

Socialist Equality Party (UK) responds to British Foreign Office handwashing over Momodou Taal

Chris Marsden
27 April 2025

On March 31, the Socialist Equality Party (UK) delivered a letter to British Foreign Secretary David Lammy MP insisting the UK government fulfil its obligations towards its citizen Momodou Taal, who was then under threat of detention and deportation from the United States.

The reply received from the “Parliamentary Correspondence Team” of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on April 10, and our response to the foreign secretary, are published below.

Dear Chris Marsden,

Thank you for your recent correspondence of 31 March about Momodou Taal. It has been passed to the US & Canada team in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Thank you for raising your concerns. The risk of detention and deportation of Momodou Taal is an immigration matter and is a matter for the US Government, in accordance with international law. A stable and open international order that safeguards human rights and open societies and is based on respect for international law is a cornerstone of UK foreign policy. We call on States to ensure those in detention are treated in line with international human rights law. This includes being treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, as required by Article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The UK supports freedom of expression as both a human right in and of itself and as an essential element for the enjoyment of the full range of other human rights. We have long history of promoting freedom of expression globally, underpinned by our commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Irregular migration is a global challenge and one that the UK will continue to work closely with its partners on. I hope you will appreciate that, as a third party, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) cannot interfere in US immigration processes, nor can we oblige the US authorities to explain their immigration decisions to us.

Should Mr Taal require consular assistance, he can contact his nearest consulate directly or call the FCDO 24/7 on +44 (0)20 7008 5000.

Yours sincerely,

Parliamentary Correspondence Team

April 27, 2025

The Rt Hon David Lammy MP

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

King Charles Street, London

SW1A 2AH

United Kingdom

Dear Foreign Secretary,

The reply to my March 31 letter, issued in the name of the “Parliamentary Correspondence Team” of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, is a studied refusal by the UK government to defend not only Momodou Taal, but, by extension, any British citizen who falls victim to the arbitrary and unconstitutional actions of the Trump administration in the United States.

My letter to you explained that Mr. Taal faced the risk of unlawful detention and deportation from the United States for his pro-Palestinian activism at Cornell University. I noted that he was one of the hundreds of international students the Trump administration is actively seeking to remove from the US on bogus charges of

antisemitism.

I further noted that those students and workers ordered to be deported have been disappeared into foreign jails, or to Guantanamo Bay, and insisted that the British government defend its citizens' freedom of speech and lawful political activity against the use of "arbitrary state power by any government, including and above all one that the UK is declared to have a 'special relationship' with."

I asked that you "formally insist" that Momodou Taal "is extended his full constitutional protections guaranteeing free speech and that he be allowed to remain in the United States to continue his studies without fear of persecution." Alternatively, should he choose to leave the US, that the government guarantee him safe and dignified passage to the UK.

Momodou took the decision to voluntarily leave the US on the evening of March 31. Under threat of imminent detention, deportation or possible transfer to a prison in El Salvador or Guantanamo Bay, he decided that he had "lost faith that a favourable ruling from the courts would guarantee my personal safety and ability to express my beliefs."

Your belated reply, issued in the name of a faceless subcommittee of the FCDO, makes clear that neither he nor any other British citizen can expect anything different from your government.

Peaceful student protesters, such as Mahmoud Khalil, Rümeysa Öztürk and others, have been abducted, while the Trump administration has invoked the Alien Enemies Act to carry out mass deportations. This month a three-judge panel of the Fourth US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Trump administration is engaged in the systematic trampling on the rights of due process that are "the foundation of our constitutional order", specifically in relation to the detention and deportation of Kilmar Abrego Garcia to a torture-prison in El Salvador.

Yet the FCDO letter declares baldly that the "risk of detention and deportation of Momodou Taal is an immigration matter and is a matter for the US Government, in accordance with international law." When that government is trampling on international human rights law, then what is left of the subsequent claim that "respect for international law is a cornerstone of UK foreign policy"?

The letter states that the UK "supports freedom of expression as both a human right in and of itself and as an essential element for the enjoyment of the full range of other human rights" and boasts of a "long history of

promoting freedom of expression globally". But this clearly refers only to cases involving governments and states targeted for diplomatic and legal hostilities, in line with the predatory geopolitical interests of British imperialism.

On February 27, for example, the FCDO issued a press release in your name condemning Thailand's deportation of 40 Uyghur Muslims to China, urging that Thailand honour its "international obligations."

When it comes to the US, however, we are told that the UK Labour government and the FCDO not only "cannot interfere" with what is referred to obliquely as "immigration processes". Indeed, they cannot even "oblige the US authorities to explain their immigration decisions to us."

The UK is directly colluding with the Trump administration in a ruthless crackdown on opposition to Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza. This includes a student at SOAS university charged, and another arrested, under terrorism legislation and many more facing investigation, suspension and expulsion for their activism—well over 100, according to rights group Liberty—and several prominent journalists and an academic detained at Britain's airports.

Moreover, it is clear that if the government will not oppose the illegal and arbitrary detention of its own citizens in the US, then it will not be long before foreign nationals will be deported from the UK for politically opposing the UK's collusion with the Gaza genocide and its broader predatory war aims.

The Socialist Equality Party will continue our strenuous opposition to the assault on democratic rights by your government in the UK and the Trump administration in the US.

Yours sincerely,
Chris Marsden



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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