# Former Mumford & Sons banjoist urges Trump administration to offer asylum to UK free speech detainees



Former Mumford & Sons banjoist Winston Marshall has ignited a sharp confrontation within the White House by urging the Trump administration to consider offering asylum to British citizens prosecuted under increasingly oppressive UK free speech laws. The exchange unfolded on Monday during the White House Briefing Room session, where Marshall boldly challenged Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt on the government’s stance.

Marshall spotlighted the sharp decline of free speech in the UK, pointing to the 2023 arrest of Adam Smith-Connor as emblematic of the crackdown. Smith-Connor was detained after refusing to leave a government-imposed "safe zone" around an abortion clinic—a zone purportedly created to protect women but effectively silencing dissenting voices. Marshall emphasized the severity of the situation, stating, “There are people in prison for quite literally reposting memes,” and lamented, “We have extensive prison sentences for tweets, social media posts and general free speech issues.” He pressed Leavitt on whether the administration would consider offering refuge to those prosecuted under these draconian restrictions.

Leavitt appeared unsettled but acknowledged the gravity of the question, admitting she hadn’t yet raised the issue with President Trump but was open to escalating it to the National Security team—a clear indication of growing American concern over Britain's free speech clampdown.

Since his departure from Mumford & Sons in 2021—prompted by the backlash over his defense of free speech and support for Andy Ngo’s controversial book—Marshall has emerged as a vocal political commentator, decrying the UK’s descent into what many see as censorship and “cancel culture.” His recent call for asylum underscores a broader alarm within free speech advocates who see the UK government’s heavy-handed approach as an assault on fundamental liberties.

This debate reverberates beyond Marshall’s intervention. Vice President JD Vance, speaking at the Munich Security Conference, decried the UK’s prosecution of Smith-Connor, condemning the legislation that criminalizes peaceful advocacy outside abortion clinics as a direct attack on free expression. Vance lamented how silent prayer—a form of protected speech—is now punishable, signaling a dangerous erosion of liberties not just in the UK, but across Europe.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer, meanwhile, remains dismissive of such concerns, boasting of the UK’s “long history” of free speech and rejecting comparisons to America’s more robust protections. Yet this arrogance is out of step with reality, as recent prosecutions—such as that of Livia Tossici-Bolt, detained for simply holding a conciliatory sign outside an abortion clinic—illustrate the UK’s harsh approach toward any expression deemed inconvenient.

The British government’s hardline stance fails to address the growing unease voiced even by figures within its own Conservative ranks. Leader Kemi Badenoch recently warned that free speech is now “at risk” and that citizens should not be criminalized for their views on contentious issues like abortion. The situation is so severe that it threatens to derail proposed US-UK trade talks, where sources close to the discussions emphasize that “no free trade without free speech” should be the baseline—a necessary reminder that economic deals mean nothing if fundamental rights are trampled.

Marshall’s pressing in the White House, the growing alarm from US officials, and the British government’s refusal to heed these warnings exemplify the urgent need to confront the UK’s assault on free expression. As the political landscape shifts and the new Labour government under Kier Starker pushes forward, the brittle state of free speech stands as a stark symptom of a broader ideological decay—an issue that must be spotlighted and challenged by voices demanding true liberty, not the sanitized conformity promoted by Westminster’s establishment.

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

## References

* <https://www.instagram.com/winstonmarshall/reel/DJAHfOuq3X6/> - This link relates to Winston Marshall's involvement in discussions about free speech, aligning with his recent efforts to address the issue with the Trump administration.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYZ7bCPawWU> - This YouTube video features a discussion involving Winston Marshall on free speech in Britain, highlighting concerns about the erosion of free speech globally and its impact on Western civilization.
* <https://bsky.app/profile/adamjschwarz.bsky.social/post/3lnvfte3lrk2o> - This post mentions Winston Marshall's involvement in free speech issues and his background as a former member of Mumford & Sons, highlighting his current role as a political commentator.
* <https://www.spectator.com.au/2025/02/the-myth-of-free-speech-in-britain-with-winston-marshall/> - This article from The Spectator Australia discusses the future of conservatism and free speech with Winston Marshall, reflecting on the challenges faced by these values in Britain and beyond.
* <https://zencastr.com/z/2Wyk99zE> - Similar to other discussions, this link involves Winston Marshall in a conversation about the myth of free speech in Britain, focusing on conservatism and Western civilization.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides information on Winston Marshall's call for asylum and the broader context of free speech concerns in the UK, including responses from various political figures.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14657935/Winston-Marshall-Mumford-Sons-Brits-speech-asylum-US.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data