



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 20, 2019

These Brits Volunteered to Fight ISIS — Now Their Government Is Harassing Them

They risked blood and treasure fighting the world's most brutal terrorist group. But now the British volunteers, who battled the Islamic State in Syria, say they're being treated as terrorists in a "hypocritical" harassment campaign — by their own government.



The issue concerns dozens of Brits who "joined the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) from 2014 onwards, as they were supported by a US-led military coalition to push Isis out of its self-declared caliphate," [reports](#) the *Independent*.

Eight of the volunteers died in the fighting. Most who survived returned to Britain, however — only to be repeatedly stopped, questioned, and sometimes even arrested on terrorism charges, the *Independent* informs. In fact, one volunteer has reportedly left the country owing to the harassment.

Moreover and in a first, a volunteer, Aidan James, has just been convicted in a retrial on a terror offense. "The 28-year-old was convicted of one count of attending a place used for terrorist training in Iraq, because the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had been present," the *Independent* [reported](#) in an earlier article.

"A jury acquitted him of a second count of the same offence, over training with the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), in Syria," the paper continued. "He was jailed for 12 months for the terror offence."

"James denied anything other than an 'incidental association' with the PKK and said he did not fight for the banned organisation, instead joining the YPG as it was supported by the US-led coalition to push Isis out of its territorial 'caliphate,'" the *Independent* also informs.

"The first jury to consider his case [could not reach a verdict in April](#), amid questions over why James was prosecuted from [*sic*] other British citizens were not."

In fact, a judge had thrown out an earlier terrorism charge against James, noting that "the Kurdish group was 'supporting the policy of the UK and other allies by fighting Isis' and was backed by RAF airstrikes," the *Independent* further writes.

The judge stated that "fighting alongside the YPG 'was not terrorism at all' under current laws."

Terrorism charges against another volunteer, James Matthews, were finally dropped in 2018 after a two-year investigation, but James complains that he's still regularly questioned at air and sea ports. He said he feels like a "guinea pig," accuses the government of continually changing its rationale for investigating him, and claims he's still being monitored.

Matthews also states that he has been stopped under "Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act while returning



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to Britain from the EU, having his phone and laptop seized,” the *Independent* relates. Government agents went so far as to visit his sister’s house in June and interrogate her on her brother’s whereabouts and activities. Matthews says that he has done nothing wrong and just wants to live a normal life.

If “volunteering” to fight Mideast miscreants seems odd, know that there’s a long history of such activity. The legendary Lawrence of Arabia fought the last great caliphate, the Ottomans, a century ago, and Americans and other Westerners have followed in his footsteps recently in going to fight the Islamic State, as I [reported](#) in 2015. Then there were the [Flying Tigers](#), American pilots who helped protect China from the Imperial Japanese during WWII, whose official name was the American Volunteer Group (AVG).

But while the AVG was lionized, the Brit anti-ISIS fighters complain they’re demonized. For example, the *Independent* tells us of how another YPG volunteer, who declined to be named, fled Britain due to security force harassment and now says that an intelligence agency in his current nation of residence has been “warned” of his presence.

The paper also relates the stories of other ex-YPG volunteers. One, going by the name Macer Gifford, says he was denied a U.S. visa and is repeatedly stopped at airports despite being “open and honest” with officials, even willingly divulging his passwords. Gifford believes that the government is targeting him more aggressively because he has given media interviews.

Then there’s Joshua Walker, who joined the YPG in 2016 and was arrested 18 months later, before ultimately being acquitted by a jury.

In fairness, there are perhaps complicating factors in certain volunteers’ cases. Aidan James, for instance, was also sentenced to three years’ incarceration on a drug charge (cocaine); this was unrelated to his volunteering, but perhaps it put him more prominently on the government’s radar screen.

As for Walker, he was charged with having possession of a copy of *The Anarchist’s Cookbook*, which, among other things, contains bomb-making information. His acquittal was based on his claim, which a jury found credible, that he’d downloaded it for use in a role-playing society at his university.

It’s also possible that, at least to an extent, these men are just caught up in the unfeeling, often undiscerning machine that is the “law.” It’s a bit like the people [told by the government](#) that they were reported to be dead and who may hear, from a bureaucrat, “I can’t put you back in the system.” Once you’re caught in the machine or are found in violation of some technicality, it can be like trying to escape a black hole.

Yet some more nefarious possibilities do suggest themselves. For example, some volunteers believe the harassment is done at the behest of Turkey, which labels the YPG a terrorist group.

Yet astute observers will note another, tragic fact: The British government’s behavior here wholly accords with how, in the modern West, treason and the subordination of the good to the evil are now norms.

Consider that while James Matthews wants to be taken off the government’s “list,” even radio giant Michael Savage [was placed](#) on a British “banned” list, along with terrorists and criminals, in 2009. It was revealed that the U.K. government did this, cynically, simply to “balance out” the Muslims on the list (it didn’t want to be accused of “racism”). Savage is still banned from entry into the nation a decade



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later, however, and this is unlikely to change.

Add to this the British girls [sacrificed to Muslim rape gangs](#) because, again, the [authorities feared appearing](#) “racist”; the Brits and other Westerners, [including politicians](#), charged with “hate speech” [for criticizing Islam](#); the [Tommy Robinson](#) situation; the Brits [persecuted](#) for [acting in self-defense](#); and the subordination of citizens’ interests to those of immigrants and even illegal aliens. This is a time of moral inversion — also known as political correctness.

Then there’s statism. You can’t have complete control over your “subjects” if they’re allowed to show initiative and step outside the box. You don’t defend yourself; that’s the job of the police (who are minutes away when seconds count). You don’t question multiculturalism and immigrationism; they’re nanny-state approved. And you don’t fight the Islamic State. That’s the job of the government — when it’s not welcoming jihadis back into our midst.

All these things are imperative. Otherwise, the little people may get the crazy idea that they run the darn country.

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Selwyn Duke (@[SelwynDuke](#)) has written for The New American for more than a decade. He has also written for The Hill, Observer, The American Conservative, WorldNetDaily, American Thinker, and many other print and online publications. In addition, he has contributed to college textbooks published by Gale-Cengage Learning, has appeared on television, and is a frequent guest on radio.



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