular interest to the officers."

Klarenberg was himself detained under anti-terror laws in May after he wrote articles exposing British

military operations targeting Russia's Kerch Bridge. The bridge's bombing last October was immediately pinned on Russian armed forces, and used to ratchet-up NATO's war against Russia in the Crimea.

Grayzone reports that counter-terror officers also questioned Murray about his popular blog, demanding to know "whether anyone else had access to it or could publish content on the platform, and if anyone other than himself authored any of its posts."

British authorities have targeted Murray over his vocal opposition to Israel's assault on Gaza, armed and financed by the US and British governments. Officers demanded to know why Murray had attended the pro-Palestinian protest in Iceland and what the speakers on the platform had said. Murray explained he does not speak Icelandic.

On X/Twitter, Murray has exposed the complicity of the imperialist powers with Israel's murderous siege. Responding to European Union President Ursula von der Leyen's visit to Israel on October 13, where she denounced Hamas as a terrorist organisation, Murray wrote, "You have turned up to give cover and support to genocide."

He later wrote, "To be entirely plain. I have always viscerally opposed war. I have dedicated my life to conflict resolution and reconciliation. But in the coming Gaza genocide, every act of armed resistance by Hamas and Hezbollah will have my support. If that is a crime, send me back to jail."

In July 2021, Murray received an unprecedented eight-month prison sentence over "jigsaw identification" of witnesses in the failed sexual assault trial of former Scottish National Party leader Alex Salmond. Murray's imprisonment was payback for his role in defending Assange.

On Monday, counter-terror police demanded to know

whether Murray would attend future pro-Palestinian protests, to which he replied “probably”. He said they also asked him, “how do I judge whether to share a platform with someone or not?”

Murray’s interrogation has an unmistakable meaning: domestic opposition to Israel’s war of annihilation against the Palestinians in Gaza—backed to the hilt by the British government and the Labour Party—is being criminalised. His detention is part of preparations to ban protests, order mass arrests of workers and young people who oppose Israel’s war crimes in Gaza, and prosecute those posting and sharing information in defence of the Palestinians.

WikiLeaks editor in-chief Kristinn Hrafnsson posted on X/Twitter on Tuesday, “I am horrified to learn of this abuse of the Terrorism Act against a friend and #Assange supporter that I invite to Iceland to discuss the campaign to save Julian and press freedom. This is a serious issue and examples of misuse of the Terrorism Act in recent months against artists, writers, journalists and activists are piling up.”

The British government is pressing into service the battery of anti-terror laws introduced after 9/11 to eviscerate democratic rights. Murray was detained under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act (2000). In April, British counter-terrorism officers detained and interrogated French publisher Ernest Moret for two days under the same schedule over his participation in mass protests against French President Macron. Klarenberg was detained in May, under Schedule 3, Section 4 of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Act (2019).

In recent months, the British government has adopted a raft of new laws, including the Public Order Act (2023), the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022), the Online Safety Bill (2023) and the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act (2023) which hand sweeping powers to the state to ban protest, suppress free speech, enforce online censorship and outlaw industrial action in essential industries.

The turn by the ruling class to naked state repression will only serve to inflame mass popular indignation, anger and protest. The global movement of the working class against austerity, dictatorship and imperialist war must be unified across national borders in the fight for world socialism. It must inscribe on its banner the demand: Free Julian Assange!



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