

British independent journalist Richard Medhurst raided and detained by Austrian authorities

Robert Stevens
7 February 2025

British independent journalist Richard Medhurst, who has reported critically on Israel's genocide in Gaza, was detained on Monday in Austria. This followed police and intelligence agents raiding his home, ransacking it and confiscating many of his possessions, including all his journalistic tools.

The state agents showed Medhurst a warrant that also required him to face an interrogation. Medhurst was then detained for six to seven hours, fingerprinted, had his DNA taken and photographed for mug shots.

Medhurst was only able finally to release information via social media about the raid and his detention on Thursday due to his equipment being taken away.

Medhurst is also one of a growing number of independent journalists who have been raided and detained by the British state over the past year, utilising draconian anti-terrorism legislation for exposing US, British and Israeli war crimes in Gaza and across the Middle East. Medhurst was arrested at London's Heathrow Airport on August 15 last year as he disembarked from his plane, under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act (2000). He was held for almost 24 hours, questioned, and had all his electronic devices and journalistic equipment confiscated.

His latest arrest comes as the far-right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the conservative People's Party (ÖVP), currently negotiating a coalition government in the Alpine state, plan massive attacks on the working class and on migrants. As the WSWs has reported, the FPÖ are "a party founded by antisemites and in which Nazi positions are widely represented. Like many right-wing parties, it supports the Israeli government in its onslaught against the Palestinians." The previous People's Party/Greens coalition explicitly

supported the genocide in Gaza and "Austria was one of the few countries to vote against the UN General Assembly resolution to improve the humanitarian situation and for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip."

In a video posted Thursday Medhurst stated, "I have been left with literally nothing, I mean just to film this was a struggle." He described the extraordinary lengths that the Austrian state went to ensure his detention.

The journalist explained the latest attack was not simply a repeat of the events in Britain, but "actually a massive escalation" as "they are accusing me of being a member of a proscribed organization", Hamas. Medhurst said, "I categorically deny all of these accusations by the British and Austrian governments. I am not a terrorist. I am a journalist and they bloody well know it."

Describing the harrowing events, Medhurst states:

"On Monday, agents from the Austrian police and intelligence services detained me, raided my home, raided my studio and then interrogated me. They essentially lured me into a trap. So I received a letter from the [Austrian] government last week from immigration summoning me for some interview at my residency. I found it a bit odd because I've lived here for a while and I never had any problems.

"So having nothing to fear I went there went to the meeting by myself. And then, after a few simple questions, they suddenly issued a thinly veiled threat saying they were considering revoking my residency because of my alleged reporting on Palestine and Lebanon.

"So of course my answer was 'no comment' and as soon as I thought everything was over I was ambushed

by a group of plain clothes agent. They entered the room flashing their badges in my face and they said that they were the Austrian equivalent of MI5 or the FBI. They detained me and then they served me with a warrant from the state prosecutor to search my home, search my studio, take all of my devices.

“Why? Because they think that I, a Christian Englishman, am a member of Hamas. Yes you heard that correctly. They are accusing me of being a member of Hamas, of being part of the Al-Qassam Brigades, of disseminating propaganda, encouraging terrorism, being affiliated with organized crime and a terrorist group.”

Medhurst continues, “They seized my phone then they drove me to my residence, ransacked the place. They even took devices which I repeatedly told them do not belong to me. Then they drove me to my studio and turned the place upside down. So I had to watch my devices being disassembled before my very eyes by a group of strangers. All these tools that I spent years building and investing in, you know the core of my journalistic profession. They took in total, they took like five six different laptops and computers, phones, USB sticks, hard drives, DVDs, you name it.

“And although the warrant was for electronic devices only, for some reason they took photos of my residence, photos of the office, of the bathroom. They helped themselves to anything they saw: books, papers, documents, cupboards, closets.”

Medhurst drew attention to the clear connection between his arrest and detention in Britain and the Austrian raid, stating, “Some of these Austrian accusations are very similar to the British ones...”

“As you recall I was unjustly arrested a few months ago in London. They jailed me for almost 24 hours under the Terrorism Act. Strangely enough last week the police in England again extended this investigation and then suddenly this happens in Vienna. I don’t think that is mere coincidence, okay. The first thing I asked the Austrian agents was did my government put you up to this? And they replied, ‘No Britain doesn’t talk to us’”.

Medhurst commented: “Well forgive me but I find that a bit hard to believe. I do think that this persecution, this raid, is related to the case in Britain. I think it’s being coordinated with Britain. My colleague, Stefania Maurizi, who worked on the

Snowden papers with Glenn Greenwald, she reported last month, in *Il Fatto Quotidiano* [*The Daily Fact*], that the British police seized a Graphene OS device from me and that it was very unlikely that they’d be able to crack it.

“So I suppose that’s why Britain asked the Austrians to raid me, grab anything they could find and go on this massive fishing expedition. The warrant even mentions my arrest in London to try and bolster their case.

“The Austrian agents asked me for the passwords to my devices and I said no because as a journalist I have an ethical a professional obligation to protect my sources. None of them were compromised during the raid.”

The raid was also conducted to interfere and disrupt Medhurst’s current activities. He explained, “The next day they dropped by and give me a list of all the things they seized. It was 19 pages long as a matter of fact. I’ve spent the last months writing a book on cyber security, as I’m unable to report and work normally under these circumstances, and they even confiscated my book, the book that I’ve been working on for two years now and just riffled through the manuscripts and the notes like it was nothing.”

Maurizi noted in her January 2 article, “Richard Medhurst is the first reporter arrested and under investigation under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000.” She warns that “if he is indicted and convicted under Section 12, he faces fourteen years in prison....

“If the British authorities prevail [against Medhurst] , no journalist travelling to London will be safe.”

Workers and youth must demand the dropping of all charges against Medhurst and other journalists and political activists being persecuted by Sir Keir Starmer’s Labour government.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)