



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on July 31, 2018

UN Violently Expels and Bans Journalist From UN HQ

The United Nations is being criticized around the world once again for providing yet another example of what critics have described as its “[war on journalism](#).” While various UN bigwigs seek to have newspapers shut down and journalists thrown into prison for their journalism, UN security officials in New York City were caught on camera violently removing a high-profile journalist, known for exposing UN corruption, from the UN building. Now, as the latest UN attack on press freedom makes headlines worldwide and attracts criticism from human-rights groups, the UN is trying to justify its scheming. The journalist, meanwhile, just wants journalists to be allowed to do their job without being targeted and harassed.



On June 22, longtime journalist Matthew Lee of [Inner City Press](#) was trying to report as the UN Secretary-General and Socialist Party operative António Guterres gave a speech. For reasons that remain unclear, Lee was [manhandled and ordered to leave by armed UN security guards](#). When he asked senior UN officials in the vicinity, including UN Under-Secretary General Catherine Pollard, to intervene or explain, they refused. The guards, meanwhile, refused to identify themselves, and refused to explain whose orders they were supposedly following in evicting Lee from the premises. They also refused to let him get his computer, interfering with his important work reporting on the UN.

Incredibly, the scandal took a turn for the worse the day before U.S. Independence Day. While covering a UN committee meeting on the “peacekeeping” budget on July 3, Lee was violently evicted from the UN compound by UN security yet again. Again, after having been repeatedly harassed by the UN, Lee was physically removed from the UN building in New York City without being given a reason why. During the forced removal, UN security guards ripped Lee’s shirt, damaged his laptop, twisted his arm, and forcibly threw him out on the street. The whole episode [was caught on video](#) and has been viewed almost 20,000 times on YouTube. It has also been reported to police.



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When Lee tried to enter the UN again, he was informed that he was now banned from the premises, apparently in retaliation for filing a complaint against the guards. Now, there is supposedly a “review” into Lee and his accreditation underway by the UN. But as of now, there has been no announcement of any investigation or review into what critics said was the outrageous treatment of a journalist. Some advocates called for the security guards involved to be suspended pending a review into the violent treatment they inflicted on a harmless journalist in the process of doing his job.

Lee, of course, is a widely read and widely respected sleuth who has probably exposed more UN corruption and wrongdoing than the rest of the resident UN “press pool” combined — literally — since he was first accredited more than a decade ago. Among the huge stories that Lee has worked on are articles exposing sexual abuses and even child rape by UN “peace” troops, the UN’s role in bringing cholera to Haiti, massive corruption among top UN officials and hangers-on, war crimes in various countries in which the UN was involved, and much more. And so, UN bigwigs do not like him. Neither do some of his fellow “journalists” at the UN, many of whom work for autocratic UN member governments.

This is not Lee’s first dust-up with the UN. As *The New American* [reported in 2016](#), the muckraking journalist was unceremoniously evicted from his office at UN headquarters as if he were some sort of crime boss. UN officials ripped off his UN media badge and even seized his personal phone. Adding insult to injury, Lee was not even given access to his own files or his coat before being forcibly ejected from the building by a phalanx of eight UN security guards. “You are a trespasser on UN property,” one of the UN guards barked at Lee as he was being ordered off the premises shortly after receiving his expulsion notice. They even searched his office and threw his laptop on the ground. After that, he was eventually downgraded from a resident correspondent to a non-resident correspondent, making his life and his job much more difficult while paving the way for the current scandal.

In an e-mail to *The New American*, Lee said the reason why the UN was trying to keep him out was obvious. “Up to the level of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, they don’t like the coverage: of UN corruption (now the China Energy Fund Committee UN bribery case), UN sexual abuse, Guterres inaction on slaughter in Cameroon, etc.,” he explained. “When I first got to the UN there were several other critical reporters on these topics. Now, much less so. So to them, the solution was to rough me up and ban me.”

And despite trying to portray itself as a guardian of press freedom and human rights, the UN is neither, Lee opined. Speaking of its treatment of journalists in particular, Lee highlighted the physical violence and lawless banning of a “critical journalist.” Separately, the UN does not have an equivalent to the Freedom of Information Act. And there are no content-neutral accreditation rules, Lee explained. “It is a set up for what happened,” he said, noting that a UN spokesman had vowed to make things worse for him after watching a video Lee made. “I get roughed up, banned, no due process, no end in sight.”

As this magazine has documented extensively over a period of years, the UN’s attacks on Lee are hardly an isolated occurrence. Consider, for example, that at least two UN agency chiefs in two different countries have been working to destroy journalists for their accurate reporting. In Italy, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) boss José Graziano da Silva, who is [connected to a corrupt communist network being brought to justice across the Americas, is abusing arcane fascist-era laws on defamation](#) in which truth may not even be a valid defense. The goal is to crush the *Italian Insider* newspaper and its editor John Phillips, who could theoretically face jail time. At the UN World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), [disgraced boss Francis Gurry is similarly trying to destroy a Swiss reporter](#)



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[merely for writing](#) about [his well-documented corruption and lawlessness](#). Incredibly, [even a UN "court" was trying to jail a Lebanese journalist for doing journalism](#).

In a statement to [Fox News](#), UN boss Guterres' spokesman Farhan Haq tried to justify the treatment meted out to Lee. Haq claimed Lee had been in violation of the rules for non-resident correspondents, the status to which he was downgraded in 2016 after exposing widespread UN corruption at the highest echelons. "On the evening of 3 July, U.N. Security was alerted to a violation in the use of an access card, in which a person was using his access card to enter an off-limits area," Haq claimed, saying Lee was not allowed to "roam around the UN compound at that hour" and that "he would be required to leave the premises."

"At that point, Mr. Lee became loud and belligerent, and resisted the instructions of UN security officers. He was then escorted outside the building, along with his laptop and backpack," Haq continued. "Based on his unacceptable behavior, and the fact that he was a repeat offender, having been similarly removed from the building on 22 June 2018, Matthew Lee has been temporarily barred from the premises pending a full review of this incident."

Watchdogs, however, spoke out about the case and suggested something was seriously wrong at the UN. "This most recent incident is the latest in a long history of harassment directed at a journalist who has been critical of UN management and operations over the years," [explained](#) Senior International Policy Analyst Beatrice Edwards with the non-profit Government Accountability Project (GAP), pointing to the investigative reporting and the crucial stories Lee has broken. "In short, as a journalist, Mr. Lee has been doing his job at the UN by keeping the English-speaking public informed about both achievements and misconduct there. It should be noted that, in the course of performing his duties, Mr. Lee has always been observant of UN protocols and respectful in his interactions with UN officials."

The Government Accountability Project is "deeply concerned about the mistreatment of Matthew Lee" for two primary reasons, continued Edwards, who is known for her work defending whistleblowers. "First, he has covered UN whistleblower cases accurately and in detail, and we regard the mistreatment of him as retaliatory," she said. "Secondly, his exclusion from the UN premises because of capricious, unannounced and unknown decisions of senior managers bodes ill for the treatment of journalists in UN Member States. It is important to note the privileged ability of UN managers to execute maneuvers of this sort in order to protect themselves from unbiased coverage."

As such, Edwards and the Government Accountability Project urged member states of the UN to help combat the "silencing of a journalist" by "taking action at the offices of the self-appointed guardian of free speech." GAP said Lee should be reinstated as a resident correspondent with appropriate access to facilities and events, and that the UN should issue a public apology for the improper expulsion. In a [follow-up piece after the harrasment of Lee intensified](#), Edwards also highlighted the broader problem that the UN itself gets to decide who is allowed to report on the UN — an obvious conflict of interest that extends into a broad range of UN functions and seriously harms efforts at oversight and investigation.

Speaking to *The New American*, Lee said the UN should "immediately" let him back in and restore him to the office from which he was evicted in 2016 after pursuing the highly significant story of communist bribery at the UN involving former UN General Assembly boss John Ashe. "The UN should also institute content neutral accreditation and access rules, and due process, for all journalists," Lee added, saying he has been asking top UN officials to do this since they took office "without any response except now being roughed up twice and banned for four weeks and counting." He also blasted the UN's immunity.



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“I would like to sue the UN to vindicate journalists’ and We the Peoples’ rights,” he said. And finally, Lee asked people to sign a petition to restore his access and to contact the UN to demand that Inner City Press be allowed back to its office.

The irony of having the world’s self-styled guardian of press freedom terrorizing and banning journalists is hard to ignore. But unfortunately, it is a problem that has become not just common, but pervasive at the institution widely dubbed by critics as the “dictators club.” Lee said the current UN leadership is as corrupt as he has ever seen — and that is really saying something. With U.S. taxpayers being the largest financiers of this farce, it is time for Americans to declare that enough is enough. Congress and the Trump administration should act.



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