

Jersey jails a blogger for blogging what it admits migh...

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As [the Guardian report this morning](#):

[Jersey](#)'s former health minister has been sentenced to three months in prison after refusing to take down articles on his blog making serious allegations against a number of people on the island.

Stuart Syvret, described by one judge as "a thorn in the side of the [Jersey] establishment", did not attend the court hearing in the royal court in St Helier on Monday but was arrested at his home after locking himself in his flat.

As the paper also note:

According to John Hemming, a Liberal Democrat MP, Syvret has been unfairly prosecuted for revealing information in the public interest, including evidence that a nurse on the island may have killed some of his patients.

Hemming accuses the Jersey judiciary of behaving oppressively by misusing the Data Protection Act in order to silence its critics.

And, tellingly:

None of the four individuals named has ever attempted to sue Syvret for defamation. Instead, the data protection commissioner in Jersey, Emma Martins, has prosecuted him under the Data Protection Act.

She argues, highly unusually, that Syvret is the "data controller" of his blog (a position usually held in a large corporation) and that he has no right to name and shame people on his blog, whether or not the information he reveals about them is correct.

And as they note:

The Guardian spoke to Syvret on Friday after he learned of his sentence. He claimed to have locked himself in his flat and said: "I am about to become a political prisoner in

Jersey — again, for whistleblowing, for being a dissident."

Now let me be clear: I have no personal reason to defend Syvret who had me investigated by Jersey police on the basis of entirely false accusations several years ago. I am all too well aware of just how much a pain Syvret can be. But I will completely defend his right to free speech - and if those who claim he has offended them have taken no action to challenge him, which is their right, then for the state to step in as it has done here is completely and utterly wrong.

But not just wrong: it is the sure sign of a police state in operation. That is what Jersey is, in my opinion. And where Jersey goes the UK has a horrible habit of following. The [UK's gagging law will allow this in the UK soon](#). Is that coincidence? Maybe if one is talking direct causation, but with regard to intent I doubt it.

Are we beginning to witness the real end of free speech and with it democracy? It certainly seems possible.

PS What chance, I wonder, that I could go to Jersey now and avoid arrest? I'd have to think about it