https://internationalviewpoint.org/Andreas-Malm-and-the-policing-of-political-life

Britain

Andreas Malm and the policing of political life

- IV Online magazine - 2026 - IVP622 - November 2026 -



Publication date: Monday 2 November 2026

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

I organised for Andreas Malm to speak to Anti*Capitalist Resistance about his book How to Blow Up a Pipeline. The recording became our most-watched video and probably still is. People wanted to hear what he had to say. I think about that recording now, reading the Home Office's judgment that his presence in Britain would not serve the public good. Those who watched our discussion decided for themselves whether his arguments deserved their time. The government evidently considers that judgment insufficient.

Malm was preparing to visit Britain for a public meeting and an academic conference when the Home Office cancelled his electronic travel authorisation. His presence was "not considered to be conducive to the public good". Somewhere inside that sentence, the government has mistaken its own comfort for the welfare of the population.

I have written to my MP to complain, for all the good it will do. Anyone who has challenged the British state knows how readily a question about an abuse of power comes back as an explanation that the power exists. I expect a summary of the immigration rules. The reply needs to answer for the decision instead. We already know the Home Office can obstruct a visit. It has just demonstrated that.

The Palestine action link

Tribune had booked Malm for its launch event on 4 November, alongside Huda Ammori, co-founder of Palestine Action. He suspects that planned appearance explains his exclusion. I suspect the same. Neither of us knows, because the Home Office has not said, and its silence leaves everyone else arguing over motives while the department never commits to a reason anyone can test. Parts of my argument rest on that silence, and the department could yet show me wrong on the particulars by explaining itself.

The Home Office has found a grubby way to censor a political meeting, removing one speaker and presenting the disruption as bureaucratic process. An email from the department told Malm he could apply for a visa instead, so that officials could "consider your circumstances in more detail". A standard visitor visa takes about three weeks; the meeting is days away. Nobody has closed Tribune or banned the discussion. The organisers just have to work around the government's interference. Malm can address them by video, as Tribune intends, and the official who cancelled his permission to travel need never sit in the room and defend the decision.

The arrangement carries an invitation to surrender. Adjust the programme and carry on; the meeting can still happen, so what is there to complain about? A video link salvages the speech and loses most of what happens around it. Political life depends on people meeting in the same room and carrying an argument on past the time allotted on the platform. A government that obstructs those encounters interferes with how opposition gets organised, and its power should not be measured only by the words it manages to suppress.

Nor did this begin with Malm. The government cancelled the travel permissions of Cenk Uygur and Hasan Piker earlier this year, using the same public-good justification. The powers are extraordinarily broad. As the Commons Library explains, immigration officials can refuse entry because of a person's conduct, character, associations or other reasons.

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine

Associations: a word capacious enough to make someone else's politics your liability.

The objection holds when the person excluded belongs to the far right. The government has also used these powers against far-right figures, and the left should resist the temptation to applaud a ministerial veto because it has landed on someone we despise. Applause concedes the principle the Home Office will then use against us: political views may justify exclusion, provided the government considers them dangerous enough. We cannot make a convincing case against that power while cheering its use against our enemies. The far right should be confronted and defeated through organised opposition, and nobody owes it an invitation or a platform. An organisation deciding whom to invite is exercising its own political judgment; a minister barring someone from the country imposes the state's judgment on everyone who might invite or hear them. Where someone poses a specific threat or commits a crime, the law already has ways to deal with it. Handing the executive a roving authority to exclude political opponents puts a weapon in the hands of an institution the left has every reason to distrust.

Once exclusion becomes an accepted way of governing, officials need not intervene in every case. Organisers start doing the sums themselves. Will sharing a platform put another speaker at risk? Might the university or venue decide that the event is more trouble than it is worth? The chilling effect is often described as if it were a change in the weather. It is a cost, paid in speakers never asked and rooms never booked, and it falls hardest on groups with the least money or institutional protection to absorb it.

State is still defining seniors with cardboard placards as terrorists

Malm's exclusion prompted this piece, but Saturday's arrests outside the US embassy show how much further the repression has already gone. Malm loses a trip and can still speak over a video link. Police reported 139 arrests on 31 October, most for expressing support for a proscribed organisation, each made under terrorism law. A speaker excluded ahead of a meeting with Ammori and protesters detained for supporting the organisation she co-founded appear to be answering to the same ministerial decision. Police were enforcing it on Saturday against people publicly disputing the political judgment on which it rested.

Ministers proscribed Palestine Action, and the designation has since hardened into a settled fact that police enforce against anyone who disputes it in public. Debate continues, with one side controlling the legal consequences of what the other says. People may still argue that the ban was wrong. They risk arrest the moment a placard says they support the organisation.

The Tribune panel Malm was meant to join had already named the arrangement: "Washington's global reign of terror and Britain's role in reinforcing it". On Saturday, protesters chose a site that stands for the power sustaining Israel, and British police set the limits of solidarity outside its gates. The British state needed no phone call from Washington. It has a stake in the alliance and institutions quite capable of spotting a challenge to it. An account that blames every act of repression on American pressure lets the British establishment off far too lightly. It has interests of its own, and it knows how to protect them.

Arms to Israel's genocide = public good

Palestine solidarity becomes especially threatening when it asks how military power is supplied and sustained. Elbit

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine

Systems' factories in Britain, which Palestine Action spent years targeting, are workplaces and investments, and they sit inside a supply chain that serves the Israeli military. A military alliance ties contracts and industrial capacity to decisions made by governments. Follow those connections and the war arrives somewhere people can organise against it, at a factory gate in Filton. What ministers prefer to discuss as foreign policy turns into a fight over what happens here, with beneficiaries who have names and addresses. Treat Palestine Action as a question of offensive speech (terrorism?) and that whole setting disappears. The companies under criticism have money and long relationships with the state. Their critics face a state that decides how to classify what they do and what it will cost them, and ministers call that arrangement the public good, which gives the interests being protected a more respectable name. I do not think the left has settled where solidarity that follows the supply chain ends and sabotage begins, and the proscription has made the question harder to argue about in public.

The government's silence over Malm encourages a familiar diversion: put the excluded writer on trial instead. Search his work for the most contentious passage and make his right to attend a meeting depend on whether you approve of it. The department exercising coercive power slips out of view. An academic can be required to explain every sentence he has uttered while the Home Office gets by with a formula. Anyone who accepts that split, with every question put to Malm and none to the department, has already conceded too much to the state.

Campaign to support Malm and free speech

I want my MP to demand that Malm's travel authorisation be restored and that the Home Office disclose why it cancelled it. I also want publishers, universities and unions to treat the exclusion as interference in their own work. A supportive statement costs little if every institution then quietly avoids the next controversial invitation. Exclusion will stay cheap for the Home Office until it meets organisations that defend the meetings they convene and the people they invite, and keep on defending them.

The phrase "public good" assumes a public too passive to object to what ministers do in its name. People who keep organising meetings and turning up to protest, as the penalties pile up, are testing that assumption. My letter is a small part of the same objection. It asks an elected representative to confront a government that claims the authority to decide which critics we may meet, then refuses to explain itself. If the reply tells me only that the correct procedure was followed, it will confirm the problem. Political exclusion has become an ordinary piece of government business, and we are expected to accept the denied stamp as an answer.

Support the campaign to reverse the travel ban

30 October 2026

Defend Academic Freedom: Reverse the UK Travel Ban on Andreas Malm

Dear Prime Minister Andy Burnham and Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood,

We strongly condemn the UK government's decision to bar Andreas Malm, Associate Professor at Lund University and internationally recognised scholar of climate change, from entering the UK.

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine

Malm was scheduled to participate in a public discussion in London on November 4 when his permission to travel was revoked on the vague grounds that his presence “may not be considered to be conducive to the public good”.

This decision constitutes a grave violation of academic freedom and freedom of expression. The ability of scholars to travel, exchange ideas, and participate in public debate—including on politically contentious issues—is fundamental to a free and democratic society. Excluding academics because of their political views or the topics they discuss sets a dangerous precedent and risks creating a chilling effect on academic and public discourse.

We call on you to immediately reverse this decision, restore Andreas Malm’s permission to enter the UK, and reaffirm your commitment to protecting academic freedom and freedom of expression.

More information: *The Guardian* 30 October 2026
https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/oct/30/climate-academic-andreas-malm-barred-from-entering-uk.

sign the petition here:
https://openletter.earth/defend-academic-freedom-reverse-the-uk-travel-ban-on-andreas-malm-8e62

Additional coverage

Tribune: https://tribunemag.co.uk/2026/10/andreas-malm-denied-entry-to-the-uk-to-speak-at-tribune-event

Al Jazeera:
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/10/30/swedish-academic-says-denied-entry-to-uk-over-palestine-event

Financial Times: https://www.ft.com/content/f67fafcb-9ac8-436c-a5e6-b3fbc04ab6e6?syn-25a6b1a6=1

Novara Media:
https://novaramedia.com/2026/10/30/home-office-bans-pro-palestine-author-andreas-malm-from-entering-uk/

Verso statement:
https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/a-statement-in-response-to-andreas-malm-being-denied-entry-into-the-united-kingdom

1 November 2026

*Source: **Anti*Capitalist Resistance***.

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: Donate then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of this article for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine