# Northern Ireland’s Kneecap alleges political policing after terrorism charge and festival bans



The Northern Irish rap trio Kneecap has sparked significant controversy following claims that a concerted effort is being undertaken to prevent their performance at the Glastonbury Festival this summer, coinciding with the recent arrest of one of their members. The band alleges that they are being scapegoated for speaking out on controversial matters, particularly the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which they addressed during their performance at Coachella in April.

Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh, known as Mo Chara, faces a terrorism charge for allegedly displaying a Hezbollah flag during a gig in London last November. This charge has been labelled by the band as a form of “political policing,” intended to suppress dissenting voices regarding Israel's actions in Gaza. The day following his charges, the trio staged an unscheduled performance at the 100 Club in central London, which reportedly sold out in just 90 seconds, leaving approximately 2,000 fans on a waiting list.

During this intimate concert, Ó hAnnaidh made a poignant statement by appearing on stage with tape over his mouth, conveying a powerful message about censorship and the suppression of free speech. He expressed, “There’s a reason they’re trying to fucking stop me speaking at Glastonbury in front of the UK.” Another member of the trio, Naoise Ó Cairealláin, performing as Móglaí Bap, echoed these sentiments by highlighting the tragic death toll in Gaza and asserting that the true narrative lies far beyond their own situation.

Their performance at Coachella was marked by notable calls for action, including chants of “free, free Palestine” and projected messages condemning Israel's military actions. The band firmly believes that the scrutiny they are facing is directly linked to their vocal criticism of these events, branding it a “witch-hunt” designed to deflect attention from the issues at hand.

Further adding to the charged atmosphere surrounding Kneecap, a poster for their impromptu gig prominently featured a remark from former Sex Pistols frontman John Lydon, who suggested the trio “need a bloody good kneecapping” given the backlash surrounding their statements. The band, however, has publicly apologised to the families of two murdered MPs, Brendan Cox and Katie Amess, acknowledging that footage of their controversial comments had been taken out of context.

Kneecap’s performances have faced repercussions as they have been removed from several festival line-ups, including appearances in Germany and locations across the UK, with calls from MPs intensifying for them to be expunged from additional major events like TRNSMT and Glastonbury itself. Despite this, the group continues to rally support and contest the charges against them, arguing that the legal proceedings are more focused on limiting their expression and travel rather than any substantiated crime.

In a statement released prior to their latest concert, they articulated their intent to challenge what they see as an unjust legal action. They asserted that the nature of the charge is not serious enough to warrant referral to the Crown Court, where a jury is present, leading them to question the motives behind these actions. Their commitment to advocating for those affected by conflict, particularly in Gaza, remains steadfast as they prepare for their upcoming performances.

As Kneecap navigates this turbulent climate, they continue to amplify their message through music, determined to stand by their convictions and bring attention to humanitarian issues impacting many around the world.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-2, 4, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraphs 3, 8, 9
3. Paragraph 10

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/23/kneecap-say-terror-charge-witch-hunt-prevent-glastonbury> - Please view link - unable to able to access data