# Glasgow politicians clash over Kneecap’s removal from TRNSMT amid safety and free speech debate



Glasgow has been enveloped in controversy following the decision to remove the Irish hip-hop group Kneecap from the TRNSMT music festival line-up, a move that has elicited sharp criticism from local politicians. The decision was based on safety concerns raised by Police Scotland, which has drawn the ire of various officials who question the need for such action, particularly given the secure environment typically provided at music festivals.

Kneecap, known for their politically charged messages and performances in Irish, had been set to feature prominently at TRNSMT, slated for July. However, a recent incident involving footage from a 2023 gig, in which a group member appeared to incite violence against Tory MPs by stating, "The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP," has intensified scrutiny on the band. Following this, calls from political leaders, including First Minister John Swinney, demanded the group's removal from the festival, citing public safety concerns. Swinney's remarks reflect a broader unease within political circles regarding Kneecap's provocative statements.

Critics, including Glasgow Greens co-leader Jon Molyneux, have expressed skepticism over the police's assessment, highlighting that Police Scotland routinely manages large-scale events without major incidents. Molyneux emphasised that the issue may be less about security and more about the band's controversial image. Drawing attention away from Kneecap’s predicament, he remarked, “In all of this one thing matters more than anything and that's that Kneecap isn't the story. The genocide and humanitarian crisis in Gaza is the story and we all have a duty to speak out on that."

Glasgow Cathcart’s SNP MSP James Dornan has echoed similar sentiments, questioning who precisely posed a threat to Kneecap. He raised pertinent concerns about the implications of the police's inability to guarantee the group's safety, which could signal a troubling precedent for artistic expression in a democratic society. His comments reflect a broader societal debate about the balance between public safety and freedom of speech.

In response to the uproar, Kneecap swiftly issued a statement apologising to the families of Jo Cox and David Amess, both victims of political violence, stressing that their messages are rooted in “love, inclusion, and hope.” They categorically rejected any alignment with militant groups such as Hamas or Hezbollah, asserting, “We condemn all attacks on civilians.” Despite the controversy, the band has indicated their intent to arrange a substitute performance at the O2 Academy in Glasgow on the same night as TRNSMT, with tickets selling out in mere seconds, demonstrating continued support from their fanbase.

The backlash against Kneecap has also drawn scrutiny regarding the wider implications for artistic culture in Scotland, especially at a time when political divisions are pronounced. Calls to ban the group from other high-profile festivals like Glastonbury suggest that this issue may not be easily resolved. David Taylor, an MP, has asserted that the group’s comments and activities could be seen as inciting violence, raising complex questions about the fine line between political expression and inflammatory rhetoric.

As discussions continue around the safety and artistic expression represented by performances at TRNSMT, it remains clear that the fate of Kneecap goes beyond a single event. It embodies deeper societal issues, including the responsibilities artists hold in a politically charged climate and the role of law enforcement in moderating public events.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/glasgow-politicians-question-decision-axe-35315155), [[2]](https://news.stv.tv/west-central/kneecap-apologies-to-families-of-murdered-mps-after-calls-to-axe-band-from-trnsmt)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/glasgow-politicians-question-decision-axe-35315155), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/music/glasgow-king-prime-minister-dundee-metropolitan-police-b1224778.html), [[4]](https://news.stv.tv/west-central/john-swinney-joins-calls-to-axe-kneecap-from-trnsmt-festival-after-kill-your-local-mp-video)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.wtyefm.com/2025/04/28/politicians-call-for-kneecap-to-be-removed-from-glastonbury-and-trnsmt-line-ups-following-counter-terror-investigation/), [[6]](https://www.bluntmag.com.au/music/kneecap-respond-after-politicians-call-for-festival-bans-words-are-not-more-harmful-than-genocide/), [[7]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/festival-urged-to-reconsider-inclusion-of-rap-group-after-dead-tory-comments-5103682)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/glasgow-politicians-question-decision-axe-35315155), [[2]](https://news.stv.tv/west-central/kneecap-apologies-to-families-of-murdered-mps-after-calls-to-axe-band-from-trnsmt), [[6]](https://www.bluntmag.com.au/music/kneecap-respond-after-politicians-call-for-festival-bans-words-are-not-more-harmful-than-genocide/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://news.stv.tv/west-central/john-swinney-joins-calls-to-axe-kneecap-from-trnsmt-festival-after-kill-your-local-mp-video), [[5]](https://www.wtyefm.com/2025/04/28/politicians-call-for-kneecap-to-be-removed-from-glastonbury-and-trnsmt-line-ups-following-counter-terror-investigation/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/glasgow-politicians-question-decision-axe-35315155> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/kneecap-apologies-to-families-of-murdered-mps-after-calls-to-axe-band-from-trnsmt> - Kneecap, the Irish-language hip-hop trio from Belfast, have issued heartfelt apologies to the families of Jo Cox and David Amess following calls for their removal from the TRNSMT festival lineup. The band stated that their message is one of 'love, inclusion, and hope' and condemned all attacks on civilians. They also rejected any suggestion of supporting Hamas or Hezbollah, emphasising their condemnation of all attacks on civilians. The controversy arose after footage from a 2023 gig appeared to show one member saying, 'The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP.'
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/music/glasgow-king-prime-minister-dundee-metropolitan-police-b1224778.html> - The organisers of the TRNSMT festival in Glasgow have been urged to reconsider the inclusion of the Irish rap group Kneecap after a video emerged of one of its members calling for the death of Tory MPs. The band is due to headline the King Tut’s stage at TRNSMT in July, but has faced criticism across the political spectrum since the comments came to light. A video of the band at a 2023 gig appeared to show one member saying: 'The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP.'
4. <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/john-swinney-joins-calls-to-axe-kneecap-from-trnsmt-festival-after-kill-your-local-mp-video> - First Minister John Swinney has joined calls for the band Kneecap to be removed from the TRNSMT festival lineup after a video emerged of the group appearing to urge fans to 'kill your local MP'. The clip has prompted calls from MSPs for the Northern Irish rap group to be axed from this summer’s music festival in Glasgow. The group is due to headline the King Tut’s stage on the opening night of TRNSMT on Friday, July 11.
5. <https://www.wtyefm.com/2025/04/28/politicians-call-for-kneecap-to-be-removed-from-glastonbury-and-trnsmt-line-ups-following-counter-terror-investigation/> - Politicians have called for Kneecap to be removed from the line-ups of Glastonbury and TRNSMT festivals following a counter-terrorism investigation into the band's activities. David Taylor MP wrote that if current reports were accurate, the band’s 'actions and statements go beyond the realm of legitimate political expression and into the dangerous territory of inciting violence and promoting extremism, as well as severe antisemitism'. He continued to say it would be 'deeply troubling' to see the festival platform a group he claimed 'advocate hatred and violence, especially at a time when political and social tensions are already high'.
6. <https://www.bluntmag.com.au/music/kneecap-respond-after-politicians-call-for-festival-bans-words-are-not-more-harmful-than-genocide/> - Kneecap has responded to calls for their removal from festivals, including Glastonbury and TRNSMT, by stating that their message is one of 'love, inclusion, and hope'. The band condemned all attacks on civilians and rejected any suggestion of supporting Hamas or Hezbollah. They also issued heartfelt apologies to the families of Jo Cox and David Amess. The controversy arose after footage from a 2023 gig appeared to show one member saying, 'The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP.'
7. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/festival-urged-to-reconsider-inclusion-of-rap-group-after-dead-tory-comments-5103682> - The organisers of a Glasgow-based music festival have been urged to reconsider the inclusion of the Irish rap trio Kneecap after a video emerged of one of its members calling for the death of Tory MPs. The band is due to headline the King Tut’s stage at TRNSMT in July but has faced criticism across the political spectrum since the comments came to light. A video of the band at a 2023 gig appeared to show one member saying: 'The only good Tory is a dead Tory. Kill your local MP.'