# Kneecap’s London gig reignites controversy amid terrorism charges and political protests



Controversial Irish rap trio Kneecap have continued to thrust themselves into the limelight, brazenly mocking political figures and even the deceased former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher despite facing severe legal scrutiny. The group's latest performance at The 100 Club in central London drew a sold-out crowd, where chants reverberated through the venue, including the provocative line ‘Maggie’s in a box’, set to the tune of KC and the Sunshine Band's ‘Give It Up’. This audacious display comes in the wake of one member, Mo Chara, being charged under the UK's Terrorism Act for allegedly displaying a Hezbollah flag at a concert in November 2024.

Kneecap has become notorious not only for their provocative lyrics but also for their outspoken political messages, which have further polarised public opinion. The charge against Chara follows a broader investigation by the Metropolitan Police’s Counter Terrorism Command, sparked by videos that allegedly show the group glorifying proscribed organisations like Hezbollah and Hamas and inciting violence against lawmakers. Kneecap has refuted these allegations, claiming that their statements have been taken out of context and that they advocate for justice, not violence.

During the Thursday night gig, chants such as "Free Palestine" were echoed by the audience, creating a charged atmosphere that prompted both excitement and concern among attendees. Kneecap's statements and actions have frequently led to cancellations of shows and demands from political figures for their removal from festival line-ups. Notably, Robert Jenrick, Shadow Secretary of State for Justice, condemned their behaviour, stating that glorifying groups like Hamas and Hezbollah should disqualify them from being booked at events. Former Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith went further, deriding the group as mere self-publicists seeking attention through shock tactics.

Despite their controversial standing, Kneecap has seen a rise in notoriety, partly due to the success of their semi-autobiographical film, which screened at the Sundance Film Festival. This heightened visibility has coincided with their performances at events like Coachella, where they attracted international attention for leading pro-Palestinian chants. Their actions at the festival sparked a considerable backlash, with organisers reportedly unprepared for the political messaging that emerged during their set, leading to a cut in the livestream coverage. Nevertheless, Kneecap responded by providing their own livestream, signalling a determination to assert their political voice amidst growing scrutiny.

The group’s members, all hailing from Belfast, have utilised their platform to advocate for Irish-language culture, while simultaneously engaging in what many perceive as politically charged performance art. The lyrics of their new track, released just hours before the London concert, take a direct swipe at Kemi Badenoch, the Tory leader, for her attempts to block their arts funding. This engagement with current political discourse exemplifies their intent to remain relevant and impactful in the face of adversity.

Looking ahead, Kneecap's continued performances—including an impending appearance at the Glastonbury Festival—suggest they are unlikely to fade into obscurity any time soon. Advocates for artistic freedom argue against the calls for censorship, positing that the group’s political expression is a vital part of a broader discussion about the role of music and art in societal issues. The discourse surrounding Kneecap illustrates the complex interplay between art, politics, and public sentiment, particularly as global events continue to shape the narrative of activism in the arts. Amidst legal challenges and public outcry, the group remains steadfast in its commitment to provoke thought and discussion through its music.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744205/Kneecap-London-Free-Palestine-Margaret-Thatcher-terror-offence.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/951643fa3345a152f86b59bbdcbd0a49)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/irish-band-kneecap-say-terrorism-charge-seeks-silence-artists-2025-05-22/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/b88745d2-d29b-4613-8632-fa763eb4f924)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://apnews.com/article/3cc86cf249c366554dee3cf5dd498fdc), [[6]](https://www.nme.com/news/music/coachella-organisers-were-blindsided-by-kneecaps-pro-palestinian-messages-3856610)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.nme.com/news/music/kneecap-lead-free-palestine-chant-during-second-coachella-2025-set-3856257)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744205/Kneecap-London-Free-Palestine-Margaret-Thatcher-terror-offence.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/irish-band-kneecap-say-terrorism-charge-seeks-silence-artists-2025-05-22/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744205/Kneecap-London-Free-Palestine-Margaret-Thatcher-terror-offence.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/951643fa3345a152f86b59bbdcbd0a49> - Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh, known as Mo Chara, a member of the Irish hip-hop group Kneecap, has been charged under the UK's Terrorism Act for allegedly displaying a Hezbollah flag during a performance at London's Kentish Town Forum in November 2024. The charge follows a broader investigation into the group by counterterrorism authorities, prompted by videos showing the band endorsing Hezbollah and Hamas and inciting violence against lawmakers. Kneecap denies these allegations, claiming their remarks were misrepresented by political figures. The group, based in Belfast, is recognized for promoting Irish-language culture but is controversial for its provocative lyrics and political stances. The controversy has led to several concert cancellations and calls from politicians to drop the band from events, including the upcoming Glastonbury Festival. Ó hAnnaidh is scheduled to appear in court on June 18, and police continue to investigate footage from a separate 2023 concert.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/irish-band-kneecap-say-terrorism-charge-seeks-silence-artists-2025-05-22/> - Irish-language rap group Kneecap has condemned a terrorism-related charge against band member Liam O'Hanna as an attempt to silence politically outspoken artists. O'Hanna, 27, was charged by London's Metropolitan Police for allegedly displaying a Hezbollah flag—representing the Iran-backed militant group banned in the UK—during a performance in November. Kneecap stated the flag was thrown on stage and denied endorsing Hezbollah or Hamas, emphasizing their condemnation of all attacks on civilians. The band, known for advocating Irish identity and Irish unity, has been scrutinized recently for pro-Palestinian messaging during their Coachella performance. In April, they also apologized for previously controversial comments perceived as encouraging violence against MPs. O'Hanna is scheduled to appear in court on June 18. Despite mounting criticism, including calls from UK lawmakers for their exclusion, Kneecap is still set to perform at the Glastonbury Festival in June.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/b88745d2-d29b-4613-8632-fa763eb4f924> - Liam Óg Ó hAnnaidh, known by his stage name Mo Chara and a member of the Belfast-based Irish-language rap trio Kneecap, has been charged with a terrorism offence under the UK's Terrorism Act 2000. The charge pertains to allegedly displaying a Hizbollah flag during a concert at London’s O2 Forum in November 2024, an act believed to suggest support for a proscribed organization. Ó hAnnaidh is scheduled to appear at Westminster Magistrates' Court on June 18. If convicted, he faces up to six months in prison and/or a fine. Kneecap has rejected the allegations, calling the charges a political distraction and an attempt to silence artists critical of global injustices, particularly in Gaza. They emphasized their condemnation of all attacks on civilians and denied support for Hamas or Hizbollah. The group's performances, including a recent appearance at Coachella, have drawn attention for their political stance and symbolism rooted in Irish Republican sentiments. The charge follows an investigation by the Metropolitan Police’s Counter Terrorism Command using audience-filmed footage.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/3cc86cf249c366554dee3cf5dd498fdc> - British counterterrorism police 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.
6. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/coachella-organisers-were-blindsided-by-kneecaps-pro-palestinian-messages-3856610> - Kneecap's performance at Coachella included pro-Palestinian messages that were reportedly cut from the official livestream. The band led the crowd in chants of 'Free Palestine' and projected slogans such as 'Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people' and 'It is being enabled by the US government who arm and fund Israel despite their war crimes.' The organisers were reportedly 'blindsided' by these messages, leading to the censorship of the livestream. Kneecap later provided their own livestream, with political commentator Hasan Piker broadcasting their set live on Twitch. The band's actions have sparked controversy and discussions about artistic freedom and political expression in music festivals.
7. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/kneecap-lead-free-palestine-chant-during-second-coachella-2025-set-3856257> - During their second Coachella 2025 set, Kneecap led a 'Free Palestine' chant and projected slogans such as 'Fuck Israel, Free Palestine' and 'Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people.' The band's pro-Palestinian messaging was reportedly cut from the first weekend's livestream, leading them to provide their own livestream for the second weekend. The performance included a brief speech by Mo Chara, who criticized the bombing of Palestinians and led the crowd in a 'Free, Free Palestine' chant. The band's actions have sparked discussions about artistic freedom and political expression in music festivals.