# Kneecap’s TRNSMT appearance threatened amid political backlash over violent lyrics and pro-Palestinian stance



The Irish hip-hop group Kneecap has found itself at the centre of a political storm following controversial comments made during performances that have led to calls for their removal from the upcoming TRNSMT festival in Glasgow. Their recent gigs have drawn attention, particularly a clip from a 2023 performance where one member reportedly stated, "The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP," sparking condemnation from politicians and igniting a fierce debate around free speech and artistic expression.

This controversy erupted after Kneecap performed at the Coachella music festival, where they made pro-Palestinian statements, including claims that "Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people." The backlash intensified when footage surfaced not only of the aforementioned remarks but also of earlier comments expressing support for groups banned in the UK, which has increased scrutiny from law enforcement. The Metropolitan Police have confirmed an investigation led by its Counter Terrorism Command, reflecting the serious nature of the allegations against the group, which has previously combined satirical commentary with themes from Irish republicanism in their music.

First Minister John Swinney has publicly denounced the band's comments, calling them "completely and utterly unacceptable" and indicating that they undermine valuable debate about free speech. He suggests that these statements have crossed a line that makes their participation in the festival difficult. This sentiment echoes broader concerns surrounding public safety and political rhetoric, especially in the context of the UK, where the assassinations of MPs Jo Cox and David Amess have underscored the potential real-world consequences of inflammatory language.

In contrast, some local politicians, including Scottish Green councillor Jon Molyneux, have defended Kneecap, framing the backlash as a deliberate effort to silence opposition. Molyneux's motion at a recent Glasgow City Council meeting condemned the Israeli government while acknowledging the backlash against the band as part of a broader trend to suppress dissenting voices. He insists that while the band's statements were misguided, this should not equate to a call for censorship, particularly in light of their outspoken support for Palestinian rights and their artistic expression.

SNP leader Susan Aitken expressed sympathy for those upset by Kneecap's remarks, stating that while accountability is necessary, this should not lead to a ban on their performance. She argued that freedom of expression extends to all artists, even those whose work may provoke discomfort. Aitken articulated a belief that art's role often involves challenging prevailing narratives and stimulating dialogue, a sentiment echoed by prominent musicians who have supported Kneecap amidst the backlash.

However, opposition parties, including Labour, have raised alarms about equating provocative statements with artistic expression. They argue that calls to violence, irrespective of artistic intent, cannot be dismissed as mere satire. Councillor Bill Butler pointed to the seriousness of implying violence against politicians, warning that such rhetoric diverges from the realm of acceptable debate. This highlights a significant divide in how political speech is interpreted and regulated within the current climate, with implications for artistic freedoms and societal norms surrounding speech.

As the debate continues, Kneecap has maintained that their comments were taken out of context and have issued apologies to the families of the murdered MPs, asserting that their intent has always been one of empowerment and solidarity. They have described the reaction as part of a "coordinated smear campaign," alleging that their criticisms of the Israeli government have played a role in the backlash they are facing. Kneecap's position accentuates the complex intersection of art, politics, and societal responsibility, posing challenging questions about where freedom of expression ends and the call for accountability begins.

The future of Kneecap at the TRNSMT festival hangs in the balance, as festival organisers and political leaders navigate the ramifications of their provocations. As the conversation evolves, it is evident that issues surrounding artistic freedom and responsibility will remain at the forefront of public discourse, reflecting deep-rooted tensions within contemporary social and political landscapes.

**Reference Map:**Paragraph 1: (1), (2), (4)  
Paragraph 2: (2), (4), (5)  
Paragraph 3: (1), (3), (4)  
Paragraph 4: (1), (3), (4)  
Paragraph 5: (4), (5)  
Paragraph 6: (1), (2), (4)  
Paragraph 7: (3), (4)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25167051.snp-councillors-defy-swinney-kneecap-trnsmt-ban-call/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/3cc86cf249c366554dee3cf5dd498fdc> - British counterterrorism detectives are investigating the Irish hip-hop group Kneecap following controversial comments made during concerts. In 2024, a band member allegedly said, "The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP," and in 2023, shouted "up Hamas, up Hezbollah," referencing groups banned in the U.K. The Metropolitan Police confirmed there are grounds for further inquiry, now led by its Counter Terrorism Command. Kneecap, known for combining satirical songs with Irish republican symbolism, has ignited political tensions and public debate, especially after projecting anti-Israel messages during a Coachella performance. The group apologized to the families of U.K. MPs Jo Cox and David Amess, who were murdered in separate extremist attacks, claiming their comments were taken out of context. Some U.K. lawmakers have called for Kneecap to be removed from upcoming festivals, though notable musicians have defended them, criticizing attempts to silence the group and uphold artistic freedom. Kneecap’s recent rise to international attention follows the success of their semi-autobiographical film "Kneecap," which screened at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival and received Oscar shortlist recognition.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/irish-rappers-kneecap-apologise-families-murdered-uk-lawmakers-2025-04-29/> - Irish rap band Kneecap apologized to the families of two murdered British lawmakers after footage emerged of one of the trio appearing to say "Kill your local MP" during a performance in 2023. In the video footage, from a London concert, a band member appears to say: "The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP." Kneecap has also faced criticism over pro ... "Fuck Israel. Free Palestine." A video clip posted on X from ... "Up Hamas, up Hezbollah." The Palestinian militant group Hamas and Lebanon ... . Kneecap, whose members have ... . "Let us be unequivocal: ... ," they said on X. "We condemn all attacks on civilians ... ." The rappers apologized to the families of Jo Cox ... . "We never intended to cause you hurt," they said. Britain's interior minister, Yvette Cooper ... "total disgrace," and that police were examining the ... . "It's dangerous to make these sorts of ... ," she told Times Radio. Kneecap, who rap about ... . Their name comes from a punishment met ... "loyalist" paramilitaries and the ... .
4. <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/kneecap-apologies-to-families-of-murdered-mps-after-calls-to-axe-band-from-trnsmt> - Kneecap, the Irish-language hip-hop trio, has faced condemnation from political figures after a clip from their 2023 show surfaced, where one member appeared to tell the audience, "kill your local MP." Footage from a previous gig, where comments were made about Hamas and Hezbollah, is being assessed by counter-terrorism police. Speaking on Monday, John Swinney described the comments as "unacceptable." The SNP leader said: "I’m not familiar with the band Kneecap, but I’ve become aware of their comments. I think these comments are completely and utterly unacceptable and if they’re performing at TRNSMT, or proposed to be performing at TRNSMT, I think the organisers of TRNSMT have got to consider that issue." The group is due to headline King Tut’s stage on Friday, July 11, and has previously performed two sold-out shows at the Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow. Issuing a response via social media on Tuesday, the band sent their "heartfelt apologies" to the Amess and Cox families, saying they "never intended to cause them hurt." Labour MP Jo Cox was fatally shot and stabbed in June 2016, and Conservative MP David Amess was stabbed to death at a constituency surgery in 2021. The band wrote: "Kneecap’s message has always been — and remains — one of love, inclusion, and hope. This is why our music resonates across generations, countries, classes and cultures and has brought hundreds of thousands of people to our gigs. No smear campaign will change that. Suddenly, days after calling out the US administration at Coachella to applause and solidarity, there is an avalanche of outrage and condemnation by the political classes of Britain. The real crimes are not in our performances; the real crimes are the silence and complicity of those in power. Shame on them." The band, made up of Liam Óg ÓhAnnaidh, Naoise ÓCairealláin and J.J. ÓDochartaigh, claim they are facing a "co-ordinated smear campaign" after speaking out about "the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people."
5. <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/john-swinney-joins-calls-to-axe-kneecap-from-trnsmt-festival-after-kill-your-local-mp-video> - First Minister John Swinney has joined calls for band Kneecap to be axed from TRNSMT after a video emerged of the group appearing to urge fans to "kill your local MP." The clip has prompted calls from MSPs for the Northern Irish rap group to be axed from this summer's music festival in Glasgow. The group are due to headline the King Tut’s stage on the opening night of TRNSMT on Friday, July 11. A video of the band at a 2023 gig appeared to show one member saying: "The only good Tory is a ... ." Footage from a previous gig is being assessed by counter-terrorism police. Sir Keir Starmer’s official spokesman said the Prime Minister believes the comments were "completely unacceptable" and "condemns them in the strongest possible terms."
6. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/kneecap-and-sprints-join-list-of-artists-boycotting-sxsw-2024-3599443> - Kneecap and Sprints are the latest artists to announce their withdrawal from this year’s South By Southwest Festival in Texas due to the event’s association with the US army and weapons companies amid the Israel-Gaza conflict. The annual music, culture and arts showcase takes place in Austin, Texas from March 12-14. Belfast hip-hop trio Kneecap shared in a statement on March 10 that their decision to not perform was made "in solidarity with the people of Palestine." They also highlighted the "unacceptable deep links" the festival had to the US army – which is a "super sponsor" of the event – and defense contractor RTX Corporation, which has supplied weapons to Israel.
7. <https://www.rte.ie/entertainment/2024/0311/1437179-kneecap-pull-out-of-south-by-southwest-festival/> - Kneecap said that SXSW organisers' 'decision to mix the arts with the military and weapons companies is unforgivable.' Gavin James and fellow Irish acts Sprints and Soda Blonde have joined Belfast rap trio Kneecap in a boycott of the South by Southwest Festival in Texas due to the event's links to the US military and the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. Kneecap were due to play three shows at the prestigious arts festival, which takes place from 8-16 March. Yesterday, the band posted a series of messages on social media platform X with backdrops of the colours of the Palestinian flag. In the messages, they wrote: "We have made the decision to cancel our three shows at SXSW and not travel to Austin as planned on Tuesday. It is done in solidarity with the people of Palestine and to highlight the unacceptable deep links the festival has to weapons companies and the US military who at this very moment are enabling a genocide and famine against a trapped population."