



## Society of Editors warns journalists at risk from state threats bill

### Description

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The torso of a male journalist holding a copy of the [Financial Times](#) with a cardboard cup holding a drink,

Journalists need stronger legal protections under the [National Security \(State Threats\) Bill](#) the Society of Editors has warned.

The calls follow concerns raised in the [Guardian](#) about British foreign correspondents, who could be at risk of prosecution if they use sources a? ?within state-backed groupsâ?\*

Members of the House of Lords were expected to finish scrutinising the [bill](#) today.

British foreign correspondents could be at risk of prosecution if they use sources within state-backed groups in countries such as Iran under national security legislation being rushed through parliament this week.

David Anderson, a former UK independent reviewer of terrorismâ?;

â?? Pippa Crerar (@PippaCrerar) [June 29, 2026](#)

## Society of Editors highlights risks for industry

Dawn Alford, chief executive of the Society of Editors, [said](#)

National security and press freedom are not competing interests â?? they are both fundamental to a healthy democracy. The Society of Editors supports robust measures to protect the UK from hostile state activity, but legislation must also provide legal certainty for

journalists carrying out legitimate public interest reporting.

Foreign correspondents and investigative journalists often need to engage with dangerous organisations and individuals in order to expose wrongdoing and inform the public. They should not be left relying on prosecutorial discretion to determine whether legitimate newsgathering is lawful.

The legislation, which the government is fast-tracking through Parliament, would make it an offence to support a designated body. This would include arranging a meeting to be addressed by a member of such a body, where the support is for a prohibited purpose prejudicial to UK interests.

It also criminalises obtaining material benefits from designated groups defined to include information.

Last week, at the second reading of the bill, Labour peer, Lord Hanson of Flint, [said](#)

The Government announced its commitment to a fast track on the Bill. That commitment reflects the urgent need to close a legislative gap. It also reflects the interest in this House and in our society in ensuring that the government has the powers to deal with those state entities that threaten our national security.

It was in response to a series of heinous antisemitic arson attacks in north London that the Prime Minister committed to bringing the Bill forward within weeks.

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## Criminalising journalism

The bill has drawn sharp criticism from campaigners and journalists who argue it represents a fundamental threat to press freedom and freedom of speech.

[Andrew Feinstein](#) a former South African MP and author, described the legislation as one of Starmer's final gifts to Britain. [Feinstein](#) accused the government of seeking to further criminalise journalism and corrode freedom of speech. He was replying to journalist and former UK ambassador, Craig Murray.

Murray criticised the haste with which the government was acting.

New Labour is rushing its new National Security State Threats bill through parliament in just one day.

It will be illegal to publish TRUE casualty information from Iran, from Hamas run-hospitals in Gaza, or IDF assault details from the resistance in Lebanon.

14 years in jail.

â?? Craig Murray (@CraigMurrayOrg) [June 29, 2026](#)

## Law will have a chilling effect on aid work

It is not just journalists who could be at risk of prosecution under the potential new legislation.

Aid and NGO organisations like Bond, the Halo Trust and the International Committee of the Red Cross have argued there is a risk that this may have, at the very least, a chilling effect on their work.

Baroness Northover, of the Liberal Democrats, [raised this in Lords](#) last week.

She noted that the International Development Committee (IDC) had also urged the Home Secretary to amend the bill. The IDC called for an express humanitarian exemption clarifying that offences relating to designated bodies do not apply to the activities of impartial humanitarian organisations acting in accordance with international humanitarian law.

As Parliament prepares to give it final approval, journalists and aid workers will be left exposed to prosecution for carrying out legitimate public interest reporting and life-saving humanitarian work.

Featured image via [cottonbro studio/ Pexels](#)

By [The Canary](#)

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