

Craig Murray seeks UN protection in Switzerland against British police-state persecution

Laura Tiernan
27 October 2023

Former diplomat-turned-whistleblower Craig Murray is in Switzerland, appealing for United Nations (UN) protection after British police informed the human rights activist that he is the subject of a counter-terrorism investigation.

Murray was detained under Section 7 of the Terrorism Act (2000) at Glasgow Airport on October 16. Counter-terrorism police interrogated the 65-year-old about his political activity in defence of imprisoned WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange, and his opposition to Israel's war on Gaza.

On Tuesday, Murray issued a defence fund appeal to help meet legal costs, announcing on his popular blog, "Incredibly, I Face Investigation for Terrorism". It featured a photograph of the letter he received from Police Scotland's Border Policing Command, informing him that his mobile phone, seized at Glasgow Airport three days earlier, was being retained under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act for "further investigation".

Murray's targeting under anti-terror laws is a warning to the working class. Under conditions of mass popular opposition to Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, backed by US and British imperialism, a terrified ruling class is moving to criminalize left-wing, anti-war and socialist activity.

Under Britain's draconian anti-terror laws, Murray had no right to a lawyer during his hour-long detention, and no right to remain silent. He was forced to provide passwords for his electronic devices.

As Murray wrote on October 24, "This is an enormous abuse of human rights. The abuse of process in refusing both a lawyer and the right to remain silent, the inquiry into perfectly legal campaigning which is in

no way terrorism-associated, the political questioning, the financial snooping and the seizure of material related to my private life, were all based on an utterly fake claim that I am associated with terrorism."

The British state's persecution of Murray eerily resembles its vindictive witch-hunt of Assange. The WikiLeaks founder is detained without charge at London's Belmarsh prison, facing US extradition under the Espionage Act, in retribution for his courageous exposure of US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Earlier today, Murray outlined the extraordinary steps he took to reach Switzerland: travelling by public transport from Edinburgh to Belfast, and then a late-night taxi to Dublin—all to avoid transit through British airports where he rightly fears further detention and harassment.

He explained, "I didn't really volunteer to fight the British police state, it came after me. But here we are, and here I am, in Switzerland, seeking the protection of the United Nations.

"I still don't actually know whether the terrorism investigation into me is focused on Palestine or on Wikileaks. It seems to be both and anything else they can get."

Lawyers acting on Murray's behalf have sent a formal complaint to five UN Special Rapporteurs, CCd to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and to the President of the UN Human Rights Council, protesting his persecution with bogus terrorism investigations. The letter is signed by Douwe Korff, Emeritus professor of international law at London Metropolitan University, and Sharof Azizov, founder of Justice for All.

“We believe this constitutes a violation of human rights, specifically his rights to freedom of expression, privacy, and due process and international law,” they write.

The letter draws attention also to the British authorities’ violation of journalistic privilege. They explain, “The use of Section 7 of the Terrorism Act... raises concerns about the misuse of anti-terror laws to intimidate and silence journalists and activists. The line of questioning included inquiries into his political affiliations, sources of income, and participation in human rights campaigns, among other topics.”

The letter states, “We express our grave concern about the unfettered powers of the UK security authorities and police to download and keep information from private devices under the guise of fighting terrorism”, and that Murray’s treatment “is part of a broader pattern affecting journalists and human rights defenders in the UK.”

Murray’s lawyers cited the recent interrogations under British anti-terror laws of Grayzone journalist Kit Klarenberg and French left-wing publisher and political activist Ernest Moret. They conclude that Murray’s detention under the Terrorism Act, “is not isolated, but is part of a pattern of harassment and intimidation that Mr. Murray has been subjected to, and it has broader implications for the state of human rights and freedom of expression in the UK, particularly for journalists and human rights defenders.”

As Murray explained earlier today, referring to his four-month imprisonment on frame-up charges related to his media commentary on the trial of former Scottish National Party leader Alex Salmond for sexual offenses, for which he was acquitted on all counts, “This is the third time since my imprisonment on an outrageous contempt of court finding, that I have been harassed and interviewed by the police.”

Murray’s combative statement explained, “the abuse of special anti-terrorism powers at ports in order to seize all papers and communications of journalists is becoming commonplace. Three other journalists I know personally—Vanessa Beeley, Kit Klarenberg and Johanna Ross—have suffered this. There are many other examples, most notably David Miranda. This really is police state stuff, yet there is an extraordinary lack of outrage from human rights organisations and the mainstream media.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact