

Joint Press Release by éditions La fabrique (Paris) and Verso Books (London)

Tuesday 18 April 2023

With this press release¹ we denounce the scandalous treatment inflicted by the British police on our colleague Ernest, who is in charge of foreign-language rights at éditions La fabrique² and for the author Alain Damasio³ (Éditions La Volte).⁴ Ernest arrived in London on the evening of 17 April via Eurostar⁵ in order to attend the London Book Fair (held 18-20 April). He'd planned more than 30 meetings with various foreign publishers and had a return ticket to Paris for Friday 21 April.

Upon his arrival at the St Pancras International station, he was stopped and questioned by the police; he is now held without a lawyer in order to be questioned under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act of 2000 – under the pretext of verifying that he is not on the verge of committing terrorist acts and that he's not in possession of materials intended for a terrorist attack.

To justify this decision, the police have argued that Ernest has participated in demonstrations in France. Such a declaration by a British police officer is completely senseless and clearly seems to indicate complicity with the French authorities concerning his dossier. The police have seized his cell phone and laptop computer in order to examine them. Ernest was asked to give his access codes to the police, without any justification or explanation.

This morning, Ernest was officially arrested and transferred to a police station; he has been charged with obstruction under Schedule 7 for his refusal to divulge his access codes. At this moment, he is still being detained.

We believe these actions are scandalous and unjustifiable violations of the freedom of expression and new examples of the arbitrariness of the anti-terrorist laws. To attempt to attack the freedoms of a publishing house in this way appears

¹ Translated by NOT BORED! 19 April 2023. All footnotes by the translator.

² Éditions La fabrique has published books by Giorgio Agamben, Tariq Ali, Alain Badiou, Pierre Bourdieu, Judith Butler, Julian Coupat, the Invisible Committee, Angela Davis, Silvia Federici, Rashid Khalidi, and Gideon Levy, among many others.

³ Born in 1969, a French writer of works of Sci-Fi and Fantasy.

⁴ Founded in 2004, French publishers of works of Sci-Fi and Fantasy.

⁵ A high-speed train that travels between Paris and London, among many other cities in Europe.

to us to be an additional element in the [recent] authoritarian escalations of the French government, which is confronted with popular dissatisfaction and mass mobilizations.⁶ We call upon all the organizations and individuals who are concerned with protecting democratic principles to express their support for Ernest with force and clarity and to denounce these repressive measures.

We call for a rally at the British Embassy in Paris, 35 rue du Faubourg St Honoré (Paris, 8th arrond.) today, Tuesday, 18 April, at 8 pm to express our solidarity and to demand that the British authorities release Ernest and that they drop all the charges against him. We call upon the French authorities to relay these demands to their British counterparts. A demonstration will also be held in London in front of the Institut français.⁷

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⁶ Most notably, there have been massive protests, strikes and riots against Emmanuel Macron's decision to raise the retirement age in France from 62 to 64 years old.

⁷ Founded in 1907, an industrial and commercial organization that promotes French culture and French outreach projects abroad.