

[Transcript] The News Agents / Can you really cancel Russell Brand?

Hello, there you awakening wonders. Now, this isn't the usual type of video we make on this channel where we critique, attack and undermine the news in all its corruption, because in this story, I am the news.

That was Russell Brand on Friday night on YouTube. And I think it's important to remind our listeners that for many people, the first they ever heard about this investigation, about these sexual assault allegations, was his pre-denial on a platform that wasn't the Sunday Times, that wasn't Channel 4, that wasn't the BBC. It was him speaking directly to his followers, his six and a half million followers.

He says there that I am the news. That is true in more ways than one. Today, he has been demonetised by YouTube. Content and old shows of his have been taken down by the BBC, by Channel 4. But on today's show, we're going to ask the question about whether any of that for brand, for his reach, for the millions of people who follow him on online platforms, whether any of that really matters. Can you really cancel Russell Brand?

Welcome to the news agents.

The news agents.

It's Emily.

And it's Lewis.

And we are in news agents HQ, our little conspiracy bunker here. But I think we often hear this word cancel, cancellation, cancelling culture. And I think it's time perhaps to try and delve into what that actually means, because obviously it operates on several levels. There is cancellation of somebody's character, if you like, or their reputation when you see publishers or charities or producers pulling away from somebody who's now in trouble. And then there's the whole area around monetisation. And clearly there is an overlap here, but it is not entirely the same thing. And so today we want to kind of deconstruct a little bit. What it means when you hear that YouTube is pulling advertisements from Russell Brand's videos, not taking down his video content, but just removing the ads themselves. When you hear that the BBC is removing, they've said some of their content. And when you read a little bit more closely, it sounds like one episode of QI that he appeared in, Channel 4, removing one episode of Bake Off.

How's he going to survive that?

How is he going to survive that? So I guess what we're trying to work out here is what is just virtue signalling from the sort of platform's perspective? What is responding to public appetite, public demand? And what is actually the kick in the financial stomach to Russell Brand here?

What is he actually being denied? Is there a point at which his oxygen is being cut off?

Or is he just going to go elsewhere to make that money?

Yeah, because the question lurking behind all of this, and we sort of touched on it a bit yesterday, but the question lurking behind all of this is whether or not actually the media ecosystem has just shifted so far quite quickly to the point where all of these things where once upon a time it really would have mattered if a celebrity figure or a cultural figure or a political figure or whatever had been quote-unquote cancelled, had had all of the endorsements of all the big traditional

players removed from them, it would really have mattered. They'd have been dead culturally, like their role within the zeitgeist would have been dead. You think about someone like, I don't know, Michael Barrymore, say, in the 2000s with everything that happens to him and the case surrounded him. He was done. He was one of the biggest sort of cultural figures in this country

in the 1990s, the 2000s. What happened there with the Stuart Lubbock case? He was done. Now, that isn't the case anymore, or it seems to me. I mean, when you've got a situation when, you know, Russell Brand, I mean, just to take some of his digital followings, he's got four million on Instagram, 2.2 million on TikTok, six and a half million on YouTube. And, you know, when you look at some of the things that some of his followers have been saying over the weekend in response to him and, you know, the internet isn't necessarily real life, but it's always to some extent a reflection of a bit of real life. And it is also financial. And it's financially lucrative in real life.

You know, some of the things we're with you, Russell, I've been wondering how long it would be until they, they tried to pull this card with a little crying emoji. I'm with you all the way, Russell. They did it to Assange. They tried it with Bernie Sanders. They did it to Corbin. They'll try and find anyone they find a threat. And as we were talking about yesterday, this is where there is the intersection between media and this new media ecosystem and politics. And the fact that our politics on both sides of the Atlantic has taken this conspiratorial turn where players, political players, try and pretend there are kind of shadowy figures everywhere trying to undermine them. That is exactly the seam that Russell Brand is tapping into to try and exploit this moment and to try and survive this moment. I think there are places that are, if you like, the safety net. More than that, the new ecosystem to this whole idea of cancellation. So I was told yesterday that actually one of the platforms in which Russell Brand is heavily monetizing is Rumble. And it was a site that I wasn't that familiar with. It kind of tends to serve the alt-right. It tends to serve the characters like Alex Jones and Steve Bannon and the sort of info wars kind of people. And I was told that Russell Brand is actually getting millions from work he does there, whether it's monetized or whether they're actually just paying for him, because they find people who have exactly been shut out, if you like, of the mainstream media or shut out of the BBC or Channel 4 or places that no longer want to work with him and say, oh right, let us be your

home. And we will provide the following for people who don't really want to be part of that mainstream

media landscape anyway. And so actually half this stuff is going on that a lot of people won't see. They won't recognize. They are totally forgotten about him, to be honest. Had you? Well, I mean, I went on Rumble last night and it was really interesting because I didn't know that he'd done the first interview with Tucker Carlson, the fired Fox News presenter. He's interviewed Rhonda Santis. You would never know that Russell Brand was so tied in to what we think of as the sort of, I don't know, the MAGA voice or the alt-right American voice. And this suggests that, you know, we will happily admit we are probably missing parts of these conversations where Russell Brand is flourishing and will continue to flourish whether or not the BBC removes an episode of QI. Exactly. And that's what is, I think that's what's just so fascinating about this, which is that, yeah, I mean, I was trying to wrap my brains this morning. I had some vague sense, I think, that he had gone down this kind of anti-vax kind of route and had become kind of more eccentric, more kooky. But I had no idea really that he was, and this is someone I like to think, right, that he plugged into the media, pretty close observer of the media, but not that type of media. And this is the kind of challenge to us in a way, right, is that we can all make ourselves feel better by, you know, thinking, oh, right, he's being dropped by this, that and the other. And maybe it's not applicable to loads of people, but for someone like Brand, it doesn't matter. And in fact, not only does it not matter, arguably, it's helping it, right? His whole

shtick has been, and on his channels, like looking through them, his whole thing about his YouTube show called The Trues, which is like before Donald Trump had talked about fake news, him constantly talking about, you know, stay free broadcasts, talking about COVID, talking about Ukraine. And he sets himself up as a martyr, a martyr of, you know, people like us, the established media, the mainstream media and so on, all these people who are trying to come and get him. So it becomes even more, I mean, obviously, there's a criminal stuff that's going on, which he's going to have to potentially deal with, or alleged criminal stuff. But on the other hand, there is in terms of financial reward, this is all out there for him to go get. I mean, I was speaking to somebody who would describe themselves as at one point, a very good friend of Russell Brown, who's said to me, if he doesn't go to prison, he will make millions from this and be bigger than before. Well, who else does that apply to? I mean, that's the Trump conundrum, right? I also want to say that when we talk about the internet, as if it's this sort of shady thing, and you mentioned this, it sits somewhere between real life and not real life. It translates into gigs and people selling out. It translates, as we saw on January the 6th, into crowds of people turning up to storm a capital in a riot. It's not something that you can pretend is just part of the ether, which doesn't have any actual contact with real life. The parallels between Trump and Brown, who obviously in so many ways, so completely different and not those parallels are not kind of necessarily self-evident. But like as soon as you start to really think about them, they're really quite profound. And they profound in another sense, or in a way, you're dealing with exactly the same problem, right? Which is that when you have a player, whether they're a political player or a cultural player, whatever they are, who doesn't care about the rules, who isn't invested in the rules, and when they've broken their rules, they use the attempt by the authorities in whatever form they are to enforce those rules against them and against the system itself. It poses a problem as to what you do, because you can't ignore what's been done. Of course, you can't. The traditional broadcasters can't ignore the fact that this is going on, and they have to act. But of course, it plays into his narrative. Likewise, in the US, the authorities in the US can't ignore what Trump has done. But there's no doubt that since his nadir in the midterms, the attempt to literally prosecute him, and actually prosecute him, has given his campaign the most tremendous shot of adrenaline. Yeah, this is why I call the alt-right sites a sort of safety net, because I guess we saw it with Lawrence Fox, right? He was at one stage a sort of mainstream actor, goes on question time, says something that could either get him cancelled, or else propel him into this brand new sphere of sort of brand new influence. He's bigger now. Bigger now than ever. He was just that guy on Lewis. Right, who Naomi Klein has written about extensively. Naomi Wolf was somebody who wrote what at one stage looked like a very well-researched book, until it was exposed, and her research was kind of exposed, and they had to pulp the whole book. And she then, kind of shortly after that, again, turned to Steve Bannon, turned to Infowars, turned to anti-vax. And it's almost like people who have been thrown out of one media ecosystem find their safety net on the alt-right side of it. And we don't know how that is going to turn out, and what long-term effect that's going to have, because we've never had this before. Like, this is something genuinely new in the last, what, 10 years, five years? Like, we've just never had this, to kind of, they're right, in a sense. Competing. Yeah, when they say they just want to keep their control, or they're just annoyed, they want to keep their control. It's not about being annoyed about it, but it is absolutely the fact that traditional media players have lost their monopoly

on being able to basically decide when someone is beyond the pale, and when they're not. And we're seeing that process, we saw it, we've seen it with Trump, we've seen it with others politically, but we're seeing this culturally with Brand as never before.

We're going to try and understand a little bit more about the financial implications of what it means to demonetize, of what it means to kind of cut off somebody's revenue on YouTube, with Charles Ubar, who is global zone digital media strategist, who's going to explain a little bit about the kind of sums involved here.

So Charles, can you explain to us how is he able to monetize his content, and how successful has he been in doing that? On YouTube, and it's the same on the other platforms as well, in a few different ways, but especially on YouTube, every video you produce, you have the ability to have ads run against that as part of their partnership program. So a YouTuber, could be the news agent, so it could be obviously Brand himself, obviously, he can put a video on the platform. And then when he gets views on that video, YouTube will put often pre-roll ads, or mid-roll ads in that video. And then the creator, in this case, Russell Brand, would then be getting a rev share with the platform. So in terms of being able to monetize it, it's quite quick and can actually be quite impactful in terms of what you can generate from the platform. So one of the platforms that I understood he's making a lot of money from right now is Rumble. Just talk us through Rumble, because, you know, I was pretty new to it, a lot of our listeners won't know it. Who does it aim at? And how does that monetize? Rumble is a YouTube alternative, basically. It operates in the same fashion. You can put up your videos on there. You can run a channel.

You can, in theory, obviously make money from ads in that space also. So it's very much like a YouTube, except who is primarily catered for at the moment are people that would commonly be known as more

alt-rights or to the right. So people in the info war space, for example, like Alex Jones and so on, and people looking to kind of work in that environment to appeal to that kind of audience.

I think the challenge there is that fundamentally Rumble is a much smaller platform. YouTube has about 2.5 billion monthly active users as of this past month. Rumble currently has roughly around 44 million. So not insubstantial, but if you consider the fact that Russell's YouTube channel alone is about 6.6 million, you're talking about a very different audience. There are separately, in those mechanics, the ability to have your fans give you tips and credits. And you often also do sometimes get scenarios. And I think Alex Jones is probably the prime example of this, but he's not the only one where they are separately making revenue from selling supplements, for example. So protein powders, health foods, so on and so forth. So there is an ability to monetize, but it wouldn't scale to quite the same degree in terms of revenue as say YouTube. But again, Alex Jones hasn't stopped obviously also, so he could survive. Yes. The question I guess really is, is he happy with that smaller audience? Will he miss having the scale and the reach that a YouTube might offer, for example? Well, that was our digital media strategist, Charles Ubers. And we're going to speak now to Ben Smith from Semaphore, who can paint us a picture of what the US landscape looks like in regard to brand's influence there and the kind of channels where he's making his money. Don't forget, this was what Russell Brand thought of Big Tech this time last year. Good news! A new proposed bill will mean that Big Tech and Big Media mesh together in a mighty new alliance that can only mean good news for everybody.

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And who will decide what good news is? They will.

Well, we're joined now by Ben Smith of Semaphore, who understands the media landscape better than

many, many others. Ben, I'm just curious to know what sort of impact these revelations, this investigation has had in the US. How has it landed?

In the US, unlike in Britain, there is a little bit of puzzlement about who exactly Russell Brand is. I mean, I think everyone knows who's famous and that he's on the internet a lot, but I think he had a kind of cultural centrality in Britain that the BBC bestows, that didn't come along in the US. So it was kind of, you know, important internet celebrity and complicated mess,

I think, was sort of the takeaway.

And that is really interesting because we're trying to explain, or to understand ourselves, how he went from being somebody I would call fairly mainstream until suddenly, about five years ago, he wasn't. And he kind of veered off into this, I'm going to call it a sort of YouTube hole. But I guess the question we're asking is whether those companies now can still carry on funding what he's doing. I mean, there is plenty of space for him in these internet sites, right?

Yeah. I mean, I think he sort of, and in weather, because he was anticipating something like this, or just because he was following his heart, you know, he was a sort of early adapter of this fragmented new world where he's found followers on social media, on YouTube, and he's not, you know, he's not subject to the decisions of some executive at the BBC that they don't want him on air anymore.

Something that struck us, and actually, as we've been talking about, I mean, we're not even aware so much because he had disappeared from so much of the mainstream is the extent to which actually brand has become very a mesh in the kind of alt-right political circles. Like he did interview Tucker Carlson. He interviewed Rhonda Santis. I mean, and this is a guy who, although he's had a political turn, clearly...

That's not really the alt-right. Those are the two of the most important Republicans in the United States of America. That's just sort of...

Well, the right. No, it's a fair point. It's a fair challenge. But you know what I mean as well.

He's part of that alt-right conversation in addition to that, right? He's become quite a sort of figure in the American right.

Yeah, he's a big right-wing internet figure, partly because he does have the sort of, like, odor of legitimate celebrity, which still does, you know, he was a real television celebrity, even if it was mostly in Britain. So he does bring some of that, a little bit of glamour to a slightly less glamorous world, the kind of... It's not just exactly right-wing. I mean, he was a big Corbyn supporter. I think it's sort of, you know, and I think kind of, you know, Glenn Greenwald had been out there defending him. I think it's kind of this new right that is sometimes a bit of the left as well. It's a strange moment over here.

Explain that. How would you describe the demographic he appeals to them? Because we've been trying to put our finger on it.

I mean, I think young men who feel alienated by establishment politics and drawn to more extreme views left and right, I mean, I think, you know, that... And it's a movement here online that came almost in equal parts out of earnest supporters of Bernie Sanders and ironic supporters of Donald

Trump.

The whole point of today's episode, Ben, is to sort of say, is it actually possible anymore with someone like Brian to cancel them? For them to be removed from the kind of media space and to remove their influence? What do you think? Is it possible now?

Not the way it used to be, right? I mean, it used to be that if you didn't have access to a broadcast tower or a printing press, you were subject to the whims of those who controlled those things. And that's obviously no longer true. But I think that, you know, the conversation isn't really true either. And I think you see it with Tucker Carlson, actually, right? He didn't get canceled, but he did get fired. And it turned out that having direct access on television to millions of people via Fox News had made him incredibly powerful and important. You know, now he's on making videos on Twitter, he attacked me the other night actually on Twitter for some insane, complicated thing. And I got like six tweets. So that's a lot less relevance and power. He'll be fine. He'll make a living.

But Russell Brown still got six and a half million followers on YouTube, even without the adverts. Do you consider that influential or not really?

I don't think that means he can turn, you know, six and a half million people out to a march on Washington to clear his name or something like that. I mean, lots of people find him engaging and entertaining. And I think he does have influence in sort of below the surface of the public culture in this new right wing conversation, in which being, I'm sure for some of those people being quote unquote canceled is sort of a badge of honor, but actually for lots of them treating women horribly is probably not. Ben, it's really great to hear your thoughts. Thank you so much. Ben Smith then. Thank you.

And coming up in a second, we'll be speaking to the son of possibly the richest political prisoner in the world. Jimmy Lai is in solitary confinement in a Hong Kong jail.

And we're going to be hearing from his son, Sebastian, about what the UK government should be doing now.

This is the news agents.

We're going to talk now about a man who I admire hugely. He's a political prisoner.

He's perhaps the richest political prisoner in the world, and he's sitting in a Hong Kong jail.

His name is Jimmy Lai, and his story is amazing. And we're going to talk about his attempts to tell the world about Chinese suppression of democracy. He has been a constant thorn in the side to Chinese dictators really pretty much since the massacre at Tiananmen Square.

And we're going to talk about him with his son, Sebastian Lai, and also with Keelan Gallagher, who is the King's Council for both Jimmy and Sebastian. Welcome to you both.

Sebastian, just tell us how your dad is doing now.

So because I speak out on his behalf, I cannot go back to Hong Kong. So Hong Kong passed a national security law in 2020. And since then, because of how vaguely worded it is, even doing this interview, for example, could put me in a lot of trouble. So I haven't been back, and I haven't seen him since the end of 2020.

Are you able to assess how he's doing? Do you hear from him?

Associated Press published pictures of him recently. They managed to capture him from the max security prison that he currently is imprisoned in. He seems to be doing okay.

Because we should say he's 75. He's diabetic.

He is diabetic. And so we're incredibly worried because every single day he's in prison,

he's essentially risking his life.

I want to give a little bit of background to our listeners who don't know Jimmy because he was born in China and he was a stowaway. He literally escaped to Hong Kong, this sort of place of dreams really in his mind when he was what 12 years old and started working as a child laborer, really long hours in a garment factory, and just, I mean, extraordinary story of sort of entrepreneurship from being a child laborer. He worked his way up and he basically created a garment, a textile factory. He ran, Joe Darno, I don't know if people will know, is sort of like Gapmeets Benetton for Hong Kong. And so his could have been just this extraordinary story of entrepreneurial success. That's what happens in Hong Kong. Dreams are made. How on earth did he then turn to this political prisoner?

There's two turning points essentially in my dad's life. The first one was actually when he first landed in Hong Kong, which was a British colony at that point. It's quite a beautiful story because you know, when he was born in China, he had no papers. So the first time that he landed in Hong Kong, it was the first time any state recognized him as a human being. It's worth noting as well that he is a British citizen and it is the only passport that he has. Now, when he landed in Hong Kong, Hong Kong was an incredibly free place. It had all the institutions that we have in the UK, except for democracy, but we had rule of law, free speech, a parliament. Exactly. So for dad, it was like going from black and white to color. And he always felt like those freedoms were the reasons why he managed to have so much success. And that leads to the second turning point, which is the Tiananmen Square massacres. This is 1989. Exactly. And he was incredibly hopeful because he saw it as a agent of change, change for good, a more liberated society. Now, when the crackdowns

happened, he realized China was liberating economically. They weren't going to liberate socially. And we can, I mean, we can be blunt on the news agents. When we talk about crackdown, we're talking about the shooting dead of unarmed protesters in the middle of Beijing's most famous square. University students getting rolled over by tanks, people carrying corpses on bikes. It really is a very dark, dark time in our history. And what did your dad do then? My dad decided to start Next Magazine. He believed that Hong Kong was going to go back to China in 1997 from Britain. And he believed that once the Handover happened, people needed a good source of information because only with information do they have choice and only with choice do they have freedom. That was why he started Next Magazine and then Apple was early in 1995.

Yeah. And I was working as a television reporter in Hong Kong at the time. And I remember the launch of Apple Daily because it was just unheard of. It was tabloid, which we'd never seen before. It was pro-democracy. It was rude about Chinese leadership in a way that the sun might be. This was somebody taking on the dictatorship across the border, essentially. And that got him into big trouble. He was not scared. And obviously he knew that there were very real consequences. And the Apple Daily has basically tried to survive constantly with this shadow, this threat of China over its shoulder. And things took a turn for the worse in the pro-democracy protests in 2019, which again, your father was right in the middle of and he basically got imprisoned after that. He's always had a lot of harassment. For example, there's a video of him in the BBC archives that I saw where, you know, he's talking about Joe Nano's shops being burned, his newspapers, the first edition being thrown into the sea by triads. Our house were fire-bombed, but I always felt very safe with my father,

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because he was never scared. He knew that the moment he is scared, that's when they get you. He knew

that for an autocratic regime, fear is the cheapest weapon that they have on its people.

So he is now in solitary confinement in a Hong Kong jail on charges of sedition?

They've sort of created quite a lot of charges around this, right?

Yeah, yeah. So he was first arrested in the end of 2020. He was in La Belle. And then he got four counts of an authorized assembly. I guess relatively poetic, because one of the counts was going to a Tiananmen Square vigil and he lit a candle, set a prayer, and he got 13 months for that. And then he got three other counts of unauthorized assembly, also for very peaceful protests. And then once those sentences were carried out, he was again denied bail and he got convicted for a lease violation, which they then turned into fraud.

So I want to bring in you at this point, Keelan, because there is this phrase that has started entering the language now, which is lawfare. And I'd like you to explain it, because it sounds like a way of manipulating the law to fit whatever crime you want.

That's exactly what it is, Emily. It's weaponizing the law in order to crack down on your critics. And it's a phrase I first heard used by my client, Maria Ressa in the Philippines, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her very brave journalism a few years ago. And it's something that we see in Jimmy Lai's case. So it used to be the case that autocratic regimes would use traditional legal weapons to try and silence journalists. So defamation, criminal libel laws, and so on. Then increasingly, they started using terrorism laws. So that's something we see in Egypt, in Iran, and so on. So describing critical journalism or investigative journalism, which challenges power as somehow undermining the authority of the state.

But we're now seeing much more creative use of law in a way which is very pernicious and dangerous. So we're starting to see increasingly regulatory laws, fraud laws being used.

And that's quite dangerous because it damages the messenger as well as the message.

And it's much harder- You really don't have trust in the actual rule of law anymore?

Exactly. And it also has the quite damaging effect of some members of the public who might hear that a journalist is being sued or being threatened with criminal libel, for example,

for a piece of public interest journalism. A lot of members of the public will know there's a problem with that. That doesn't sound right. But when they hear, well, this person is a tax evader or this person is a fraudster, it's a problem. So that's why we see Jimmy Lai at being charged with sham fraud charges, which the US government, United Nations experts, the European Union have all made clear are fraudulent charges, sham charges.

You haven't said the British government?

Well, I haven't said the British government because, regrettably, we've heard stronger voices coming from the US government, the European Union, and the United Nations than we have from the UK. And we're grateful to the UK for starting to change

that slowly since December 2022. We had a period of two years between December 2020 when Sebastian's father was arrested and detained. And December 2022, two whole years when the UK government didn't make public statements. In contrast, we were getting public statements from the United Nations, from the US, from the European Union, condemning his treatment of the time. Just talk us through that. Who was in charge then? I mean, who was the Prime Minister at the

time? It was Boris Johnson at the time. And did you call on him? Did the family call on the Prime Minister to say, you need to speak out to China? When my father was first arrested, from my understanding, Dominic Raab did issue a statement, basically saying that he criticised the arrest. To be honest, we really thought that the UK government would speak out a lot stronger in my father's case. James Cleverly was in Beijing a couple of weeks ago. Did he raise it with the Chinese authorities then? James Cleverly expressed concern. What does that mean? Exactly.

You know, which we're obviously grateful for, but it's, you know, call for this man's release. He's 75. He might die in prison, right? He might very well die in prison. It's you know, everybody's concerned. And Jimmy Lai is representative, I think we could say, of what is happening more widely now in Hong Kong, which is protests have been flattened, dissent has been flattened, you're not allowed to assemble, you're not allowed to criticise the government. We remember this magic promise of one country, two systems, Margaret Thatcher, you know, set it up. This is going to be the handover principle that Hong Kong is going to operate somewhere between Britain and Hong Kong, but with all the British institutions of democracy still in place. That's gone now, is it? You've put it very well because, you know, like I mentioned before, they've been trying to harass my father for the last 20, 30 years. Now, it's not like the government suddenly have 100 more IQ points per person. The reason why they imprison my father and are using the law to attack him is because they've completely disregarded the rule of law.

And can I just also check, Jimmy Lai's UK defence was not allowed.

That's right. So one of the most pernicious aspects of the national security law that Sebastian has referred to is that doing things like bringing your case to the United Nations in itself could be treated as a criminal offence. That's why Sebastian himself and we as the international legal team have also been threatened with the long arm of the Chinese state simply for going to the United Nations, for standing up for your father's rights.

And because of that, there has to be a very clear split between the domestic legal team in Hong Kong and the international legal team holding Hong Kong and China to account internationally. So that means that Jimmy Lai cannot be represented in the Hong Kong proceedings by me or by my colleagues. We indeed can't travel safely to Hong Kong or to any country with an extradition treaty with Hong Kong as matter of stand. And then Timothy Owen, Tim Owen, who was his Casey of choice, was also stopped from representing him in the domestic proceedings. So this is a regime which is determined to shut down their critics, whether they be journalists, whether they be lawyers, whether they be a son speaking out for his father, and they're determined to do that no matter where those critical voices are. That's why we've seen the shadow police stations

here in the UK. It's why we've seen a Hong Konger pulled by the hair in the Manchester Consulate. It's why we've seen these disgraceful bounties in the last number of weeks. So this is a state which is determined to crack down on dissent not only within its own borders, but internationally. And that's why Sebastian is in the polling position of not being able to even return to see his father in prison. If something doesn't change, we're going to see a British national die behind bars. And it's frankly disgraceful that Sebastian's having to fight to get his own government, the UK government, to meet with him to talk about how to change that. Have you met with Rishi Sunak or James Cleverly or Kirste Armour?

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I have not met with any of them, but I have outstanding requests. So Sebastian made a request through us as the international legal team to meet with the foreign secretary James Cleverly in January of this year. That's nine months ago. We have repeatedly requested to meet with the foreign secretary and we have not yet had a meeting. Now we are grateful to Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan for meeting with us, but there's an outstanding request to meet with the foreign secretary and it's baffling that we have a British national detained in Hong Kong, a British national, his son Sebastian, wanting to meet with the foreign secretary and having this consistent refusal. So it remains the case that there's an outstanding request to meet with him and there is also an outstanding request to meet with Rishi Sunak because you made an express request again through the international legal team to meet with Rishi Sunak four months ago. That's also outstanding. Why do you think there is this reluctance? Frankly, I'm incredibly disappointed because, I mean, this is a British citizen who is locked behind bars in Hong Kong. I don't understand why they don't speak out on my father's behalf. I don't understand why virtues that my father has shown by his actions, on virtues that the United Kingdom want to want to stand behind. Sebastian Lai, killing Gallagher. Thank you both very much indeed. Thank you. Well, after those comments from Sebastian Lai and from his lawyer, we reached out to the foreign office to try and understand their position on Jimmy Lai. And what we heard from James Cleverly's office was the following statement. His prosecution is highly politicized and I raised his case in Beijing last month. We continue to press for consular access. The international community is paying close attention to his case and many others. We urge the Hong Kong authorities to uphold the rule of law and to comply with international norms and standards. Fans of Emily in Paris will have recognized that theme tune. Lewis Goodall, I'm guessing, by your announcement that that was a new game show. You probably did watch it. It sounds like 321 or something. I just assumed it was one of your shows. It's not my show. Emily in Paris? No. No, it isn't. I watched one, maybe two episodes and I couldn't do it. What is it? It's kind of like the young American, the naive American, turns up in Paris. There's crazy European city and her adventures. Like an American in Paris, like George Gershwin, like that. Anything like that? Yeah. I mean, you're trying to make it sound like sort of Graham Greene and it's not. But Rishi Sunak, here is the link. Rishi Sunak has declared himself a fan and he's also of Emily in Paris and we know that he's a fan of Bridgeton and we know that he took his daughters to a Taylor Swift concert. This is the interview he's done with The Times. It's the interview he's done with The Times. But we also know, sort of piecing things together, that when he's on holiday in California, he goes to SoulCycle classes. What is SoulCycle? What is all this stuff? I've never heard of any of this stuff. So, Lewis, this is where I have to explain to you because you are not a Gen Z millennial woman. No, I definitely not. But he kind of weirdly is. I mean, all his tastes are very similar to our brilliant producer, Laura's. But I think this is tapping into something quite potentially useful for him, which is if there's one demographic that the Tories don't yet seem able to reach or haven't so far been able to reach, it's the young millennial women and it's young women. People who sit on the cusp of sort of Gen Z millennial and yet Rishi Sunak, whether

he gets it from his daughters or his wife, we don't know, but his tastes. He sounds lame, Emily. I'm not going to lie to you. I can limp lettuce. Don't start lettuces. No, no, no. We know who owns the lettuce in the Tory PM race here. But of course, it's actually, it's not really about Emily in Paris or Rishi in Paris. It's about Kier in Paris. See what I did there? That's nice, wasn't it? That was a segue worthy of Jon Snow. This is the only Netflix box set that you're going to be watching is Kier's Dalma in Paris with Emmanuel Macron and David Lanny and Rachel Reed, we should say. And there was a shot of them all sort of striding across, you know, in front of the Elise. He's meeting with Emmanuel Macron as part of Charm Offensive, preparing for government. And that's going on today. And we will be talking about that tomorrow as well as his wider attempts to craft a apparently whole new or partly new Brexit deal. The only thing that we need to get out of the way before John Soaple, the Spurs fan returns. Do we know when that's going to be, by the way? Never, right? Yeah, 2025. Was that Kier Starmer gave Emmanuel Macron an Arsenal shirt? He's an Arsenal fan. I mean, Kier is. And Macron was presented after their 45 minutes conversation in English with an Arsenal shirt. Very famous French Arsenal players like Thierry Henry, manager, Arson Wenger. So clearly Kier thinks that he's on safe ground. He was Kier got some cuff links, apparently. That's a sort of duty free purchase. I've heard one, isn't it? Well, I'm going to buy Kier. I'm thinking that was it Cameron got given a boxed set? No, it was Brown. No, Brown took Obama like a sort of carved, it was like a carved ship or something that was kind of from like claymoth or something. Yeah, like an original, it was a sort of basically it was an artifact. It was a kind of 18th century connection with like the kind of revolutionary war. It was it was a real thing. Obama gave him 100 DVDs. I love that. I love that. We'll be back tomorrow. Yeah, what am I going to do with that tacky thing? Anyway, we're going to be back talking about Kier, Stammer and a potentially revised Brexit deal or so he says tomorrow. Bye for now.