

Guardian columnist Owen Jones attacked by fascist thugs in London

By Robert Stevens
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The Socialist Equality Party condemns the vicious attack on Owen Jones, the *Guardian* columnist and prominent Labour Party activist, by fascist thugs in the early hours of Saturday morning.

The attack is the latest in a series on prominent left-wing figures and political organisations. On his twitter account Jones describes himself as “Socialist, antifascist, *Guardian* columnist, author...” He has over 1 million followers between his Twitter and Facebook pages.

Jones was attacked by a group of four men after coming out of a pub in Islington, London at around 2am. He had been celebrating his birthday with his partner and five friends. Jones sustained injuries to the head and back in the attack. A photo showed scrapes on Jones’ back.

Describing the events after his party, Jones told the *Guardian*, “We were about 30 metres away, saying goodbye to each other, when four men charged directly towards me: one of them karate kicked my back, threw me to the ground, started kicking me in the head and back, while my friends tried to drag them off, and were punched trying to defend me.

“It was clearly a premeditated attack and I was their target. They all attacked me and only assaulted my friends when they tried to defend me.”

On twitter he added, “The group then scarpered: I don’t know if they said anything in the melee. I’m fine other than a big bump on my head and a cut back.”

Jones said the assault was bound up with “the rise of an emboldened far right, which is increasingly violent, and targeting minorities and people on the left.” He told the *Guardian*, “In the past year I’ve been repeatedly targeted in the street by far right activists, including attempts to use physical assault, and homophobic abuse. I’ve had a far-right activist taking

pictures of me, and posting threatening messages and a video.”

“Because of this, and escalating threats of violence and death, I’ve had the police involved. My friends felt it was a matter of time until this happened. Give the context, it seems unthinkable that I was singled out for anything other than a politically motivated premeditated attack.”

Jones has posted videos of various attacks, one of which can be viewed here. Jones is followed down the street and verbally abused by a fascist mob, including the far-right provocateur James Goddard. One shouts, “Why are you doing the dirty work for Corbyn?”

Goddard asks Jones, in relation to Corbyn, “Why do you support a communist?”

Jones is gay and the abuse dished out includes homophobic slurs.

The journalist posted a tweet Saturday reproducing a photo taken previously by a far-right activist of Jones in a pub, with a threatening message. The photo is captioned, “Picture today Islington London Owen Jones.”

Above the post, a message read, “It gets worse hope not hate [the name of an anti-racist group] I can get that close to your like minded people its [sic] scary. Do not underestimate my talents of my past and present I even know your address [sic] of all you radicals.” It was signed, “Scott Timothy Veteran and I’ve had enough.”

On Sunday afternoon, Jones told the BBC, after being asked if his attackers said anything to him, “It is very difficult when you’re suddenly on the floor being kicked in the head.” He added that “I’ve had evidence since, which I can’t discuss ... which suggests political motivations.”

He added, “What happened—to be clear—is they spotted me in the pub, waited for us to leave, and then

launched their attack when we were away from the pub—it was planned, not a random attack.”

In the last year alone, three leading figures on the left in the UK have been attacked by far-right forces, along with other incidents in which left-wing groups have been targeted in violent assaults.

In July last year, Steve Hedley, the Rail, Maritime and Transport union assistant general secretary was savagely assaulted in a pub by fascists after he spoke at a Stand Up to Racism demonstration in London. Hedley was left bleeding heavily from a head wound. His partner was also assaulted, including being hit by a chair, and ended up in hospital. No charges were laid by the police over the attack.

In March, Labour leader Corbyn himself was subject to an attack by a far-right thug at the Finsbury Park Mosque’s Muslim Welfare House. John Murphy approached Corbyn and smashed an egg in his clenched fist into the side of the Labour leader’s head while he was sitting down eating with his wife, Laura. Murphy was only given a 28-day sentence for “common assault” despite previously threatening to kill opponents of Brexit as well as Muslims in online posts.

It emerged during the 2018 trial of Darren Osborne—who killed a Muslim worshipper and injured 12 others when he ploughed a hired van into a crowd outside Finsbury Park Mosque in 2017—that he had planned to murder Corbyn and London Mayor Sadiq Khan.

Last August, fascists attacked the Bookmarks bookshop in central London, run by the Socialist Workers Party. Again, no charges were brought by the police.

In January this year, far-right activists surrounded a Rail, Maritime and Transport union picket line at Victoria Station in Manchester, verbally abusing striking guards.

Only weeks ago, more than 100 supporters of fascist Tommy Robinson marched through Manchester city centre, holding an unprecedented demonstration inside the privately owned Arndale shopping centre. As part of their rampage, they smashed up the stall of a left-wing organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Group.

The police have said they will be look at CCTV footage relating to the attack on Jones, but as is

demonstrated by the incidents listed above, they have done little or nothing to arrest and charge any perpetrators.

It is beyond doubt that if anyone from the wider left had committed such crimes as the attack on Jones, they would have been immediately rounded up, arrested and charged.

The SEP warned after Corbyn’s attacker received a paltry prison sentence that the attack on the Labour leader must be taken as “a serious warning of the dangerous right-wing political climate being whipped up by Britain’s ruling elite and its media outlets.”

The attack on Britain’s most prominent left journalist underscores these warnings and raises the necessity for heightened political vigilance and security regarding fascist provocateurs, combined with a determined political counteroffensive for socialism based on a mobilisation of the working class.

Among the tens of thousands who tweeted their support for Jones after the attack was Corbyn who said, “Owen believes it was politically motivated, and we know the far right is on the march in our country. An attack on a journalist is an attack on free speech and our fundamental values.”

While Corbyn identifies the rise of the far right as a great danger, he will do nothing to mobilise the working class—the only social force that can defeat the fascist threat. Among the leading forces giving succour to the far right are the Blairites—who speak in similar terms as the fascists about the danger of a “hard left,” “communist” government if Corbyn were ever to take power. While the party’s rank and file have made many moves to remove and expel the Blairites, Corbyn has insisting on them staying put as a valued part of the “Labour family.”

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