# Self Esteem stands by Kneecap amid Glastonbury line-up controversy



British musician Self Esteem, known off-stage as Rebecca Lucy Taylor, has expressed her comfort in sharing the Glastonbury Festival line-up with the Irish rap group Kneecap, despite the band’s recent controversies surrounding their provocative statements and performances. An investigation led by British counter-terrorism officers has emerged following the resurfacing of contentious footage in which members of Kneecap allegedly made statements like, “The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP.” Additionally, apoplectic remarks supporting banned groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah have been scrutinised as well.

In light of these incidents, which have stirred political outrage and led to calls for the band’s removal from festival line-ups, Self Esteem articulated her belief in the importance of artistic expression and freedom of speech. During an appearance on Times Radio, she remarked, “I think it’s important that they don’t get censored, personally… I feel very comfortable sharing a line-up with them.” This sentiment reflects a burgeoning debate about the boundaries of artistic expression in the context of political commentary, particularly in turbulent socio-political climates.

Kneecap, hailing from Belfast, is renowned for interweaving satirical lyrics with themes of Irish nationalism. Their provocative style often draws comparison to historical punk bands known for their intention to incite discourse through shocking content. They have maintained that their comments have been taken out of context and are part of a broader commentary, rather than endorsements of violence or support for militant groups. Following the backlash, the group apologised to the families of the murdered British MPs Jo Cox and David Amess, asserting that their intent was never to glorify violence. The controversy surrounding Kneecap heated up during their recent performances, which included a politically charged Coachella set that featured anti-Israel slogans, leading to accusations of antisemitism.

The call to ban Kneecap from events, spearheaded by Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch, has drawn varied reactions across the music industry. A coalition of other artists, including Massive Attack and The Pogues, have penned statements defending Kneecap, emphasising the need to protect artistic expression from what they perceive as a politically motivated attempt to suppress dissenting voices. They argue that these efforts overlook deeper systemic issues, pointing instead to the ongoing humanitarian crises, such as that in Gaza, overshadowed by the outrage directed at the band.

The layered nature of this controversy brings to light the complexities artists face when navigating the intersection of art, politics, and public perception. Critics of Kneecap argue that the line between satire and incitement can be dangerously thin, while supporters claim that the group’s art serves as crucial social commentary reflective of their cultural and historical context. As the group prepares for their set at Glastonbury, they stand at a crossroads of artistic freedom and public accountability, grappling with the repercussions of their narrative choices.

Self Esteem's performance at Glastonbury, celebrated for its bold fashion choices and compelling stage presence, juxtaposes the turbulent atmosphere surrounding Kneecap. Her recent outfit, inspired by the Sheffield shopping centre Meadowhall, garnered acclaim, signifying a celebration of cultural identity amidst the backdrop of national discourse. This dual narrative of celebration and controversy reverberates through the festival grounds, prompting audiences to reflect on the multifaceted nature of expression in both music and social commentary.

As both artists take the stage at Glastonbury, their presence embodies a wider cultural dialogue about freedom, expression, and the complexities of public opinion in a changing political landscape.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3
3. Paragraphs 1, 3
4. Paragraphs 2, 3
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 5
7. Paragraph 5

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/self-esteem-comfortable-with-kneecap-at-glastonbury-4ICOC3Q5N5HATMNYWF5VLAUAEE/> - 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 group Kneecap issued an apology to the families of murdered British lawmakers Jo Cox and David Amess following the resurfacing of controversial footage from their 2023 performance, where a member appeared to say, 'Kill your local MP' and 'The only good Tory is a dead Tory.' The band, known for their republican views and support for Irish unity, has also been criticized for pro-Palestinian messages at events, including a Coachella performance condemning Israel and footage supporting banned groups Hamas and Hezbollah. Kneecap denied supporting any militant groups, stating the clips are part of a smear campaign and reiterating their condemnation of attacks on civilians. British Interior Minister Yvette Cooper condemned the comments as dangerous, noting law enforcement is reviewing the footage. Kneecap, set to perform at Glastonbury Festival in June, emphasized they did not intend to cause harm and acknowledged the gravity of their statements amid the UK's history of political violence.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/2a228472-da0f-4d7f-81f3-dbbbf23455ae> - Northern Irish rap group Kneecap is at the center of a major controversy following provocative performances at Coachella, where they displayed a slogan stating 'Fuck Israel. Free Palestine.' The incident led to accusations of antisemitic hate speech, calls for prosecution from UK Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch, and condemnation from politicians including British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Irish Taoiseach Micheál Martin. Footage from past performances added to the outrage, showing Kneecap members expressing apparent support for Hamas and Hizbollah, and suggesting violence against Conservative MPs. Some of their summer shows have been cancelled amid growing backlash. The band's provocative style echoes punk traditions of deliberate shock value, similar to the Sex Pistols and gangsta rap pioneers NWA, though critics argue Kneecap blurs satire and incitement. While the trio claims to distance themselves from political violence and has apologized to families of murdered MPs, they maintain a strong anti-Israel stance. Their use of Irish-English bilingual lyrics and commentary on Northern Ireland's history show a deeper message beneath the surface-level provocation, but critics accuse them of hypocrisy and insensitivity in applying local protest tactics to broader geopolitical conflicts.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-61967203> - Singer Self Esteem said her Glastonbury outfit was inspired by Sheffield's Meadowhall shopping centre because when it opened she 'lost her tiny mind'. The South Yorkshire songwriter wore a silicone bra with cups replicating the two glass domes of the mall's roof, and a cape embroidered with its outline. Self Esteem, real name Rebecca Lucy Taylor, said as a child she'd 'march around there like a real chic adult'. She added being on the food court's video wall was a 'major goal' of hers. 'I dunno how to explain, but the Americanised shopping mall has always excited me since,' she said. The cape was made by R & R Atelier, and the corseted bra was created by fashion designer Ollie Spragley.
6. <https://www.thestar.co.uk/news/people/self-esteem-glastonbury-sheffield-artist-stuns-fans-with-corset-based-on-meadowhalls-dome-3746551> - Sheffield artist Self Esteem represented her city in eye-popping style at Glastonbury in an unmissable corset based on Meadowhall Shopping Centre’s dome. It is being called one of, if not the, top performances at Glastonbury this year. In a critically-praised set on the John Hill stage, Rebecca Lucy Taylor won the crowds over with ambition, style and stage presence. This was not least because of her performance in a Madonna-esque conical corset and matching cape.
7. <https://www.joe.ie/music/kneecap-glastonbury-set-bbc-807382> - Fans of Irish rap trio Kneecap have been questioning why their ‘headline-worthy’ Glastonbury set has not been made available to stream. Mo Chara, Móglaí Bap and DJ Próvaí drew massive crowds as they took to the Woodsies stage of the Somerset-based festival on Saturday morning. They then finished with a raucous late-night show at the Shangri-La area, which they described as 'one of the best gigs of our lives.' During their sets, the Belfast group highlighted their pro-Palestine stance, with a projected message saying that 20,000 Palestinian children have been killed in Israeli strikes that have been 'enabled by the British government.' However, despite the successful performance, fans were left bemused after attempting to watch the set back on iPlayer, only to find out it wasn’t there.