

How a Police State Starts

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Global Research, October 05, 2020
[Craig Murray](#) 4 October 2020

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*On Saturday a small, socially distanced vigil of 18 people for **Julian Assange** at Piccadilly Circus was broken up by twice that number of police and one elderly man arrested and taken into custody.*

The little group of activists have been holding the vigil every week. I had just arrived to thank them and was astonished to see eight police vans and this utterly unnecessary police action.

There could not be a clearer example of "Covid legislation" being used to crack down on unrelated, entirely peaceful political dissent.

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I was myself questioned by a policeman who asked me where I lived, how long I had been in London and why, what I had been doing at the Assange trial and when I was going back to Edinburgh. (You can see me very briefly at 10mins 30 secs trying to reason with a policeman who was entirely needlessly engaging in macho harassment of a nice older lady).

Later in the evening I had dinner with **Kristin Hrafnsson**, editor-in-chief of Wikileaks. I returned to my hotel about 11pm, did my ablutions and went to bed. Just after midnight I was awoken by an insistent and extremely loud pounding at the door of my room. I got naked out of bed and groped my way to open the door a chink. A man dressed like the hotel staff (black trousers, white shirt) asked me when I was checking out. I replied in the morning, and pointed out the hotel knew I was leaving the next day. Why was he asking in the middle of the night? The man said "I was asked to find out". I closed the door and went back to bed.

The next morning I complained in the strongest possible terms, the hotel refunded me one night's accommodation. The duty manager who did this added "It was not our fault" but said they could not tell me any more about why this had happened.

The person at my door had a native English accent. I had been staying in the hotel over four weeks and I think I know all of the customer facing staff - not a single one of them has a native English accent. I had never seen that man before. This was a four star hotel from a major chain. I suspect "do not get sleeping guests out of bed after midnight to ask them what time they are checking out" is pretty high on their staff training list. I cannot help but in my mind put it together with my encounter with the police earlier that day, and their

interest in when I was returning to Edinburgh, but there seems no obvious purpose other than harassment.

The hotel incident may just be in the strange but unexplained category. The busting of the Assange vigil earlier is of a piece with the extraordinary blanking of the hearing by corporate media and the suppression of its reporting on social media. These are dangerous times.

I am now safely back home in Edinburgh.

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