# Kneecap sparks legal battle and police probe over incendiary festival performances



A controversial Irish rap group, Kneecap, is embroiled in a significant backlash, facing legal threats and public condemnation over inflammatory comments allegedly made during performances. The trio, known for their provocative style and songs infused with Irish republican themes, has issued a statement threatening to sue music industry figures who called for their removal from the Glastonbury Festival lineup. This marks a contentious chapter in a narrative that intertwines artistic expression with serious political ramifications.

Kneecap's recent rise to notoriety can be traced to their performances at prominent events, including Coachella, where they displayed slogans such as "F\*\*\* Israel, Free Palestine," sparking outrage across the political spectrum. Critics have linked these actions to a broader pattern of controversial remarks, including statements that seemingly endorse violence against politicians, particularly targeting Conservative MPs with phrases like "kill your local MP." The Metropolitan Police have responded by launching a counter-terrorism investigation following the emergence of video footage capturing these incitements.

The band, comprising Naoise O Caireallain, Liam Og O hAnnaidh, and JJ O Dochartaigh, maintains that their comments have been taken out of context and are a part of a deliberate smear campaign. In a public apology to the families of murdered MPs Jo Cox and David Amess, Kneecap asserted that while they staunchly defend freedom of expression, they do not condone violence in any form towards individuals, including elected officials. “We do not, and have never, supported Hamas or Hezbollah,” the group clarified, further rejecting claims that their performance messages incited violence.

This controversy has resonated deeply within the music industry. Several key figures have advocated for Kneecap's removal from festival lineups, asserting that their views conflict with values of peace and tolerance, especially during a time of heightened awareness regarding antisemitism and political violence. Conservative MP Kemi Badenoch and former TV judge Sharon Osbourne are among the critics, with Osbourne describing the band as lacking in talent and using the controversy as a marketing ploy. Letters have circulated, including from TUV leader Jim Allister, urging festival organisers to reconsider Kneecap's inclusion in lineups alongside renowned acts like Neil Young and Charli XCX.

Conversely, some industry supporters argue that attempts to silence Kneecap represent a dangerous precedent that threatens artistic freedom. Their supporters contend that the band’s confrontational style mirrors the punk attitude of musicians from a bygone era—a genre built on challenging norms and sparking debate through unabashed expression. However, this artistic liberty raises questions about the responsibilities that come with public platforms, especially when the messages may appear to trivialise the complexities surrounding real-world conflicts such as those in Israel and Palestine.

Despite calls for their removal from several festivals, including recent cancellations at the Eden Project, others like Wide Awake in Brockwell Park have maintained their support for Kneecap, standing by the group's right to perform. Glastonbury Festival has yet to comment officially on the situation, leaving the potential for both public outcry and legal repercussions looming as they approach the summer festival.

The stakes are high as this unfolding drama reveals the intersection of music, politics, and societal values. In a landscape that increasingly scrutinises artistic expression for its impact, Kneecap's situation is emblematic of broader cultural debates on free speech and accountability in an era where the lines between performance art and real-world implications are often blurred.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14729323/Kneecap-threaten-sue-industry-critics-banned-Glastonbury.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/2a228472-da0f-4d7f-81f3-dbbbf23455ae)
2. Paragraph 2: [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/3cc86cf249c366554dee3cf5dd498fdc), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/2a228472-da0f-4d7f-81f3-dbbbf23455ae)
3. Paragraph 3: [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/irish-rappers-kneecap-apologise-families-murdered-uk-lawmakers-2025-04-29/), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-04-29/glastonbury-should-think-very-carefully-about-2025-performers-says-minister)
4. Paragraph 4: [[6]](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/ban-kneecap-from-glastonbury-calls-allister-allowing-performance-to-go-ahead-would-be-a-disgrace-and-against-values-of-peace-tuv-leader-writes-to-festival-organisers-5103742), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/irish-rappers-kneecap-apologise-families-murdered-uk-lawmakers-2025-04-29/)
5. Paragraph 5: [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/3cc86cf249c366554dee3cf5dd498fdc), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/2a228472-da0f-4d7f-81f3-dbbbf23455ae)
6. Paragraph 6: [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-04-29/glastonbury-should-think-very-carefully-about-2025-performers-says-minister), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/2a228472-da0f-4d7f-81f3-dbbbf23455ae)
7. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14729323/Kneecap-threaten-sue-industry-critics-banned-Glastonbury.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/2a228472-da0f-4d7f-81f3-dbbbf23455ae)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14729323/Kneecap-threaten-sue-industry-critics-banned-Glastonbury.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - 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.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 'Fuck 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. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/2a228472-da0f-4d7f-81f3-dbbbf23455ae?utm_source=openai))
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. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/irish-rappers-kneecap-apologise-families-murdered-uk-lawmakers-2025-04-29/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-04-29/glastonbury-should-think-very-carefully-about-2025-performers-says-minister> - Controversial Irish rap group Kneecap have had one of their Cornwall shows canceled by organisers after videos emerged of them appearing to call for Tory MPs to be killed, and another of them appearing to shout 'up Hamas, up Hezbollah'. The band were due to be part of the Eden Project on July 4th, their spokesperson said: 'Eden Sessions Limited announced today that the Kneecap show at Eden Project scheduled for July 4 2025 has been cancelled. Ticket purchasers will be contacted directly and will be fully refunded. The refund process will commence from Wednesday, April 30 2025. Refunds will be processed against the original payment cards used. Purchasers should allow six working days for funds to be received into their accounts.' The cancellation came as ministers raised questions on Tuesday over their scheduled Glastonbury performance. Kneecap say this was 'taken out of context and is now being exploited and weaponised as if it were a call to action.' The group made a public apology this morning via social media sending their 'heartfelt apologies' to the Amess and Cox families—two MPs who were murdered in their constituencies. The band also said they 'never intended to cause you hurt' and 'reject any suggestion that we would seek to incite violence against any MP or individual'. They added that attention given to this was a 'transparent effort to derail the real conversation'. 'They want you to believe words are more harmful than genocide. Establishment figures, desperate to silence us, have combed through hundreds of hours of footage and interviews extracting a handful of words from months or years ago to manufacture moral hysteria.' But the daughter of murdered MP Sir David Amess has rejected the group's apology. 'It was absurd, that's not an apology. It's deflection, it is not taking accountability, it's making excuses. These words that they are using are extremely dangerous and they have not acknowledged that.' ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-04-29/glastonbury-should-think-very-carefully-about-2025-performers-says-minister?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/ban-kneecap-from-glastonbury-calls-allister-allowing-performance-to-go-ahead-would-be-a-disgrace-and-against-values-of-peace-tuv-leader-writes-to-festival-organisers-5103742> - TUV leader Jim Allister has written to the Glastonbury Festival, calling on organisers to axe Kneecap’s planned set at this year’s event. The scandal-hit republican rappers are booked to play at June’s festival, by far the biggest date in the UK’s musical calendar. They’re meant to be taking to the stage on Saturday, a day headlined by two giants of the entertainment world – rock legend Neil Young and contemporary pop megastar Charli XCX. But in his letter to Glastonbury, Mr Allister tells organisers offering a platform to Kneecap 'stands wholly at odds with the values of tolerance, peace, and inclusivity which your festival claims to promote'. The band – 30-year-old Naoise O Caireallain, Liam Og O hAnnaidh, 26, and JJ O Dochartaigh, aged 36 – have been heavily criticised for making anti-Israel statements during their set at a massive music festival in California this month. North Antrim MP Mr Allister’s letter to Glastonbury, seen by the News Letter, has him express his 'deep concern over the decision to host the group' at this year’s festival. Pointing out their moniker is a reference to paramilitary violence in which civilians are shot through the knee, Mr Allister states: 'Their choice of name alone is an affront to the countless victims maimed by terrorist brutality. However, the concerns go deeper. Kneecap has repeatedly glorified the actions of the Provisional IRA and promoted a narrative that seeks to romanticise a terrorist campaign which caused immense suffering across our United Kingdom. More recently, this group has been embroiled in fresh controversy — publicly advocating that people should 'kill your local MP,' an utterly abhorrent incitement to political violence – [and making] inflammatory and deeply offensive comments about Israel, during a time when antisemitism and violent rhetoric against the Jewish community are a growing and serious concern. Kneecap's JJ O'Dochartaigh, aka DJ Provai, sports his signature tricolour balaclava while holding up money outside Belfast High Court, after the trio won their legal challenge over a decision to refuse them a £14,250 funding award from the UK government in November 2024. Photo: Mark Marlow/PA Wire ([newsletter.co.uk](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/ban-kneecap-from-glastonbury-calls-allister-allowing-performance-to-go-ahead-would-be-a-disgrace-and-against-values-of-peace-tuv-leader-writes-to-festival-organisers-5103742?utm_source=openai))