# Over 100 Welsh musicians back Kneecap amidst fiercest backlash over Gaza controversy



Over a hundred Welsh musicians have united in support of Belfast rap group Kneecap, following a wave of concert cancellations precipitated by controversial comments made during recent performances. This show of solidarity is part of a broader movement encompassing artists across the UK who defend Kneecap's right to artistic expression amid escalating scrutiny and calls for censorship.

The growing backlash against Kneecap intensified after footage emerged from their concerts, allegedly showing a member shouting slogans supportive of Hamas and Hezbollah. In one instance, the member encouraged listeners to target Conservative MPs, remarks that have drawn the attention of London’s anti-terror police. The group, known for their provocative lyrics that often intertwine Irish republican themes with contemporary socio-political discourse, claims these comments were taken out of context, asserting that their intention is to highlight issues of oppression and injustice rather than advocate for violence.

Kneecap’s recent performance at the Coachella festival gained notoriety for its outspoken anti-Israel messages, including chants calling for Palestinian liberation. The group's stance forms part of a larger critique of Israel's actions in Gaza, where civilian casualties have reportedly surpassed 52,000 since the conflict reignited in October 2023. Their dynamic blend of satire and activism echoes a longstanding tradition among artists in Northern Ireland, who have historically used their platforms to advocate for social justice and political change.

Joining the ranks of artists such as Paul Weller, Pulp, and Massive Attack, over forty musicians recently penned a letter supporting Kneecap, arguing that the focus on the group distracts from the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. The latest wave of support from Welsh musicians, which includes prominent figures like Gruff Rhys of Super Furry Animals and Welsh language singer-songwriter Steve Eaves, reflects a collective concern that the conversation is disproportionately fixated on Kneecap rather than the broader implications of ongoing violence in the region. Eaves remarked that this focus detracts from the "relentless Israeli aggression" facing civilians in Gaza, a sentiment echoed by many within the Welsh music community, which prides itself on a tradition that champions peace and justice.

Despite their claims of artistic freedom, Kneecap faces pressure from various quarters, including calls from some UK politicians for their performances—such as an upcoming set at Glastonbury—to be cancelled. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch, for example, has vocally opposed their right to perform, labelling it a form of “cancel culture.” Yet many supporters assert that attempts to silence Kneecap represent an infringement on freedom of expression, with critics warning of a dangerous trend towards deplatforming artists who vocalise contentious political positions.

In response to the mounting criticism and the wider implications of their messaging, Kneecap has sought to clarify their stance, reportedly offering apologies to the families of British MPs Jo Cox and David Amess, both murdered in separate political attacks. They assert that their earlier statements have been misinterpreted, exacerbating the issue of artistic expression versus advocacy of violence. This intricate dance between protest and provocation continues to shape debates about the limits of artistic discourse in an increasingly polarised world.

As the conversation around Kneecap unfolds, it raises critical questions about the nature of artistic freedom and the boundaries of acceptable political expression in music. While some view their performances as a necessary outcry against injustice, others see a troubling trend of incitement that could undermine the very messages of peace and solidarity they aim to promote.

The confluence of artistic expression, political activism, and social justice remains at the heart of Kneecap's narrative, prompting a re-examination of how music serves as both a catalyst for change and a potential source of controversy. As more artists rally around the group, the outcome of this cultural moment will likely resonate beyond the stage, galvanising discussions about the responsibilities that come with a public platform amid complex global issues.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1 - (1)
2. Paragraph 2 - (2), (3)
3. Paragraph 3 - (1), (4)
4. Paragraph 4 - (1), (3)
5. Paragraph 5 - (1), (2), (4), (6)
6. Paragraph 6 - (3), (5), (7)
7. Paragraph 7 - (2), (4)
8. Paragraph 8 - (3), (4)
9. Paragraph 9 - (1), (3)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/more-than-100-welsh-language-acts-join-growing-list-of-musicians-supporting-kneecap-PLMUBPZY6NAELCRFVOXNTEKDAQ/> - 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'—both banned organizations in the UK. 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 UK MPs Jo Cox and David Amess, who were murdered in separate extremist attacks, claiming their comments were taken out of context. Some UK 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.ft.com/content/2a228472-da0f-4d7f-81f3-dbbbf23455ae> - Irish rap group Kneecap has sparked intense controversy following provocative performances at Coachella, where they displayed a slogan reading 'F\*\*\* Israel. Free Palestine.' Criticism has ensued from UK, Irish, and international figures, with accusations of antisemitic hate speech. The backlash intensified due to past footage showing members voicing apparent support for Hamas and Hizbollah and encouraging violence against politicians—alarming given the killings of MPs Jo Cox and David Amess. While the band apologized to the MPs' families and denied support for terrorist groups, they maintain staunch anti-Israel stances. Their actions have led to concert cancellations and calls for prosecution. Kneecap, known for their confrontational style and political satire in the vein of punk predecessors like the Sex Pistols and NWA, walk a fine line between protest and provocation. Though often satirical, their messaging risks trivializing serious conflicts. They advocate for working-class solidarity and Irish cultural pride but face criticism for applying shock tactics from Northern Ireland’s political context to broader geopolitical issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Their blend of irony and activism—what some call 'cakeism'—raises questions about the limits of artistic freedom and the distinction between protest and hate speech.
4. <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.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-68533409> - Belfast band Kneecap have pulled out of South by Southwest (SXSW) in Texas over the arts festival's sponsorship with the US Army. The group is the latest to cancel their sets at the event in protest against the military's support for Israel in the war in Gaza. Other artists who've announced they won't be performing include Lambrini Girls, Scowl and Sprints. BBC Newsbeat has contacted organisers of the festival for comment. The festival, which runs until 16 March in the city of Austin, celebrates film, comedy and music and attracts more than 300,000 people each year. In a statement shared on social media, Kneecap said they cancelled their three sets at the festival 'in solidarity with the people of Palestine'. The trio said they 'cannot in good conscience' attend the event, even though pulling out would have 'a significant financial impact' on the band, but they said it wasn't comparable to the 'unimaginable suffering' in Gaza.
6. <https://time.com/6916015/sxsw-festival-acts-pull-out-us-army-sponsor-backlash/> - Several artists, including Kneecap, have withdrawn from the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival in Austin, Texas, in protest against the event's sponsorship by the US Army and its association with defense contractors amid the Israel-Gaza conflict. Kneecap stated their decision was made 'in solidarity with the people of Palestine' and to highlight the 'unacceptable deep links' the festival had to the US Army and defense contractors. Other acts to pull out include Lambrini Girls, Scowl, Gel, Okay Shalom, and Squirrelflower. The boycott was led by Chicago-based songwriter Ella Williams, also known as Squirrelflower, who announced on Instagram her withdrawal and encouraged other musicians to do the same.
7. <https://www.tipperarylive.ie/news/national-news/1785437/sharon-osbourne-calls-for-irish-rap-group-kneecap-to-have-us-visa-revoked.html> - Sharon Osbourne has called for the US visa of Irish rap group Kneecap to be revoked following their performance at Coachella, where they displayed anti-Israel messages and slogans such as 'F\*\*\* Israel, Free Palestine.' Osbourne criticized the festival organizers for allowing artists to use the Coachella stage as a platform for political expression, stating that Kneecap's actions included projections of anti-Israel messages and hate speech, and that the band openly supports terrorist organizations. She expressed concern over the festival's moral and spiritual integrity, stating that such discussions would have been more appropriate at their own concert, not at a festival.