

Police crackdown on UK anti-monarchy protesters tears apart democratic pretensions of ruling elite

Robert Stevens
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As the queen's cortege has passed through various cities, ahead of the state funeral next week, police have arrested and threatened individuals protesting against the monarchy.

At least four people were arrested in Edinburgh, Scotland, including a woman who was subsequently charged. A man was arrested in Oxford during a proclamation event for Charles III and then de-arrested by Thames Valley Police.

Some of the cases included:

- In Edinburgh, a woman was arrested “in connection with a breach of the peace” for holding up a sign saying, “Fuck imperialism, abolish monarchy” outside St. Giles’ Cathedral where the Queen’s coffin was due to arrive.

- A 74-year-old in Edinburgh charged for the same “offence”.

- A 22 year old man, identified as Rory, was arrested for calling out, “[Prince] Andrew, you’re a sick old man” during Edinburgh’s royal procession. He was charged with breach of the peace.

- In Oxford, Symon Hill was arrested and handcuffed for “disorderly conduct” after shouting “Who elected him?” during a reading of Charles’s proclamation.

- On Monday a woman was led away from parliament in London for holding up a sign reading “Not my king” while Charles addressed MPs. A video of the incident posted by the *Evening Standard* went viral on twitter with over 4.7 million views.

The deluge of pro-monarchist bilge the population is being subjected to is whipping up, as intended, filthy right-wing elements.

When the young man in Edinburgh shouted comments about Prince Andrew [in relation to his friendship with a convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein], he was thrown violently to the ground by one man and then shoved by

two more before being taken away by police and arrested.

The headline of the *Sun* tabloid newspaper hailed the “TAKE DOWN” of a “yob thrown to ground by royal mourners”.

For its part the BBC ran an interview with several people who attended the Edinburgh event as a supposed vox pop sample of the feelings of the population. Among these was a young man wearing a Rangers Football Club shirt who said he attended, “Because I’m a proud patriot in my own country. I think the monarchy holds a place, to the whole tradition and pride that I feel is going out of the window. There are not a lot of patriots left in Britain and Scotland anymore.”

Rangers is notorious for the considerable sectarian support among its fans for loyalist paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland.

Also Monday, Paul Powlesland, a solicitor, was threatened with arrest in London. Video footage of the event was seen by over 1.4 million people.

Powlesland tweeted, “Just went to Parliament Square and held up a blank piece of paper. Officer came and asked for my details. He confirmed that if I wrote ‘Not My King’ on it, he would arrest me under the Public Order Act because someone might be offended.”

Speaking on ITV’s *GMB* show Tuesday, Powlesland said, “I was outside Parliament, the centre of our politics, where someone has proclaimed himself King and said that I am their Subject. I think at least I get a chance to make my opinion on that in very polite terms.”

Widespread anger at the police clampdown led leading political commentators and newspaper columnists with a long record of upholding the interests of British imperialism to warn that police attacks on people with republican views—a position held by at least a quarter of the population—was undermining faith in the institutions

of the state.

Andrew Marr, who until recently fronted the BBC's flagship political comment programme, said as he opened his LBC *Tonight with Andrew Marr* show, "A monarchy which can't survive some booing and a few pieces of cardboard is pretty flimsy, isn't it?" He warned, "This kind of idiotic heavy-handed policing is actually, longer-term, dangerous for the monarchy. If the suggestion is that we can have a King or we can have free speech, millions of us will say - ooh, I think free speech, thanks."

Guardian political editor Pippa Crerar tweeted, "Whether you agree with her or not, this woman [who was led away from Buckingham Palace by a phalanx of police] has a right to protest. Nor is this an isolated example. Police need to be careful not to over-step the mark." *Guardian* columnist Marina Hyde also opined, "quashing public dissent can backfire in ways even those with power cannot foresee."

By 9.16pm on Monday, London's Metropolitan Police, which is mounting the largest policing operation in its history around the queen's death, was forced to issue a statement by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Stuart Cundy declaring, "We're aware of a video online showing an officer speaking with a member of the public [Powlesland] outside the Palace of Westminster earlier today. The public absolutely have a right to protest. We have been making this clear to all officers involved in the extraordinary policing operation currently in place and we will continue to do so."

Many opposed to the clampdown noted that the police are threatening the arrest of people protesting the monarchy utilising draconian legislation brought in by the Conservative government just months ago.

In an article, "Could an anti-monarchy placard get you arrested after the Queen's death?" *Sky News* acknowledged, "The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, which became law this year, gives police more power to disrupt protests deemed to cause 'significant impact' on those nearby."

The clampdown on freedom of speech would not be possible without the support of the Labour Party and trade unions. Within an hour of the queen's death, the postal and rail unions called off current and upcoming national strikes. The Royal College of Nursing even halted an ongoing strike ballot of around 300,000 members out of "respect".

On Tuesday, *Guardian* columnist and Labour member Owen Jones reported guidance "sent to all Labour MPs by the party leadership, banning them from posting anything

on social media except for tributes to the Queen or whatever the party tells them, and banning them from talking to the media."

Among the edicts handed down are, "All campaigning and party activity must remain suspended until further notice"; "When in public continue to follow the dress code (sombre and dark colours) during this period"; "All political communications, including MP updates/newsletters, should be postponed during this period."

The events of the last days represent a devastating exposure of the democratic pretensions of the British ruling elite, which is putting into place the structure of a police state.

For the last eight months the population has been regaled with unrelenting propaganda that what is at stake in the war against Russia in Ukraine is the very future of democracy and the rule of law. The warmongers never tire of declaring that if anyone attempts to protest in Putin's Russia, including holding up placards, they are immediately arrested.

Yet this is the very scenario being played out before the eyes of millions as a super-rich parasite is proclaimed head of state as his supposed birth right—the very antithesis of democratic rule. Powlesland was threatened with arrest a few yards from Westminster Hall, where the self-same King Charles III was pontificating that parliament was the "living and breathing instrument of our democracy".

The state clampdown on anti-monarchy protests takes place as the Truss Conservative government prepares legislation to criminalise strikes in designated essential industries and services. It confirms that in a society riven by unparalleled levels of social inequality and amid an eruption of the class struggle that has only been interrupted by a period of compulsory national mourning, the bourgeoisie is embracing dictatorial forms of rule.



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