



“Think before you post”: The U.K. is now jailing people for social media comments

BY [STANDING FOR FREEDOM CENTER STAFF](#) / FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 2024



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Western civilization appears to be on the cusp of a new Dark Age – for any government that arrests and locks up its own citizens for saying, writing, or thinking the “wrong” opinions or beliefs can no longer say it stands for freedom or human rights.



The United Kingdom has ramped up its censorship efforts, now taking the extraordinary step of jailing its own citizens for making “hateful” social media posts and threatening to extradite the citizens of other countries, including the U.S., for “hate speech” and other speech violations.

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The crackdown comes in the wake of a mass stabbing and the resulting reactionary riots.

On July 29, Axel Rudakubana took what has been **reported** to be a kitchen knife to a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport and proceeded to kill three young girls: Bebe King, 6, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9.

The suspect also stabbed eight other children and two adults.

Following the horrific act the community was heartbroken and enraged. Information began circulating on social media that Rudakubana, who since the attack has turned 18 years old, was an illegal immigrant who came to the U.K. on a small boat.

That turned out not to be true. The suspect was born in Cardiff, Wales, but his parents did immigrate to the U.K. from Rwanda.

However, outrage had already consumed many, kicking off widespread riots. The anger largely focused on expressing anti-immigration sentiment, but some also turned their attention to buildings housing asylum seekers.

Hundreds have been arrested in connection to the riots and protests.

The U.K. government has responded to the riots by targeting people posting on social media in an effort to stop what it alleges is incitement to riot.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) shared a [video](#) on X warning people about using social media, stating:

"Think before you post! Content that incites violence or hatred isn't just harmful – it can be illegal. The CPS takes online violence seriously and will prosecute when the legal test is met. Remind those close to you to share responsibly or face the consequences."

The warning was shared by the U.K. government's official account, which also [issued](#) the same ominous warning, "Think before you post."

Numerous arrests have been made of people who did nothing but post their feelings or opinions on social media.

For example, a 55-year-old woman was arrested for a social media post she shared that [claimed](#) the suspect was "was an asylum seeker who came to the UK by boat last year and was on an MI6 watch list."

"If this is true," she stated, "then all hell is about to break loose."

Dimitrie Stoica was [arrested](#) for making a TikTok video in which he pretended that right-wing rioters were chasing him. Though he claimed the video was a joke, Assistant Chief Constable Michelle Shooter stated,

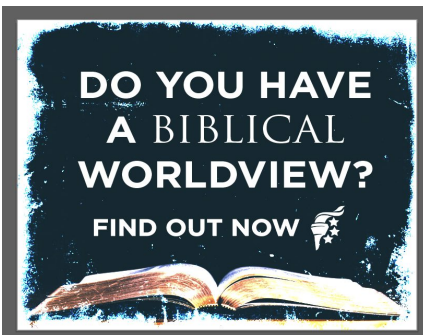
"As has been made clear by forces across the country, any criminal actions relating to the disorder, whether they be in person or online, will be dealt with quickly and robustly. Whether it is spreading misinformation or being involved in disorder the message is clear – as a service we are ready to respond and deal with any situation robustly."

Several more [arrests](#) for written content have since been made. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said,

"This is not a law free zone. And I think that's clear from the prosecutions and sentencing. Today we're due sentencing for online behavior, that's a reminder to everyone that whether you're directly involved or whether you're remotely involved you're culpable and you'll be put before the courts if you've broken the law."

Director of Public Prosecutions Stephen Parkinson [stated](#), "We do have dedicated police officers who are scouring social media, their job is to look for this material, and then follow up with identification, arrests, and so forth," adding that although people may not think they are doing anything wrong, "they are and the consequences will be visited upon them."

London Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley stated that the arrests won't be confined to British citizens, [warning](#) that the government would extradite citizens of other countries. "We will throw the full force of the law at people," he said. "And whether you're in this country committing crimes on the streets or committing crimes from further afield online, we will come after you."



A Sky News reporter asked Rowley about whether X owner Elon Musk, who has made comments online regarding the U.K.'s censorship and apparent two-tiered justice system, was in violation of the new speech codes. He responded,

“You can be guilty of offenses of incitement, of stirring up racial hatred, there are numerous terrorist offenses regarding the publishing of material. All of those offenses are in play if people are provoking hatred and violence on the streets, and we will come after those individuals just as we will physically confront on the streets the thugs and the mobs who are taking – who are causing the problems for communities.”

Musk has been the target of pro-censorship advocates since taking over X and vowing to make it a free public forum.

In the wake of the riots, some are [claiming](#) Musk and other high-profile persons are responsible and should be arrested.

Many have tried to force Musk to censor content on the platform. Recently European Commissioner for Internal Markets and Services Thierry Breton [threatened](#) Musk for hosting former President and current candidate Donald Trump on X.

“As there is a risk of amplification of potentially harmful content in [the EU] in connection with events with major audience around the world, I sent this letter to @elonmusk,” Breton [posted](#) on X. “As the relevant content is accessible to EU users and being amplified also in our jurisdiction, we cannot exclude potential spillovers in the EU. Therefore, we are monitoring the potential risks in the EU associated with the dissemination of content that may incite violence, hate and racism in conjunction with major political – or societal – events around the world, including debates and interviews in the context of elections.”

He warned,

“This notably means, on one hand, that freedom of expression and of information, including media freedom and pluralism, are effectively protected and, on the other hand, that all proportionate and effective mitigation measures are put in place regarding the amplification of harmful content in connection with relevant events, including live streaming, which, if unaddressed, might increase the risk profile of X and generate detrimental effects on civic discourse and public security.”

The EU has since [claimed](#) Breton did not receive approval from its president Ursula von der Leyen before sending the letter.



TAKEAWAY

The U.K. has long since descended into an authoritarian system of government, embracing more a spirit of socialism than representative democracy. In recent years, it has stolen its people's most basic rights, which were first codified in the Magna Carta and later the Bill of Rights of 1689.

U.K. government officials would do well to go back and read Winston Churchill's [warning](#) about the dangers of socialism to a free society:

My friends, I must tell you that a Socialist policy is abhorrent to the British ideas of freedom... How is an ordinary citizen or subject of the King to stand up against this formidable machine, which, once it is in power, will prescribe for every one of them where they are to work; what they are to work at; where they may go and what they may say; what views they are to hold and within what limits they may express them; where their wives are to go to queue up for the State ration; and what education their children are to receive to mold their views of human liberty and conduct in the future?

A Socialist State once thoroughly completed in all its details and its aspects...could not afford to suffer opposition.

Here in old England, in Great Britain... in this glorious Island, the cradle and citadel of free democracy throughout the world, we do not like to be regimented and ordered about and have every action of our lives prescribed for us... Socialism is, in its essence, an attack not only upon British enterprise, but upon the right of the ordinary man or woman to breathe freely without having a harsh, clumsy, tyrannical hand clapped across their mouths and nostrils... A free parliament is odious to the socialist doctrinaire... but I will go farther. I declare to you, from the bottom of my heart, that no socialist system can be established without a political police. Many of those who are advocating socialism or voting Socialist today will be horrified at this idea. That is because they are short-sighted, that is because they do not see where their theories are leading them...

No socialist government conducting the entire life and industry of the country could afford to allow free, sharp, or violently worded expressions of public discontent. They would have to fall back on some form of Gestapo, no doubt very humanely directed in the first instance... it would stop criticism as it reared its head, and it would gather all the power to the supreme party and the party leaders... and where would the ordinary simple folk... where would they be once this mighty Organism had got them in its grip?

Unfortunately, for decades now, the British people have ignored and outright rejected this call for individual rights and liberty. As the years went on, they have given away more and more of their freedom, including free speech. They exchanged liberty for promises that the government would provide for them and protect them. Now women and [priests](#) are being arrested for [silently praying](#) in their heads or holding unapproved signs in public places, and those who post ideas, dissenting opinions, and jokes on social media can expect to rot in prison.

We would never condone rioting, violent protests, or racist threats. Those are criminal and are thus already covered by the criminal code. But comments made on social media should not be treated as criminal actions — unless they meet the criminal criteria of being specific, immediate, credible threats to do violence.

The problem is that the U.K. has silenced debate surrounding policy decisions that have had enormous effects on its citizens. Its government has also ignored the votes of the people to exit the European Union and limit mass migration.

Citizens are now responding to a government that seems unwilling or unable to protect them or their children with outrage and rioting. The government’s response to the rioting has been to further increase censorship, creating a truly dystopian situation where those who use the “wrong” words are considered criminals while those who physically assault and kill are provided with excuses and mercy.

Churchill’s warning has come true. Criticizing the government’s policies, disagreeing with [LGBT ideology](#), praying for the life of the unborn, and making posts that simply turn out not to be true can all land you in jail in the U.K. now.

Allowing the government to play truth detector and arrest those who disagree or even those who lie is authoritarian and misguided. Violent rioters should be arrested and charged accordingly, but crushing online dissent or heated rhetoric does nothing but force everyone into ideological alignment and creates anger.

The world needs more free access to information, ideas, and debate, not less. Without it, the West is poised to descend into a new Dark Age, one without God-given freedoms and human rights.