# Kneecap to headline Wide Awake festival despite recent controversies



The Irish rap trio Kneecap is set to perform at London’s Wide Awake festival after a series of concert cancellations prompted by controversial footage that surfaced online. The festival, taking place in Brockwell Park on May 23, confirmed the band's headline show following productive discussions with key stakeholders, underscoring its commitment to supporting alternative music. The festival's management expressed enthusiasm about delivering a memorable experience featuring both emerging and established talents.

Kneecap, comprising Liam Og O Hannaidh, Naoise O Caireallain, and JJ O Dochartaigh, has become a focal point of controversy due to a pair of videos filmed in 2023 and 2024. One video purportedly shows a member invoking support for groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, while another reportedly includes remarks advocating violence against Conservative MPs. In light of these revelations, several concerts—including performances at the Eden Project in Cornwall and various festivals in Germany—were cancelled, fuelling a public outcry that has included calls from politicians like Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch for the band to be barred from high-profile events such as Glastonbury.

In the wake of these events, Kneecap issued an apology to the families of murdered MPs but defended its stance, asserting that the footage had been “exploited and weaponised.” They categorically denied any support for Hamas or Hezbollah, which are both banned in the UK. On social media, the group expressed excitement about their forthcoming performance in London, promoting the availability of remaining tickets for what they described as a "very special" show.

The backdrop of Kneecap’s controversies is not limited to the UK; the band has also made headlines for their decision to withdraw from the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival in Austin, Texas. This protest was aligned with ethical considerations surrounding the festival's ties to the U.S. Army amid the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict. Artists including Lambrini Girls and Scowl joined Kneecap in this boycott, highlighting a growing trend among musicians to take firm stands on social and political issues that resonate with their audiences.

Despite the backlash, several notable figures in the music industry have come to Kneecap’s defence. Artists such as CMAT and Massive Attack have signed statements arguing that there is a deliberate attempt to censor the band while drawing attention to other pressing issues, such as the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Self Esteem, also known as Rebecca Lucy Taylor, remarked on Times Radio that not allowing Kneecap to perform would constitute a threat to cultural expression and freedom of speech.

Kneecap, known for their provocative lyrics and championing of the Irish language, released their acclaimed debut album "Fine Art" in 2024, marking a significant milestone in their career. As they prepare for their much-anticipated appearance at Wide Awake, they join a lineup that features other rising stars, including English Teacher and Peaches, ultimately cementing their place in the UK’s vibrant music scene.

The ongoing saga surrounding Kneecap encapsulates the tensions between artistic expression, political activism, and public opinion, reflecting broader societal debates over freedom of speech and the complexities inherent in the evolving world of music and cultural discourse.

### Reference Map

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

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/kneecaps-wide-awake-headline-set-to-go-ahead-as-planned-after-cancellations-LZHMMJ4M6RHBJEA2ZGX4QDQFPM/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/kneecaps-wide-awake-headline-set-to-go-ahead-as-planned-after-cancellations-LZHMMJ4M6RHBJEA2ZGX4QDQFPM/> - The article reports that Irish rap trio Kneecap's headline performance at London's Wide Awake festival is set to proceed as scheduled, despite several of their concerts being canceled due to controversial footage. The Wide Awake festival confirmed the performance after discussions with key stakeholders, emphasizing their commitment to supporting the alternative music scene. Kneecap, known for their provocative lyrics and advocacy for the Irish language, have faced scrutiny following the release of videos from 2023 and 2024, leading to canceled shows and political calls for their exclusion from events like Glastonbury.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-68533409> - This BBC Newsbeat article discusses the withdrawal of several bands from the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival in Austin, Texas, in protest against the U.S. Army's sponsorship of the event amid the Israel-Gaza conflict. Kneecap, a Belfast-based hip-hop trio, canceled their performances to stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine, highlighting the festival's ties to the U.S. military and defense contractors. Other artists, including Lambrini Girls, Scowl, and Sprints, also withdrew for similar reasons, emphasizing the ethical considerations influencing their decisions.
4. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/wide-awake-festival-2025-line-up-kneecap-to-headline-alongside-cmat-english-teacher-daniel-avery-and-more-buy-tickets-3809677> - NME reports on the lineup for the 2025 Wide Awake Festival, announcing that Kneecap will headline alongside artists like CMAT, English Teacher, and Daniel Avery. The festival is scheduled to take place at Brockwell Park in London on May 23, 2025. Kneecap's inclusion as headliners follows the release of their acclaimed debut album 'Fine Art' in 2024, marking a significant moment in their career as they bring their unique Irish-language rap to a broader audience.
5. <https://www.nme.com/news/kneecap-and-sprints-join-list-of-artists-boycotting-sxsw-2024-3599443> - This NME article details the decision of Kneecap and Sprints to withdraw from the 2024 SXSW festival in Austin, Texas, in solidarity with Palestine. The artists cited the festival's association with the U.S. Army and defense contractors as their primary reasons for boycotting. Kneecap emphasized the unacceptable deep links between the festival and entities involved in the Israel-Gaza conflict, highlighting the ethical dilemma posed by participating in an event with such affiliations.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-68533409.amp> - An AMP version of the BBC Newsbeat article discussing the withdrawal of bands from SXSW over the U.S. Army's sponsorship amid the Israel-Gaza conflict. Kneecap, along with other artists, canceled their performances to protest the festival's ties to the U.S. military and defense contractors. The article provides insights into the ethical considerations influencing artists' decisions to withdraw from the event.
7. <https://time.com/6916015/sxsw-festival-acts-pull-out-us-army-sponsor-backlash/> - TIME magazine reports on the withdrawal of multiple artists from the SXSW festival in Austin, Texas, due to the U.S. Army's sponsorship and its association with defense contractors amid the Israel-Gaza conflict. Kneecap's decision to pull out is highlighted, with the band expressing that the financial impact of their withdrawal is negligible compared to the suffering in Gaza. The article also mentions other artists who have taken similar actions in protest.