

UK Police: Merely Watching James Foley Beheading Video May Be an Act of Terrorism

By [Paul Joseph Watson](#)

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British police have warned the public that merely watching the James Foley beheading video may be a criminal offense under terrorism legislation, a draconian escalation that threatens to create an ominous pretext for the free flow of information on the Internet.

After the video emerged, which purports to show an ISIS militant with a British accent beheading American journalist James Foley, the Guardian reported that Scotland Yard had launched a full investigation.

“Scotland Yard warned the public that viewing, downloading or disseminating the video within the UK might constitute a criminal offence under terrorism legislation,” [states the report](#).

“In other words....if you watch terrorism, you’re also a terrorist,” remarked [Zero Hedge](#).

So not only could it be treated as a terrorist offense to post a link to the video on your Facebook page, but merely *watching* the clip could also get you in hot water, despite the fact that tens of thousands of Brits have probably seen the video since it emerged earlier this week.

In terms of brutality, the video pales in comparison to previous examples since it doesn’t actually show the full beheading during the clip.

If watching a YouTube or Live Leak video can be classified as a terrorist act, what’s next? Given that authorities in the U.S. [consider libertarian beliefs to be “extremist”](#) and have placed them in the same category as militant Islam, are seemingly mundane political videos going to receive the same treatment in future?

Of course, British authorities are not going to pursue everyone who watches or disseminates the video, but threats combined with selective enforcement create a pretext that governments can exploit to set the benchmark for declaring any content whatsoever on the Internet to be extremist in nature and therefore off limits to the general public.

As we previously reported, UK authorities have acted to censor YouTube clips in the past, [most notably in 2011](#) when the British government ordered YouTube to remove footage of the British Constitution Group’s Lawful Rebellion protest, during which they attempted to civilly arrest Judge Michael Peake at Birkenhead county court.

Paul Joseph Watson is the editor at large of [Infowars.com](#) and [Prison Planet.com](#).

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