

Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh and Kneecap defiant at Westminster Magistrates' court hearing

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Our reporters
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Kneecap member Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh (O’Hanna), who performs under the stage name Mo Chara (My Friend), appeared in Westminster Magistrates’ court Wednesday morning.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) alleges he displayed a Hezbollah flag on stage at the O2 Forum in Kentish Town, London, on November 21, 2024. Hezbollah, with over a dozen representatives in the Lebanese parliament, is designated a “proscribed organisation” by the UK government.

If convicted, Ó hAnnaidh faces up to six months in prison, a £5,000 fine, or both.

His lawyers sought to have the case thrown out, arguing that the statutory six-month time limit on bringing charges under Section 13 of the Terrorism Act (2000) had been broken by the CPS.

At the very least, prosecutors laid charges at the last possible moment. The fact highlights the politically motivated nature of the prosecution and its desperate character.

The Metropolitan Police’s Counter Terrorism Command was reportedly alerted to a video from the O2 Forum on April 22. A full month later, at the eleventh hour, a prosecution was brought amid a wave of support for the band after its pro-Palestinian stand at the Coachella music festival in the United States.

Ó hAnnaidh and Kneecap remain defiant, continuing their defence of the Palestinians and democratic rights. A member of the legal team told the crowd:

“Around the world Kneecap are hailed as heroes for speaking truth to power, but in the British court they’ve

been criminalised and today the truth was outed – this was a rushed prosecution following the Coachella performance where Kneecap did not shy away from speaking truth to power.”

A statement released by the band Wednesday afternoon said perceptively:

“Mo Chara’s real problem is that the message he put out landed. Working-class people aren’t meant to speak like this, organise like this, or connect struggles across borders like this. That’s what scares them.

“While Mo Chara stands in the dock for allegedly waving a flag, those complicit in a genocide walk the streets untouched. Since October 2023, over 60,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza—entire families erased, journalists targeted, children bombed in their beds.”

A large protest took place outside the court, gathering from 8am, two hours ahead of the start time for the hearing, and still going into the afternoon. A crowdfunder has raised nearly £20,000.

Large numbers stopped to speak with members of the Socialist Equality Party distributing the SEP’s statement, “Defend Kneecap! Drop the terror charges against Liam O’Hanna!” which argues:

“They are being persecuted because they are giving voice to the deep anger, disgust and moral outrage felt by hundreds of millions of workers and youth worldwide who want the genocide to end, and the perpetrators punished.

“They are being persecuted to intimidate and ultimately criminalise mass opposition to genocide and

war.”

Danielle told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “The governments are complicit... the media are silent... So we have to rise up as a people. This is a revolution of the working class. We are mobilising. This is never going to end until Palestine is free because until Palestine is free, none of us are free.”

Asad explained, “Any movement of this scale... with the sheer size of support that we’ve seen globally is a grassroots movement, it is a socialist movement at heart, it is a working-class movement at heart. It is a movement for freedom, freedom from oppression.

Both Danielle and Asad took part in the Global March to Gaza through Egypt and highlighted the severe repression they had faced at the hands of the el-Sisi government, which works “hand in glove with the Tel Aviv regime.”

Ciara said, of the terrorism charges, “He hasn’t done anything compared to what the government has done. They’re trying to repress voices; it’s the same story all the time...”

“It’s easy to feel defenceless because governments have so much power but if people don’t stand up for what they believe in then nothing’s ever going to change.”

The Socialist Equality Party will join the protest outside the next hearing in O’hAnraidh’s case on August 20. We call on all workers and students to show their support and defeat this attack on democratic rights, artistic freedom and the movement in defence of the Palestinians.



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