

Irish band Kneecap leads thousands in chant of ‘Free Palestine’ at Coachella festival

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On Saturday, Irish band Kneecap led thousands of music fans in a chant of “Free Palestine” at the Coachella festival in Indio, California, in the Colorado Desert.

The band performed before projections that read:

Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people. It is being enabled by the U.S. government who arm and fund Israel despite their war crimes. F--- Israel; free Palestine.

Rapper and singer Mo Chara told the crowd,

The Irish not so long ago were persecuted at the hands of the Brits, but we were never bombed from the f----- skies with nowhere to go. The Palestinians have nowhere to go, It's their f----- home, and they're bombing them from the skies. If you're not calling it a genocide, what the f---are you calling it?

As the crowd cheered, the band led a chant of “Free, free Palestine!”

The Coachella music and arts event, launched in 1999, is now held annually on consecutive weekends in April, with the same musical lineup both weekends. As of 2017, it attracted 250,000 people.

According to various media reports, Kneecap’s projections were also used during their appearance on the festival’s first weekend, leading “to the livestream of the band’s set being cut off; on the second weekend,

the Sonora tent’s sets were not livestreamed, presumably due to those messages.” (*Variety*)

Last week, *Variety* added, “the band claimed on X that Coachella had censored their protest, but assured the festival over social media that they would be ‘back next Friday’ and it would ‘be sorted.’” They were as good as their word.

The *Wrap* commented that on Saturday “the band made sure to capture and post images and video of the performance: It wasn’t immediately clear whether any of it came through the official Coachella livestream.” Social media influencer Hasan Piker joined Kneecap on stage and streamed to his own Twitch channel with nearly 3 million followers.

Kneecap is a three-man hip hop group from West Belfast, Northern Ireland. The band members are Mo Chara, Mógláí Bap and DJ Próvaí. They rap in a mix of Irish and English, often with Irish Republican themes. Their first single 'C.E.A.R.T.A.' (Irish for “Rights”) was released in 2017.

The band is known for its support of the Palestinians, flying Palestinian flags at concerts and pledging to boycott Israel.

Also at Coachella, award-winning US punk band Green Day changed a line of their song “Jesus of Suburbia” from “runnin’ away from pain when you’ve been victimized,” to “runnin’ away from pain like the kids from Palestine.”

The *Huffington Post* noted that the

switch came during a quiet moment in the song, and drew cheers from the audience.

It’s not the first time the band has shown solidarity with Palestinians. During a concert in Malaysia in February, [lead singer Billie Joe]

Armstrong draped a Palestinian flag over his shoulder to signal his support for the besieged population of Gaza.

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Variety also reports that “British punk duo Bob Vylan displayed a Palestinian flag during their set weekend one and commented on Gaza as well.”

Kneecap’s performance in particular sparked outrage from pro-Zionist groups.

The *Hollywood Reporter* observed that the executive director of “Creative Community for Peace, a nonprofit comprised of entertainment industry professionals,” called on venues and promoters to boycott the band, and “called for the group’s visas to be revoked as well.”

The organization’s official asserted that:

Festivals such as Coachella are meant to bring people together to celebrate music and life, instead they allowed the festival to devolve into a forum of hate.

In fact, as the WSWS has pointed out, the dishonestly named “Creative Community for Peace” is the “polite face” of right-wing Zionism. Its claim to be an “apolitical organization” is laughable. Formed in 2011 to oppose the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, the CCFP has been associated with StandWithUS, an unabashedly far-right outfit with links to the Israeli government.

The pro-genocide forces can rave all they want, but Kneecap didn’t invent the sentiment expressed Saturday night, nor if the band were expelled from the US would it disappear. The reaction by the crowds at Coachella is no aberration. It is an expression of the anger and horror felt by hundreds of millions around the globe at the never-ending campaign of murder and terror inflicted by the Zionist regime on the populations of Gaza and the West Bank.

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