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Jonathan Cook

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## *Police Escalate Britain's War on Independent Journalism*

The raid on investigative journalist Asa Winstanley isn't about terrorism, writes Jonathan Cook – except that of the U.K. government. It is about scaring us into staying silent on Britain's collusion in Israel's genocide.



Nov. 5, 2017: Solidarity with Palestine protesters versus British law enforcement in London. (Alisdare Hickson, Flickr, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The U.K. government and police — the British state — made clear Thursday they are waging a war of intimidation against the country's independent journalists in a desperate attempt to silence them.

Ten Metropolitan police officers made a dawn raid on the home of investigative journalist Asa Winstanley and seized his electronic devices under the U.K.'s draconian Terrorism Act. A letter from the Met indicates that the associate editor of *The Electronic Intifada* is being investigated by the force for “encouraging terrorism.”

Winstanley is the latest — and most high profile — independent journalist to be targeted by counter-terrorism police in recent weeks. Earlier, Richard Medhurst was arrested at Heathrow airport on returning to the U.K. Then Sarah Wilkinson was arrested and her home ransacked.

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Winstanley has repeatedly embarrassed the British establishment by exposing its covert and deep ties to Israel and its collusion with the Israeli lobby.

In his book *Weaponising Anti-Semitism: How the Israel Lobby Brought Down Jeremy Corbyn*, Winstanley exposed in shocking detail how anti-Semitism was weaponised against the former Labour leader.

The book would have made uncomfortable reading for his successor, Sir Keir Starmer, now Britain's prime minister, because it documents his role in the smear campaign.

While in opposition, Starmer's Labour Party threatened to expel Winstanley as a member — he resigned in protest instead — and have made legal threats against him.



Starmer addressing the press in Washington on Sept. 13 during a visit to the White House. (Simon Dawson / No 10 Downing Street, CC BY 2.0)

As *The Electronic Intifada* website notes: “Now that Labour is the UK's ruling party, it has the potential to use the apparatus of the state against those it views as its own — or Israel's — political enemies.”

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There is precisely no reason for police to raid Winstanley's home or seize his electronic devices. The preposterous accusation of “encouraging terrorism” clearly relates to his online work, which is fully in the public domain.

The British state wants to insinuate through the dawn raid and confiscation of his devices that he is somehow harbouring secret or classified information, or in illicit contact with terror groups, and that incriminating evidence will be forthcoming from searches of those devices. It won't. If there were any real suspicion that Winstanley had such information, the police would have arrested him rather making a public show of a 6 a.m. raid and search they knew beforehand would turn up nothing.

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This isn't about terrorism at all. It is about frightening those opposing Israel's genocide in Gaza, and the West's collusion in it, into silence. If the British state is going after someone like Winstanley, you are supposed to conclude, they will surely soon come for me too.

Even the name of the "counter-terrorism" raid is performative: "Operation Incessantness." The message the state wants to send is that it will not rest till it has us all behind bars.

Don't believe this nonsense. The police have nothing on Winstanley. Exposing information about Israel and its genocide, and the British government's culpability, is not a crime. At least not yet.

They want you to think it is, of course. They want you scared and mute. Because every time you go out and protest, you remind the world that the British government, and their bully-boys in blue, are the real criminals – for enabling genocide.

**Jonathan Cook is an award-winning British journalist. He was based in Nazareth, Israel, for 20 years. He returned to the U.K. in 2021. He is the author of three books on the Israel-Palestine conflict: *Blood and Religion: The Unmasking of the Jewish State* (2006), *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (2008) and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair* (2008). If you appreciate his articles, please consider offering your financial support.**

*This article is from the author's blog, Jonathan Cook.net.*

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