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## UK briefing: **July**

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# Counter-terrorism

Terrorism law watchdog finds that police abused counter-terror powers with Schedule 7 stop of French publisher

- In April, London's Metropolitan police [stopped and arrested Ernest Moret](#), a French publisher working with a left-wing publishing house in France, under Schedule 7 counter-terror laws at St Pancras train station.
- The stop was related to anti-pension reform protests that Moret had participated in in France, and the arrest made for Moret's attempts at supposedly obstructing the stop by refusing to hand over sensitive information.  
The investigation against him was dropped later in June.
- Following backlash against the overtly politicised use of Schedule 7, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation Jonathan Hall [reviewed the stop](#).

In the review Hall stated that he had 'reached the clear conclusion that this examination should not have happened, and that additional safeguards are needed to ensure it is not repeated.'

Speaking on the clearly politicised use of the power, he also stated that 'The rights of free expression and protest are too important in a democracy to allow individuals to be investigated for potential terrorism merely because they may have been involved in protests that have turned violent.'

- The review also recommended that the code governing Schedule 7 be amended to 'specify that Schedule 7 should not be used for the purpose of public order policing'.

# National Security

## Crackdown on migrant rights lawyers escalates with new taskforce

- In late July, a story by the rightwing paper *Daily Mail* alleged that its investigations had found immigration solicitor firms charging clients to support 'fake' asylum status claims.
- Following this, the government [announced in early August that it had formed a 'Professional Enablers Taskforce'](#), bringing together regulatory bodies, government departments and law enforcement units to crack down on 'corrupt immigration lawyers'.

Alongside this, it was announced that police forces are aggressively seeking prosecutions against immigration lawyers under a clause of the Immigration Act 1971 which could result in them facing life imprisonment.

- The Professional Enablers Taskforce has also developed a training package for frontline immigration staff to help identify and report 'suspect activities' to support this crackdown on lawyers, mirroring the type of surveillance culture promoted by Prevent, and represents a clear attempt to intimidate and hinder the work of lawyers working with migrants and refugees.
- The Taskforce had been operating preliminarily over recent months - and the fact of its public launch aligning so closely with rightwing attack pieces on solicitors firms makes it all but certain that there was some degree of cooperation between the government and the press over the story.
- More broadly, the introduction of the Taskforce represents the escalation of a long-running attack on migrant rights lawyers, which has come alongside a

major crackdown on migrants, refugees and migrant rights themselves through a spate of new laws.

In late 2020 a lawyer firm was [attacked by a knifeman](#), shortly after then-Home Secretary Priti Patel attacked 'activist lawyers' for preventing the removal of 'illegal immigrants' from Britain - illustrating the consequences of these attacks in Britain's charged anti-migrant climate

## Apple criticises proposed amendments to Investigatory Powers Act, threatens to withdraw services from UK if they go ahead

- The government recently concluded a [public consultation into the Investigatory Powers Act 2016](#) - popularly dubbed the 'Snooper's Charter' - which was seeking input on its plans to amend the 'notices regime' around the law in response to new developments in communications technology since its initial passage into law.
- The amendments would relate to technical capability notices, data retention notices and national security notices made under powers of the Act.

They would also force messaging services/platforms to get approval by the Home Office on any security features before releasing them to customers, and allow the Home Office to demand the disabling of recent security features without telling the public.

- Apple's submission [to the consultation was made public](#), where it argued that the proposals 'constitute a serious and direct threat to data security and information privacy' and claimed that it would 'remove services such as FaceTime and iMessage from the UK rather than weaken security' for its services.

# National Security

- The proposed amendments come in the context of serious attempts by the British government to undermine end-to-end encryption in messaging platforms, which it claims its stymying efforts to tackle online terrorism and sexual abuse.

This is mentioned, for example, as a concern in the government's latest CONTEST Counter-terrorism Strategy released in June, and the Home Secretary has [recently criticised Meta's plans to introduce end-to-end encryption](#).

The Online Safety Bill currently in Parliament represents another major effort to undermine encryption and hand power to the government to monitor and censor online communications platforms. Messaging platforms like Signal [have threatened to withdraw from the UK](#) if the proposals in the Bill go ahead.

- More broadly, this latest showdown between tech companies and the government illustrates how the balance of forces have turned so sharply against tech companies on the question of 'security' - whereas as late as 2017 companies such as Facebook could enjoy the status of being 'too big to regulate', and argue that self-regulation was sufficient.

## Britain and Turkey deepen security collaboration over migration and terrorism

- In early July, Rishi Sunak and Turkish President Erdogan [met at the NATO summit in Lithuania](#), where they agreed to task their respective Foreign Ministers to 'look at areas for closer collaboration on migration and organised crime' and 'to deepen intelligence sharing and cooperation on countering terrorism.'

- This was followed up in August with a [joint statement in which they pledged](#) greater bilateral work to tackle 'illegal immigration'.

As part of this it was announced that the UK would support the establishment of a 'Centre of Excellence' by Turkish National Police, which will deepen expertise for both countries around disrupting so-called smuggling networks aiding 'illegal immigration'.

- This forms another node in the British government's network of bilateral agreements with countries to stem, police and/or criminalise migration flows to Europe and Britain, which forms a key part of its anti-migrant crackdown.

The increasing criminalisation of migration encourages the work of irregular networks of 'people smugglers' to enable migrant transit, which then become the rationale for further crackdowns and securitisation.