

Irish rap group Kneecap banned from entering Canada for speaking out against genocide

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The three-man Irish hip hop band Kneecap has been banned from entering Canada ahead of their sold-out concert dates in Toronto and Vancouver planned for October. Liberal MP Vince Gasparro, the parliamentary secretary for combating crime, announced the measure in a video statement filled with lies and doublespeak on the platform X (owned by jet-setting Hitler-saluting neo-Nazi, mega billionaire Elon Musk).

Liam Óg Ó Hanaidh (Mo Chara), Naoise Ó Cairealláin (Móglai Bap) and JJ Ó Dochartaigh (DJ Próvai) have been courageously speaking out against Israel's Gaza genocide, which has been supported and facilitated by Canada and all the imperialist powers. Kneecap has garnered support and popularity among global audiences and fellow artists due to their courageous stand.

After their performance at the Coachella music festival in April, where they projected statements condemning the Israeli government, their weekly US streams nearly doubled. Their set in June in Glastonbury "was so popular that organizers had to shut access to the arena to stop overcrowding," according to a *New York Times* article. For this reason, Kneecap has become a target for persecution by Zionist organizations, right-wing media outlets and now governments.

Canada is second on the list of countries to deny them entry after Hungary did so on July 24. The Hungarian government, whose far-right President Tamás Sulyok falsified his father's Nazi past, has accused Kneecap of engaging in "antisemitic hate speech."

In his extraordinary announcement, Gasparro builds his entire case against Kneecap on the Terrorism Act charge the UK government has levelled against Kneecap member Liam Óg Ó Hanaidh, which he is scheduled to fight in court in London on September 26. Equating an investigation with guilt, Gasparro accused the band of "advocating for political violence, glorifying terrorist organizations and displaying hate symbols that directly target the Jewish community." The words "violence," "hate" and "terrorist/terrorism" are repeated four times in the 1 minute and 40-second-long video.

Meanwhile, this is how Gasparro refers to the slaughter of well over 65,000 Palestinians and the mass starvation of

hundreds of thousands:

"Let me be clear, Canada is never to be used as a platform for extremism or political violence and we will not tolerate *international conflicts* being used as an excuse to intimidate and harass Canadians here at home."

Kneecap has announced they will pursue legal action against Vince Gasparro.

"No member of Kneecap has been convicted of ANY crime in ANY country EVER...We will be relentless in defending ourselves against baseless accusations to silence our opposition to a genocide being committed by Israel," they wrote in a statement. They have also called to their fans to "stand up and speak out."

The Socialist Equality Party in the UK wrote in a statement denouncing the terrorism charges on May 22nd 2025:

Kneecap's targeting under counter-terrorism laws underscores the connection between imperialist war, genocide, and the turn to dictatorial forms of rule. ...

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.

The hypocrisy of the Canadian government banning a music group for alleged "hate speech" and "antisemitism" was not lost on online users reacting to Gasparro's video statement.

A user on X posted an image of the Canadian parliament applauding Ukrainian Nazi Waffen-SS Veteran Yaroslav Hunka in September of 2023 and wrote, "Nazis fine. People speaking out against the genocide you are enabling no bueno."

Another popular comment read, "So IDF [Israel Defense Force] soldiers that are committing a genocide can enter the country but an Irish band that says that genocide is wrong

can't? Make it make sense."

A Canadian Reddit user commenting on an article about the ban remarked, "They're being banned for opinions shared by a large number of Canadians. There have been regular protests for Palestine in my city since the start of Israel's invasion in October."

Gasparro's assertions about Kneecap's views being contrary to "Canadian values and laws" pertain to the Canadian ruling elite rather than the Canadian population.

Since October 2023, there have been hundreds of protests across Canada in support of the Palestinians national rights and against the Israeli genocide with hundreds of thousands participating. Multiple pro-Palestine protests took place throughout this summer including in cities like Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. They are being met with police repression. On July 11th, eleven people were arrested and charged during a pro-Palestinian protest with over a thousand participants. On Saturday, two protesters were arrested in Ottawa during the anti-war, anti-austerity and environmental protest "Draw the Line," where participants waved Palestinian flags and wore keffiyehs.

Democratic rights are being dismantled across all areas of Canadian society. This includes the cultural sphere, where numerous artists have faced bans, intimidation, and even the loss of their job for speaking out against the genocide.

According to an article by the Canadian Press, four faculty and staff unions at McGill University are opposing the university's efforts to limit the right to protest on the campus. The university is seeking an injunction specifically targeting the student organization "Students for Palestine's Honour and Resistance," as well as putting "special security measures" in place to restrict access to their campuses between October 5th and October 7th as a precaution "at a time of elevated potential for disruption." But under the injunction, virtually any noisy protest could be banned, including those by workers protesting over contract negotiations.

Toronto artist Pegah Peivandi was recently prevented from completing a pro-Palestinian mural for the Canadian National Exhibition to which she had been invited. On September 2nd, she posted to Instagram:

About 3 hours into painting, I noticed a police officer circling me, closely watching my progress. I dismissed it, telling myself I wasn't doing anything wrong.

During a break, however, one of the programming coordinators approached me. He showed me a Wikipedia page for Palestinian symbols of freedom, specifically the watermelon. Pointing to my unfinished semi-circle on a black background, he asked, "Is this what this is about?"...When I was asked to change my design, I refused. Why continue painting for an institution that trusted a police officer's assumptions

over my voice, and that reduced genocide to a 'political conversation'? All I had completed was a red semi-circle outlined in white and green. No seeds, no details, just the beginning of a watermelon. That alone was enough to have me escorted out, silenced, and denied the ability to finish.

We are entering a new phase in which protest is not only subject to punishment but increasingly suppressed before it can even occur. On September 19, federal Justice Minister Sean Fraser tabled the "Combatting Hate Act" in Parliament. It follows on from the "bubble zone" municipal bylaws already passed in Toronto, Vaughan, Brampton and Calgary restricting protests within 50 meters of places of worship, schools, childcare centers and other institutions. These legal instruments specifically target anti-genocide protests and put anyone that supports them under general suspicion of promoting "hate," "terrorism" and "antisemitism." The real fascists, meanwhile, like the recently assassinated Charlie Kirk, are worthy of standing ovations in parliament and eulogies by the entire political establishment.

The announcement made Sunday by Prime Minister Carney (along with his British, Australian and Portuguese counterparts) of the recognition of a Palestinian State is a despicable display of hypocrisy meant to distract from these developments, and cover up the Western powers' complicity in the genocide. Diplomatic recognition is dependent on a series of conditions, which incorporate key war aims of Israel's fascist government, including Hamas laying down its weapons and being excluded from any role in the future governance of Palestine. The Canadian government still refuses to call what is happening a genocide, referring in Orwellian terms to "the Israeli government's contribution to the humanitarian disaster in Gaza." Canadian imperialism is trying to cover up its tracks. As the WSWS has previously reported, between October 2023 and July 2025, there were 47 direct military shipments from Canada-based arms manufacturers to Israel. More than 421,000 bullets have been delivered from Canada to Israel since the Gaza genocide was launched, including a single shipment of 175,000 bullets in April.



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