

OPEN LETTER: VIOLENCE & BILL OF RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AT LET WOMEN SPEAK AUCKLAND (25 MARCH 2023)

To,

Rt Hon Chris Hipkins, Prime Minister

Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Deputy Prime Minister

Hon Ginny Andersen, Minister of Police & Minister for Seniors

Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister for Women

Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Minister for the Community & Voluntary Sector, Disability Issues, Diversity, Inclusion, & Ethnic Communities

Hon Willie Jackson, Minister for Broadcasting & Media

Mr Andrew Coster, Commissioner of Police

We, LGB Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (herein 'Alliance'), are horrified at the political violence, abuse, and intimidation inflicted on women, girls, and seniors at a public women's & children's rights rally, Let Women Speak (LWS) Auckland, on Saturday 25th March 2023 at the band rotunda, Albert Square.

Kellie-Jay Keen, a visiting women's rights campaigner, alongside various NZ women's, lesbians', children's, education, and disability rights activists, were violently assaulted and intimidated out of their designated, council permit location where they sought to exercise their freedom of expression.

Saturday's events can only be described as the result of a week's-long, highly irresponsible and dangerous disinformation campaign between NZ Members of Parliament, NZ media, and trans/gender-identity-centric 'Rainbow' groups, to slander Kellie-Jay Keen and local women's rights campaigners as 'neo-Nazis' and 'white supremacists'. Kellie-Jay Keen was forced to flee the country out of safety concerns. Women, girls, seniors, and other attendees of LWS Auckland bear bruises, scars, and psychological trauma in its aftermath.

NZ Police's inaction and ill-preparedness to ensure public safety and rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly is inexcusable. The counter-protest was widely promoted by media and politicians. The Alliance's Terri Lipanovic, an organiser of LWS NZ, asked police officers 3 times to please clear the area around the rotunda of counter-protesters of which they had a council permit. In return, Terri received blank stares and fudging about finding the Senior Sergeant.

Some of the known, including worldwide broadcasted, violence on the day:

A senior woman was brutally punched in the face/head multiple times by a man.

A senior man was violently elbowed in the jaw by a man.

Two women, Kellie-Jay Keen and LWS NZ's Tania Sturt, were doused in a liquid by a man.

A mother and her young daughter tried to escape the violence to the female toilets only to be confronted by men intimidating them at their need to seek safety in a female-only space.

Numerous LWS organisers & attendees were crushed and bruised as they tried to escape the violence.

In response to such a horrific day for women and girls in this country, we have the following demands:

- **We demand public condemnation of the political violence and intimidation targeting women, children, and seniors at Let Women Speak Auckland by the Prime Minister and all the Ministers of relevant portfolios that this letter is addressed to.**

We urge all other MPs to condemn these violent political acts of terror.

- **We demand a full apology to the victims and public from the Minister of Police, Commissioner of Police, and relevant Senior Sergeant for the failings of the NZ Police to ensure peace and order and to uphold the peoples' rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.**
- **We demand a full investigation into what led to NZ police failings to ensure peace and order and to uphold the peoples' rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.**
- **We demand that every effort is made to prosecute all those who committed political acts of violence against members of the NZ public, Kellie-Jay Keen, and any other visitors to NZ affected.**
- **We demand full investigations into the professional conduct of publicly-funded media outlets & journalists who dangerously slandered Kellie-Jay Keen and NZ women's & children's rights campaigners as aligned with neo-Nazis and white supremacists.**
- **We demand full investigations into the professional conduct of organisations and charities who dangerously slandered Kellie-Kay Keen and NZ women's & children's rights campaigners as aligned with neo-Nazis and white supremacists, and who organised the protest that breached its own responsibility of freedom of peaceful assembly while physically eroding others' right to freedom of peaceful assembly. The protest was a violation of freedom of expression.**

Attached on the following page is a statement by UK human rights, women's rights, LGB rights and child safeguarding groups condemning violent protests preventing women from speaking in New Zealand. We endorse their statement and thank them for their solidarity.

LGB Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand | comms@lgballiance.nz

Signed:

Terri Lipanovic

Hamish McGregor

Statement by UK human rights, women’s rights, LGB rights and child safeguarding groups condemning violent protests preventing women from speaking in New Zealand

Women who speak out about women’s rights and lesbian rights are vilified and, increasingly, attacked not only verbally but physically. Many of us have experienced such extreme hostility, intimidation and violence. We stand with all women who speak for their rights.

Kellie-Jay Keen, a women’s rights activist from the UK, has been prevented by violent protesters from holding a public open-mic event, and has been assaulted and forced to cut short her tour of Australia and New Zealand.

Videos from the event show a protester attacking her with tomato juice, and a mob threatening to crush her as she tried to leave the event after protesters breached security barriers. She was saved by event stewards removing her from danger; a meaningful police presence was nowhere to be seen.

It is clear that the police in New Zealand failed to protect her, and the many other women hoping to speak, from intimidation and violence at the hands of protesters. As a result the event was called off, and Ms Keen left New Zealand early.

As activists for women’s rights, lesbian, gay and bisexual rights, child safeguarding and human rights in the UK, we condemn the actions of violent activists (while supporting the right to protest peacefully). We are dismayed by New Zealand’s failure to provide effective protection for free speech for women’s rights campaigners.

In its International Women and Girls Strategy, released on 8th March 2023, the UK government says that constraints on women’s freedom of expression, prevention of women’s engagement in public debate, and intimidation and threats of violence against women are major issues. The Rt Hon James Cleverly, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, says in the foreword: “We support all the brave women around the world who are struggling for their freedoms and rights.”

We call on the Secretary of State, on behalf of the UK government, to join us in supporting the brave women speaking up for women’s rights in New Zealand, and in condemning the violent protesters. We call on the Secretary of State to ask for an immediate meeting with the New Zealand High Commissioner to seek assurances on the matters of human rights and free speech in New Zealand.

We call on the UK government to engage with the government of New Zealand to demand to know why Kellie-Jay Keen was unable to speak in public and had to leave the country.

The UK government must ask New Zealand what it is doing to support freedom of expression and association in a free society, and in particular what action it will now take to protect the rights of women and girls to speak freely without fear of violence.

Sex Matters
LGB Alliance
Fair Play for Women
Transgender Trend
Safe Schools Alliance
For Women Scotland
Women’s Rights Network

Justice for Women
Conservatives for Women
Labour Women’s Declaration
working group
Liberal Voice for Women
Lesbian Labour
Merched Cymru
LGB Alliance Cymru

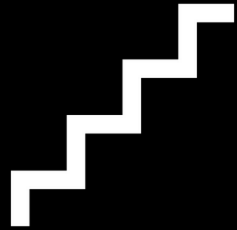
Scottish Feminists Network
Gay Men’s Network
Keep Prisons Single Sex
Fair Cop
Authentic Equity Alliance
Legal Feminist
Bayswater Support Group
Free Speech Union



ALLIANCE

NEW ZEALAND

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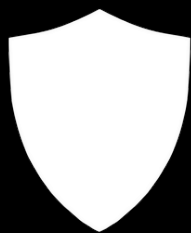


LGB RIGHTS

We work to advance the rights & diverse interests of lesbians, gay men, and bisexual women and men

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

We promote respectful freedom of expression on lesbian, gay, & bisexual issues



SAFEGUARDING

We advocate strong safeguarding practices to protect children & vulnerable people from harmful, unscientific ideologies

LESBIAN VISIBILITY

We highlight the dual discrimination faced by lesbians

