



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by International Probono Legal Services Association Limited, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[3 February 2025]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **The Misuse of Counter-Terrorism Legislation Against Journalists and Political Activists in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

International Probono Legal Services Association Limited (IPLSA) and Justice pour Tous Internationale (JPTi) submit this joint statement to urgently highlight the systematic misuse of counter-terrorism legislation by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Government to suppress political activists and independent journalists engaged in legitimate public interest reporting and advocacy. The increasing reliance on broad and arbitrary state security laws to silence critical voices, detain individuals without charge, and confiscate personal data represents a serious infringement on fundamental human rights.

This statement underscores a disturbing trend of arbitrary detentions, excessive surveillance, and the unjustified application of anti-terrorism measures against those who criticise the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland foreign and security policies, particularly concerning conflicts in the Middle East and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Since its enactment, various instances have been documented where the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's state security legislation—specifically Schedule 7 and 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000, as well as Schedule 3 of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019—has been invoked without legitimate basis. These provisions have been used to intimidate independent journalists and political activists, often as a direct consequence of their public criticism or advocacy.

### **Mr Craig Murray's Case**

One of the most concerning cases is that of Craig Murray, a former British ambassador and well-known Scotland liberation activist and investigative journalist. On 16 October 2023, he was detained and interrogated at Glasgow Airport under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000, a provision that allows authorities to detain individuals at borders without reasonable suspicion of involvement in terrorism. During his detention, his bank cards, electronic devices, and mobile phone were confiscated, and he was compelled to provide PIN codes and passwords. A letter from Police Scotland, Border Policing Command, dated 19 October 2023, informed him that his confiscated mobile phone would be retained "for as long as deemed necessary, in the interests of the investigation," thereby confirming that he remains subject to an ongoing counter-terrorism probe, despite having no known connections to any terrorist activity.

The targeting of Craig Murray constitutes a clear instance of political harassment and intimidation. As an outspoken critic of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's foreign policies in Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Gaza, and a long-time advocate for Palestinian self-determination, Mr. Murray's detention appears to be directly related to his journalistic work and dissenting political views rather than any genuine security concerns. The abuse of Schedule 7 powers to interrogate, surveil, and confiscate the data of a journalist known for exposing state abuses and violations of international law represents a deeply troubling indicator of a broader crackdown on press freedom and political dissent in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

### **Mr Richard Medhurst's Case**

Beyond Craig Murray's case, similar counter-terrorism measures have been employed against other independent journalists and activists, reinforcing concerns regarding the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's increasingly aggressive use of counter-terrorism laws as a tool for political suppression. For instance, Richard Medhurst, an independent journalist and commentator, was arrested at Heathrow Airport on 15 August 2024, under Section 12(1A) of the Terrorism Act 2000. His detention lasted nearly 24 hours, during which he was denied the right to contact his family, subjected to oppressive interrogation techniques, and had his media equipment confiscated.

His arrest has been widely condemned by journalistic organizations and human rights defenders, who argue that his detention was politically motivated and intended to punish him for his reporting on Palestinian rights and Middle Eastern affairs.

### **Ms Ross, Mr Laughland, and Mr Klarenberg's Case**

Similarly, Johanna Ross (Ganyukova), John Laughland, and Kit Klarenberg, all British journalists known for their critical reporting on the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland foreign policy, intelligence operations, and international affairs, have been subjected to detention, interrogation, and invasive surveillance under Schedule 3 of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019, in what appears to be a deliberate campaign to intimidate dissenting voices.

Johanna Ross, detained at Edinburgh Airport on 18 February 2022, was forcibly separated from her belongings, compelled to surrender all electronic devices, including her phone and her daughter's phone, and denied legal counsel, while being interrogated about her work for Russian-based media. She was later informed that her confiscated data would be retained indefinitely "in the interests of national security," with no further justification or recourse.

John Laughland, detained at Gatwick Airport on 7 October 2022, was similarly denied legal counsel and questioned about his views on the Ukraine war, his professional affiliations, and alleged ties to Russian-linked organizations, while his passport, laptop, and phone were confiscated, and his computer was retained for three weeks.

Likewise, Kit Klarenberg, detained at Luton Airport on 17 May 2023, was held for five hours, subjected to biometric data collection, compelled to provide passwords to his devices, and interrogated about his residency in Serbia, his contact with Russian government officials, and the funding of his media outlet. His memory cards and SIM cards were seized, and over a year later, some of his data remains in state custody, indicating an ongoing security probe against him.

The lack of transparency, due process, and legitimate national security justification in each of these cases underscores the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland government's abuse of counter-terrorism laws to intimidate, surveil, and suppress independent journalism. The use of border security powers to detain, interrogate, and confiscate data from journalists without any credible evidence of wrongdoing represents a blatant assault on press freedom, the right to privacy, and the fundamental principles of democratic accountability.

### **Implications on the Freedom of Expression in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

The legal and human rights implications of these actions are profound, as they violate core international protections. The vague language of Section 12(1A) of the Terrorism Act 2000 criminalises mere expressions of opinion, fundamentally undermining international human rights standards. This misuse of national security measures against journalists and activists contravenes Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits the suppression of dissent.

We call upon the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Government to respond promptly to these urgent concerns and provide full transparency regarding the scope of counter-terrorism measures used against political dissidents, journalists, and human rights defenders. It is crucial to assure non-repetition and implement concrete steps to prevent the misuse of counter-terrorism laws against legitimate journalism and peaceful activism.

## **Recommendations**

We urge the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Government to eliminate state secrecy classifications related to these human rights abuses, ensuring that victims and the public are informed about the extent of these violations. Such transparency is essential to uphold accountability and the right to truth.

We further call for the formal notification of affected individuals that they are no longer under investigation and that their confiscated data and equipment will be returned unconditionally. These measures are vital to restoring trust, reinforcing freedom of expression, and ensuring that counter-terrorism powers are not wielded to suppress legitimate dissent.

The international community expects the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to uphold its commitments under international human rights law, and we trust that the government will engage constructively to restore confidence in its adherence to democratic principles and human rights protections.

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Justice pour Tous Internationale (JPTi), NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.