

OpenVoiceNews U.K.

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

Public Outrage Over Music Festival Chant Masks Deeper Global Injustice

July 17, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



A performance at this year's Glastonbury Festival has sparked fierce debate over free speech, foreign policy, and double standards, after punk rock duo Bob Vylan made a controversial statement criticising Israel's military actions in Gaza. While the chant provoked swift condemnation from UK officials, critics argue the wider human rights context is being ignored in favour of political posturing.

During their June 28 set, rapper Pascal Robinson-Foster of Bob Vylan called out what he described as the violent actions of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Gaza, chanting "death,

death to the IDF.” The crowd responded to their earlier chant with “Free! Free! Palestine!” The performance was broadcast live on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), remaining on BBC iPlayer for five hours before being removed. The broadcaster has since stated that the recording will not be available on demand.

The backlash was immediate. Prime Minister Keir Starmer labelled the remarks “appalling hate speech,” while Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy accused the BBC of leadership failure. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party’s Home Affairs spokesperson Chris Philp called for prosecuting the performer and the BBC. Calls for resignation came from Israeli officials, with Deputy Foreign Minister Sharren Haskel criticising the BBC’s delay in removing the footage. The Avon and Somerset Police launched an investigation, citing possible hate crime offences.

United States Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau reportedly suggested the group’s upcoming tour visas would be revoked.

In response, Bob Vylan denied promoting violence or antisemitism. They clarified via Instagram that their comments targeted the military institution responsible for extensive destruction in Gaza and not any ethnic or religious group.

Civilian Cost

While the political fallout continues, attention has been drawn to the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where civilians continue to bear the brunt of military operations. On June 30, an Israeli airstrike on the Al-Baqa café reportedly killed at least 41 civilians, according to Al-Shifa Hospital director Mohammed Abu Salmiya. The café was a known spot for journalists, students, and remote workers.

Just two days later, the Associated Press reported another Israeli strike had killed Dr Marwan Al Sultan, director of the Indonesian hospital, along with his wife, daughter, and son-in-law. He was the 70th healthcare worker to die in the space of 50 days, further fuelling concerns over the targeting of vital medical infrastructure.

The Gaza Health Ministry reports more than 56,000 Palestinian deaths since October 2023. A recent study published in the journal Nature and posted on the preprint server medRxiv estimates the actual toll to be closer to 84,000, with over half of the victims being women, children, or the elderly.

Despite this, there has been little outcry from Western leaders. Netanyahu, who faces charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC), has not faced any formal pressure from the UK government. This silence contrasts with the swift calls for accountability aimed at a band and broadcaster.

While the UK has paused some arms export licences to Israel, parts used in the US-made F-35 jets continue to be supplied, despite opposition from rights groups including Amnesty International UK and Oxfam. These jets have been linked to attacks on Gaza's civilian infrastructure, including water facilities and shelters.

Labour leader Starmer, once a human rights lawyer, has condemned the violence as "appalling" but stopped short of backing legal consequences. As Yasmine Ahmed, UK Director at Human Rights Watch, said, "The atrocities we are witnessing in Gaza are precisely because governments don't think the rules should apply to them."

Critics argue that rather than chasing headlines over a chant, British leaders should refocus on holding those in power accountable. If international law truly matters, justice must start with those responsible for the violence, not those who speak out against it.