



## Journalist Richard Medhurst Shares Chilling Arrest Story

*This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.*

**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** Richard Medhurst is a truly independent journalist and political commentator who was born in Damascus, Syria. He regularly hosts live broadcasts discussing all sorts of political controversies from around the globe – US politics, international relations in the Middle East, rooted in an anti-imperialist worldview. In my view, he's become one of the most knowledgeable journalists on a wide variety of issues, including multipolarity. And he covered the Assange trial as well as anybody I know. He's also been someone who has covered the civil war for the last six, seven years, the dirty war from the United States in Syria, where he obviously has ties to. And for the past several years, two years at least, his focus primarily has been on what a lot of our focus has been, which is on the Israeli war in Gaza. He's on Patreon, YouTube. We have become fans of him before many people knew him. I reached out to him. We've had him on our show several times. And we're here to talk about a particularly disturbing case where he is now facing not just the threat, but the very real possibility of criminal prosecution in the EU and in the UK as a result of the reporting that he's been doing on Israel, and not just prosecution, but prosecution under terrorism laws. Richard, I wish we were seeing you under better circumstances, but we really appreciate you taking the time to talk to us. We had you on back in August, I think it was, when you were actually arrested at Heathrow Airport. And of course, there's always a little personal resonance for me because as you know, my husband was detained at Heathrow under these anti-terrorism laws. I really got to understand how chilling they were, although his case never went nearly as far as yours has. For people who haven't watched that, who haven't been following your case, before we get to the most recent developments which are even more chilling, talk about just as a reminder, in a kind of summary way, what happened back then and why.

**Richard Medhurst (RM):** Yeah, thanks Glenn for having me on. You know, when that happened to David, that was the first time that I also got to understand what this Schedule 7 was, what these terrorism laws were. So, I landed at Heathrow and they didn't let anyone disembark, they called me to the front of the plane and I thought it was a Schedule 7, which is when they detain you and it turned out to be a full arrest. They put me in cuffs, they jailed me for 24 hours. And they didn't use Schedule 7, they used Section 12 1A. So that was like the first time they've ever used that against a journalist. And the reason it's so chilling is because if you look at the law, it's very broad. It's very, very broad. So if you give the impression or

you say something that could be completely factual but makes it sound like a lawyer can twist into you supporting X or Y, they can arrest you and charge you and put you in jail for it. And that's why it's so chilling for someone who's a journalist to be arrested because then you're basically being put in prison for doing your job. And they questioned me for about two hours the next day so I had no idea why I was even there. I was put in this nasty cell. And then they released me on bail and I've been on bail ever since and they've been extending it every three months. So I have to go back on May 15th for now unless they decide to charge me or to extend it again or to drop it and that's almost nine months now that I've been under investigation for so-called terrorism. And, you know, it's really stifled my work and has stopped me from being able to do my job because if reporting is now a criminal offense, you know, I mean, what's next? And we saw what happened with Julian. Julian was also attacked and put in jail under a different political charge, which was espionage. And I feel like they've decided to now use terrorism, which is also also political, against against me and try and make an example out of me because of my reporting on the genocide in Gaza.

**GG:** So this is an important distinction, and I want to emphasize that you alluded to it, which is in the case of my husband who was detained in Heathrow during the Snowden reporting when he was passing through on his way back from Germany to come to Rio, he was detained under Schedule 7, so he wasn't officially arrested. This was a provision that says if you come to the airport and you have some sort of suspicion of terrorist activity, you can be detained and questioned. They seized his electronic devices and yet at the end what is supposed to be a nine-hour period of detention, you can go to the court and convert it to an arrest and they kept threatening that they would but they didn't. They ended up letting him go primarily because it became such a big diplomatic scandal. But because they let him go and they didn't arrest him the way they did with you and yours became a more serious case he was able to sue and in the course of suing, they were forced to say why it is that they detained him. And they said it was because of his work with the Snowden reporting. In other words, they had accused him of somehow being a suspect in a terrorism case as a result of the work he was doing with myself and Laura Poitras and The Guardian when it came to journalism. Have you had any sort of clear explanation about what the basis was for your arrest and for this ongoing investigation? Do you know for certain why this is?

**RM:** No, I really don't. I mean, they obviously hinted at things that they were upset about during the questioning, which I'm not allowed to talk about. But I honestly can't tell you 100% why I was arrested. I still think that they kind of just got mad at me because of my job. They even made a point that I have a large number of followers and they were showing me my YouTube channel and my Twitter and commenting on how big my reach is and making it very clear that basically this was the reason – I was a menace. I mean, why else would you bring this up? So the point is basically that I'm a bad influence on society or something. So I think this was really the basis of it. But I'm sure there are other things that they couldn't necessarily arrest me for that annoyed them. For example, a few weeks before I got arrested, I did this massive investigation on Israeli athletes, the national football team, the Olympic team – because the Russians got banned within four days of the Ukraine war, but the Israelis hadn't. And so I showed through, you know, their whole social media how all of these

athletes were saying genocidal things. So I thought maybe that angered them. Maybe the fact that I covered this gang rape that was happening in the Sde Teiman Detention Facility. I think it was all of these things.

But again, it doesn't mean I deserve to be arrested, but I think in general, my reporting on that, and perhaps my reporting on Julian Assange's case as well, maybe that angered the UK and US authorities. So I think it's a mix of these things. And yeah, they certainly escalated it to an arrest. And I think everybody else who had come through Heathrow, even other journalists, had only been – well, only in quotation marks here – detained with Schedule 7 as they did to your husband, to David. They force you to answer all the questions and hand over your electronics. With me, I was able to not comment the interview and they nevertheless made me give my electronics and as a matter of fact I might face a second case because of that because I've refused to give my password. So this is another law. It's called Reaper and it's just as oppressive as the Terrorism Act. And if they go to a judge and they get a court order and you still refuse to give them the passwords, you can go to prison for like two to five years automatically. And I refuse to give them passwords because they took my phones. These are journalistic tools and I'm not gonna compromise the safety of sources, acquaintances and other people. I just can't, it's an ethical obligation. So that's why I refused.

**GG:** You know, one of the reasons I'm asking is because I remember, I think I really did start watching you on YouTube, I found your show, when you still had something like 5,000 subscribers. It was really at the beginning. I mean, sometimes people come and say, oh, I've been reading your work since your Unclaimed Territory blog way before Snowden, way before Salon even. And I always feel like, oh, this is like one of hardcore original viewers of my show. I kind of feel like that with you, and one of things that attracted me to your show is that you are extremely passionate, you don't hold back at all, but it's always very, very fact-based. Especially on a topic that people consider sensitive, like Israel and Gaza, you use language that a lot of people would regard as intemperate. You don't really dilute what it is that you're feeling, and when you're talking about something like the Israeli destruction of Gaza in particular. I think that is what is appropriate, but it means that you probably do stand out to a government like the UK as opposed to a bunch of other people who are speaking critically of Israel and Gaza in sort of more restrained tones. But what's really concerning me about your case is that there is this ongoing increasing tendency to equate criticism of Israel with support for terrorism. I can't tell you how often, for example, in these cases in the United States where the students are being arrested and snatched off the street and deported. The only thing they're quote-unquote guilty of is protesting the war in Israel and in a lot of people's minds that instantly becomes equated with support for Hamas or support for terrorism which itself is a crime. And I'm wondering whether – and I don't want to, I know there's some legal constraints that you're operating under because you really do have a serious criminal case pending – but whether the theory seems to be that kind of by being so out there and you've now grown your audience you have several hundred thousand – I think we lost Richard, oh no you're back right, you can hear me? Yeah, so you now have several hundred thousand YouTube subscribers. The theory seems to be that by being so vocally denouncing and condemning of the Israeli state that in some sense it amounts to support for

terrorism. Does it seem like that's a theory that is being used to justify your criminal prosecution?

**RM:** Yeah, it absolutely is and, you know, so what they did to me in Austria afterwards, where they continued this case. So they ambushed me again on a plane, and they lured me to immigration. And you know this thing they've been doing with Mahmoud Khalil in the US where they threatened to rescind his green card. So about a month before that, they started it with me in Austria. They told me to come to the immigration authorities. And I'd never been summoned before there in my life. So I knew something was up. And they threatened to take away my permanent residency because of my reporting. And if that wasn't enough, they then had these intelligence agents ambush me with a search warrant. And I asked them what unit they were in. They told very explicitly that they're the equivalent of MI5 in Austria and they served me with a search warrant and they accused me in the warrant of being a Hamas member and not just a member but in the military wing they specifically cited the Kassan brigades. And again when I heard that I couldn't help but burst out laughing. I was like this must be a dream or something, this is madness. And they not only – You'll be familiar with this, Glenn, in the US legal system. I think it's called alleged conduct. So when you add a bunch of narrative in a prosecution to kind of paint someone as a villain. They're not additional charges, but they make you look bad and they could lead to harsher sentencing. But that's what they did in the warrants. They added these things like about rape on October 7th, trying to connect me to those things. So yeah, they basically equated all my reporting with not just terrorism but all of the crimes that they said happened on October 7th. And, you know, they not only threatened to take away my residency, but they also accused me of being an actual member of the organization of Hamas. So, yeah, it's actually gone that far. It's gone that far and I'm shocked that they can even subject me to two investigations in two countries, I mean, just because of my reporting. Again, it is 100% to do with my reporting, nothing else. So, the examples they've cited are also outlandish. One of the things the prosecutor in Vienna says in the warrant is that I allegedly showed a video of Hamas fighters eating triangle-shaped desserts. I don't even know what to say to all this, but I'm really starting to understand that they have a target on my back. And just to underscore your point about the way that I'm reporting things, I think that they really just want to stop me from doing my job, put me behind bars or just kind of like wage lawfare and psychological warfare against me.

**GG:** You know, I was saying just briefly while you were gone, which is that a lot of this has become normalized in the sense that I can't even count at this point how many people we've had on our show who report critically on Israel from Grayzone, from other places, and they get detained at airports, they get summoned, they have had their houses searched and seized, they've had their devices taken, and obviously part of this is to create a climate where people are afraid, where they know that if they criticize Israel too, they might end up in these kinds of situations. But in your case, it seems to have really gone a lot further in that it wasn't just that you had this kind of intimidating moment at Heathrow. It clearly is now continuing to the point where you are facing the real prospect that you could be forced to go back to the UK and have to actually confront an indictment and potentially a trial under terrorism laws based on a very kind of vague theory about what you might have done that might have prompted

the view that you're in some way supporting Hamas. Where is the current situation and what are the choices that you are facing?

**RM:** Yeah, so they keep extending the investigation every quarter, every three months. And the police apply for that and they always get permission, of course. So that's one option for them, to keep me in a permanent state of limbo where I can't work properly. And they still get to benefit from me being silent and then not having to take it to court and deal with the drama of an attack on press freedoms and everything that wouldn't ensue. And I don't know where I got cut off before, but it's also like the case in Austria where I'm also facing a potential indictment and with them taking away my residency, potentially. So I was saying earlier that they tried that with Khalil in the US, but about a month before ICE agents took him, they ambushed me in Vienna, they told me to come to immigration authorities and they threatened to take away my permanent residency because of my reporting. No other reason. And then I got ambushed with a search warrant by these intelligence agents, and the prosecutor accused me of being a Hamas member. So they escalated it, not just from quote unquote supporting Hamas, but now to actually being a member of Hamas and being a member of the armed military wing. They specifically say that in the first paragraph of the warrant. Which is insane, beyond insane. And I tried to explain to them that I'm Christian, they don't allow Christians in Hamas. And their response was "we're just following orders, it's not up to us, we are just executing the warrant". And they came in here in my studio, in my home, they ransacked the place. I mean, they did everything but rob me. They took thousands of euros worth of gear, every computer I've owned, every piece of gear I bought since I started this job. And I think that was another attempt to kneecap me, similarly to how in Heathrow they took my microphones, analog wired microphones. What are you gonna investigate with an analog microphone? It's just to screw with you to stop you from working. So I think there was a very clear sequel to what they've done in Heathrow. And now they're trying to corner me so that they either put me in jail in England or they put me in jail here. Or make my life hell in both countries, it's beyond an escalation. It's just madness frankly.

**GG:** Yeah, I mean, even if it doesn't end up going to those extremes, and there's by no means a guarantee that it won't, just the intimidation alone, the fact that you have to constantly have this on your mind automatically detracts from the work that you're able to do, but it also, again, is intended by design to send a signal to other people who are similarly critical of Israel in a similar way within the EU that if you think you can say what you want about Israel. You better think again because we will use the criminal force of law to harass you in very serious ways and even threaten you with imprisonment. It's actually amazing how quickly these things get normalized and the fact that it's gotten this far in your case with very little mainstream media attention, of course, needless to say, just gives you a kind of sense for how decayed things have become on the press freedom front when it comes to this issue. In terms of people who might wanna help with your, I'm sure you have defense costs, I'm sure you have other costs in terms of the things that they've taken, how can people help you and follow your work as well?

**RM:** I have a GoFundMe set up, I don't know the link exactly, but [patreon.com/RichardMedhurst](https://www.patreon.com/RichardMedhurst), that's where people can also donate and I'll have updates on my case on my Twitter. So just look up Richard Medhurst on Twitter and you'll find my account. And yeah, just a short parenthesis on press coverage, the British press six months later haven't said a word about what happened to me. They didn't report on the UN letter that was sent to Keir Starmer as well, signed by four UN Special Rapporteurs. And the Austrian press at least covered the raid that happened to me and they covered it in a more or less balanced or neutral way. So I just thought I'd say that because I think it once again underscores how sold out the whole UK press establishment is.

**GG:** Yeah, no question about it. Well, you know we're here for you whenever you need to come on, want to come on, want to talk about anything. We're definitely here for you, we are rooting for you and supporting you. I really regard your case as a serious threat to press freedom, but one that unfortunately is becoming increasingly common. I wish I could say it's so aberrational and so extraordinary, but it really, really isn't. And it's always great to see you. I hope you take care of yourself and stay in touch and we'll talk soon.

**RM:** Thank you, Glenn.

**GG:** Thanks for watching this clip from System Update, our live show that airs every Monday through Friday at 7 p.m. Eastern exclusively on Rumble. You can catch the full nightly shows live or view the backlog of episodes for free on our Rumble page. You can also find full episodes the morning after they air across all major podcasting platforms including Spotify and Apple. All the information you need is linked below. We hope to see you there.

**END**

---

**Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:**

**BANKKONTO:**  
Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.  
Bank: GLS Bank  
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600  
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

**PAYPAL:**  
E-Mail: [PayPal@acTVism.org](mailto:PayPal@acTVism.org)

**PATREON:**  
<https://www.patreon.com/acTVism>

**BETTERPLACE:**  
Link: [Click here](#)