



Britain Accused Of Attacking Freedom of the Press - Again. « Investigative Journalists Classified as Terrorists »

Par [Graham Vanbergen](#)

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The U.K. [prides itself](#) on its past commitment to free expression and press freedom, but as we found out last year the targeted surveillance of journalists and calls by Britain's prime minister, then David Cameron, heavily supported by Home Secretary, now PM Theresa May, to ban secure messaging indicated a clear shift toward a more much restrictive environment for the press.

Then of course we have the famed raid by GCHQ on the offices of The Guardian over the Edward Snowden leaks in 2013. Just last year The Guardian [published](#) a piece about how the government are directly spying on British journalists. "GCHQ's bulk surveillance of electronic communications has scooped up emails to and from journalists working for some of the US and UK's largest media organisations."

In the worst scenario possible for press freedom, the British government has classified investigative journalists as terrorists when it comes to surveillance. "New evidence from other UK intelligence documents revealed by Snowden also shows that a GCHQ information security assessment listed "investigative journalists" as a threat alongside terrorists or hackers" - the Guardian article stated.

Today we find out that NatWest bank is to close the accounts of Russia's state-run broadcaster, RT or Russia Today.

Editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan [tweeted](#): "They've closed our accounts in Britain. All our accounts. 'The decision is not subject to review.' Praise be to freedom of speech!"

The bank, RT said, had insisted its decision was final and it was "not prepared to enter into any discussion."

The UK Treasury said it does not comment on individual cases, but added that no new sanctions or obligations relating to Russia had been imposed on British banks by the government since February 2015.

A spokeswoman for Prime Minister Theresa May said: "It's a matter for the bank, and it's for them to decide who they offer services to based on their own risk appetite."



It very much looks with Britain's anti-Russian rhetoric reaching fever pitch, as fully demonstrated just a few days ago by its highest diplomat Boris Johnson, openly encouraging [demonstrations](#) outside the Russian embassy in London, that Theresa May's government is implicated. This looks like another provocative move that has the smell of a government walking all over its democracy to serve its own agenda. Nat West, part of the disgraced RBS Group is 87% owned by the state.

[Anthony Bellanger](#), General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists has stated "I do not understand the decision of the bank, which does not detail any reason in its letter. But again, the bank must publicly explain [its decision]."

RBS already in the mire having been bailed out to the tune of almost £50billion eight years ago has lost money every month since to the tune of another £45billion. It can little afford to have bank accounts closed, especially by wealthy customers. No sooner had the announcement been made than [wealthy Russians](#) were preparing to remove their money from NatWest as a direct result.

Just a few days ago, RBS Group, regularly branded by the mainstream media in Britain as 'crooks, thieves and conmen' was exposed by a BuzzFeed News investigation entitled "[The Dash For Cash: Leaked Files Reveal RBS Systematically Crushed British Businesses For Profit](#)" where RBS stand accused of boosting revenues during the financial crisis by draining businesses of cash and stripping their assets. Many lost healthy businesses, many more lost lifetime savings, their homes, marriages and it is even reported that some committed suicide over the practices of this bank. Thousands of jobs were lost along the way. This organisation has no moral compass at all, so closing the bank accounts of news outlets should be of no surprise in the grand scheme of things.

There should be no doubt that press freedom in Britain is under attack. This was echoed by David Anderson, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, in which he [warned](#) in his 2014 review that bringing "journalism and blogging within the range of 'terrorism' encourages a 'chilling effect.'"

In a scandal that broke at the same time in October 2014, police admitted they had used the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) to obtain journalists' phone records, thereby bypassing legislation that protects journalistic sources. Then GCHQ [admitted](#) that it disregarded legally privileged information. This means that the UK's three intelligence agencies have been spying on the communications of those who are taking legal action against them. All of this adds up to a picture that would make the Stazi blush with envy - suppressing a hostile media outlet and blanket surveillance of journalists.

The World Press Freedom Index recently found that most of the movement in the worlds press was indicative of a climate of fear and tension combined with increasing control over newsrooms by governments and private-sector interests, western ones included. And Britain was no exception as it has seen a recorded decline in press freedom for almost decade, but most notably since the Conservatives arrived in power from 2010.

The result is that the [UK has year-on-year fallen down the press freedom rankings](#) and as at last year was sitting at 38th place behind countries such as Tonga, Belize, Lithuania, Chile, Samoa, Ghana, Latvia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovakia and Jamaica. In the same rankings report, the USA has now fallen to 41st place straddled between Slovenia (40th) and Burkino

Fasa (42nd), which says it all!

Just to add a little more fog to the freedom of the press story, Julian Assange's [internet was cut off](#) by the Ecuador embassy in London yesterday, WikiLeaks has said. Reports coming out of Ecuador are now [pointing](#) to increased pressure on the Ecuador government to remove Assange's asylum status, and finally expel him from their embassy, and into UK police custody. That information comes via RT in which it states that [Ecuador is being urged to end its asylum](#) of Wikileaks co-founder Julian Assange by one of its most prominent diplomats, following the recent leak of Democratic National Committee (DNC) emails and other emerging scandals involving Hillary Clinton.

The [United Nations](#) even took a position on this by stating that: "Mr. Assange had been subjected to different forms of deprivation of liberty – initial detention in Wandsworth Prison in London, followed by house arrest and then confinement at the Ecuadorean Embassy." The British government have completely ignored UN requests for Assange's immediate unconditional release and placed armed police outside the embassy building.

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Articles Par : [Graham Vanbergen](#)

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