

# Workers Party of Britain leader George Galloway detained in London under counter-terrorism legislation

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George Galloway and his wife Putri Gayatri Pertiwi were detained by Counter Terrorism Command officers at London Gatwick Airport on Saturday morning. Galloway, 71, is the leader of the Workers Party of Britain, and his wife is deputy chair of the party. Active in politics for over 50 years, former Labour Party MP Galloway has been elected to parliament seven times in five different constituencies.

The pair were apprehended after visiting Russia, returning to the UK via a flight from Abu Dhabi.

Galloway and his wife were detained for several hours before being released without charge. Speaking about the event on his online talk show on Sunday evening Galloway said he was told by the police, “You are not under arrest” but “you are not free to leave” and “you do not have the right to remain silent”. Galloway said they were questioned “far and wide” including about “your attitude to the conflict in Gaza; who persuaded you of this point of view; why do you admire Mr. Lavrov? [Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov]; why are you so friendly to China?” Gayatri was asked why a fingernail was painted in the colours of the Palestinian flag.

Galloway declared that none of this had “anything to do with terrorism” and “there is only one reason they detained us there, under that legislation, it was to gain access to our communications.”

Electronic equipment, including a phone, was confiscated. Galloway was instructed to give up a passcode of a phone that didn’t belong to him, but told the police, “I don’t have the password, but if I did, I wouldn’t give it to you.”

After being told this would be an offence, Galloway said that until last year he was a member of parliament

“in possession of vast amounts of confidential correspondence concerning my constituents.” As a journalist and broadcaster, as well as the leader of a British political party, he told police officers he had “contacts, sources in the police itself, in the security services itself... I have contacts in the civil services, the parliament, even in the government. Do you really think I would betray my sources to you?”

As a result of his detention Galloway said, “I missed the speech I was due to give in a meeting in central London in the presence of, amongst others, the ambassador of the... People’s Republic of China.”

Galloway and Gayatri were detained under Schedule 3 of the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019, which allows police officers to stop, question, search and detain a person at a border area to determine if they have engaged in “hostile activity” against the UK.

The legislation—in an all-embracing catch-all—defines “hostile activity” as anything that “threatens national security, threatens the economic well-being of the United Kingdom in a way relevant to the interests of national security, or is an act of serious crime.”

To ensure that literally anyone can be detained, it stipulates, “it is immaterial—(i)whether a person is aware that activity in which they are or have been engaged is hostile activity, or (ii)whether a State for or on behalf of which, or in the interests of which, a hostile act is carried out has instigated, sanctioned, or is otherwise aware of, the carrying out of the act”.

Befitting the police-state regime that the Labour government is wielding against opponents of austerity and war, Schedule 3 allows designated police, immigration, and customs officers at ports and border

areas to stop and question individuals without even a prior suspicion of involvement in “hostile activity”.

Only the bare minimum facts were initially made known about the circumstances leading to the detention of Galloway and his wife. A Metropolitan Police spokesperson told the *Herald* newspaper: “We can confirm that on Saturday, 27 September counter terrorism officers at Gatwick Airport stopped a man in his 70s and a woman in her 40s under Schedule 3 of the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019.

“Neither of them were arrested and they were allowed on their way.”

The powers handed to the police under Schedule 3 of the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019, and Schedule 7 (Terrorism Act 2000) are some of the most draconian ever passed. The Investigatory Powers Commissioner’s Office (IPCO) noted of the schedule Galloway was detained under that “The powers also allow an examining officer to retain, copy, use and destroy an article which is found during a search.

“The Investigatory Powers Commissioner (IPC) may authorise retention and use of an article found during a search. This includes authorising retention and use of a copy of an article that consists of or includes confidential material. The IPC can also authorise destruction of any such articles. The IPC also reviews and reports on the operation of the Schedule.”

The attack on Galloway and his wife represents a ratcheting up of the massive onslaught against democratic rights in Britain being carried out by Keir Starmer’s Labour government. Anti-terrorist acts and other draconian legislation have been utilised against other political figures and journalists, including human rights activist and former UK diplomat Craig Murray and journalists Kit Klarenburg and Richard Medhurst. However, Galloway is by far the most well-known anti-war figure in Britain. Expelled from the Labour Party by Tony Blair in 2003 for his opposition to the invasion of Iraq, Galloway has one million followers on Facebook, over 800,000 followers on X, and an online weekly talk show viewed by hundreds of thousands.

Galloway is an advocate of populist nationalism, who previously sought nomination as a candidate for Nigel Farage’s Brexit Party. Beginning his political career as a Stalinist, he advocates for a “left-right” alliance based on urging a defence of the interests of British imperialism through the pursuit of multi-polar alliances

with Russia and China to counter US imperialism.

But he has won support over several decades as an opponent of imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and is a vocal opponent of NATO’s proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. This places him in the crosshairs of Britain’s state forces, amid a hysterical campaign of warmongering by Britain and other European powers targeting Russia above all but also directed against China.

Since early July, almost 1,700 peaceful protesters have been arrested under Section 13 (1) of the Terrorism Act 2000 for stating their opposition to the proscribing of peaceful direct action group Palestine Action. The crackdown continued on Sunday with 66 people arrested, including an 83 year-old at a protest in Liverpool—held to coincide with the beginning of the Labour Party conference in the city. They were arrested under the Terrorism Act for holding signs reading: “I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action”. This spearheads ongoing efforts to criminalise opposition to Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

Schedule 3 of the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 was enacted in February 2019, in the aftermath of the hysterical campaign against Russia over the Salisbury affair. The then Conservative government of Theresa May—backed by the right-wing of the opposition Labour Party—claimed that the Putin government sent operatives into Britain to poison, in Salisbury, Wiltshire, the double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia.

Written evidence submitted in 2020 to a parliamentary committee by Professor Emeritus Clive Walker pointed out: “Schedule 3 is so vague that it might be argued to lack ‘legality’ in the meaning of the European Convention on Human Rights. The term, ‘hostile activity’ has not been deployed in the UK beyond *war-related legislation*, such as the Civil Defence Act 1939 and the Geneva Conventions Act 1957.” (Emphasis added.)



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