

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > Great Britain & Northern Ireland (Europe) > Extreme right / Fascism (Britain) > **Britain's far right is on the rise - thanks in large part to the media**

Britain's far right is on the rise - thanks in large part to the media

Thursday 11 October 2018, by [JONES Owen](#) (Date first published: 28 September 2018).

By failing to challenge his views, Sky News acts as a recruiting sergeant for Tommy Robinson

When the history of the far-right revival is written, the judgment cast on the British media will be deservedly brutal. Last night, it was the turn of Sky News to play what could be called the game of "clever bastards". A self-satisfied media elite justifies providing the far right with a platform on the basis that they will expose and therefore discredit Islamophobic bigots, because they are such clever bastards. Yesterday Sky interviewed [career criminal](#) and football hooligan Tommy Robinson, a man who has been convicted of offences ranging from assault to [fraud](#). Let me stun you by revealing that, no, the ultimate takedown of Tommy Robinson did not take place. Robinson did have the opportunity to post the full unedited interview on his Facebook page, though: Sky News has provided him with a copy to go viral on social media, presenting himself, again, as a courageous anti-establishment martyr.

"But all ideas must be freely debated!" goes the glib liberal response. So let this be put bluntly. [The far right](#) is not a legitimate political perspective. Bigotry is not a legitimate political perspective. These are irrational forms of hatred that categorise certain human beings as inferior and as dangerous based on their race or religious creed. By providing the far right with a platform, you instantly provide them with legitimacy and respectability. Their hatred simply becomes just another political belief, like whether we should nationalise the railways or cut taxes on the rich. They become "that bloke off the telly".

If we are to debate any old idea that happens to have a following, then why aren't we holding prime-time debates over whether the universe came into existence less than 10,000 years ago, or whether the Earth is indeed flat? The obvious response is that it dignifies the utterly irrational with ill-deserved respect. But at least the circulation of Flat Earth nonsense does not threaten lives.

Robinson's hatred is radicalising terrorists in this country. This is a fact. Last year, Islamophobic terrorist Darren Osborne [ploughed his van into Muslim worshippers](#) outside a mosque in London. According to the former assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police, [Osborne had been radicalised](#) by "large amounts of online far-right material including, as evidenced at court, statements from former EDL leader Tommy Robinson, Britain First and others".

Indeed, such statements by this jumped-up thug include a video in which he yells: "Every single Muslim watching this ... on 7/7 you got away with killing and maiming British citizens ... the Islamic community will feel the full force of the English Defence League if we see any of our British citizens killed, maimed, or hurt on Britain soil ever again."

Robinson himself responded on Twitter to the Finsbury Park terrorist incident by describing it as a

“revenge attack”, [accusing the mosque](#) of having “a long history of creating terrorists & radical jihadists & promoting hate & segregation”. Giving a platform to this dangerous bigot is playing chicken with other people’s lives.

One senior Sky News journalist [responded to the controversy](#) thus: “Some will argue Tommy Robinson shouldn’t be given a platform – but he already *has* a platform on social media.” What contorted logic: so therefore his platform should be further extended and legitimised? Does it not occur to broadcasters, as they host fascism, that every time the media provide him with a platform, his Facebook account accrues more followers?

The British media are not going to defeat the far right. They will continue to give a platform to them and legitimise their leading figures. The press, in particular, will keep feeding them by spreading hatred and lies about Muslims, migrants and refugees. The far right will not be debated out of existence. It will be defeated, not by the media’s clever bastards, but by a left that offers hope and combats racism and bigotry without apology.

Owen Jones

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