

Britain's police-state dragnet against pro-Palestinian activists widens

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Police raided the home of prominent anti-Zionist Tony Greenstein in the early hours of December 20, arresting him under the Terrorism Act (2000) for a social media post defending the right of Palestinians to resist Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Sussex Police and unidentified plain clothes officers arrived at Greenstein's Brighton home at 7am. They told the 69-year-old he was being arrested on "suspicion" of having committed an offence under Section 12 1(a) of the Terrorism Act.

Greenstein's offending communication was a November 15 reply to a Zionist on X. Greenstein had written: 'I support the Palestinians that is enough and I support Hamas against the Israeli army.'

In the legal dragnet represented by the Terrorism Act (2000) and subsequent amendments, Greenstein is deemed to have published a statement "supportive" of a proscribed terrorist organisation.

Greenstein co-founded the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in 2004. A supporter of Jeremy Corbyn, he was expelled from the Labour Party in 2018 based on manufactured charges of anti-Semitism. His father was a Rabbi who marched against Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists during the 1930s.

Officers bundled Greenstein into the back of a police van, and he was taken to Hollingbury Custody Centre where he was questioned for one hour and detained until 4pm. During his detention, police used Greenstein's confiscated keys to raid his home. No warrant was provided by police. They seized electronic equipment including a laptop, desktop computer, two external hard drives and two mobile devices.

While Greenstein has not been charged with any offence, draconian bail conditions have been imposed. He is banned from posting statements on Twitter/X about Israel's war on Gaza, he must inform police if he plans to sleep anywhere other than Brighton, and must give police the phone number, IMEI and SIM number for any new device within 24 hours.

In a statement posted on his blog on Christmas Eve, Greenstein denounced the police raid and the seizure of his

electronic devices as an intelligence gathering exercise against the state's "enemies on the Left and in the Palestine solidarity movement". He told the *World Socialist Web Site* his arrest was "a fundamental attack on free speech and must be resisted on those grounds, amongst others".

His arrest is part of a campaign targeting left-wing opponents of Zionism. It is driven by fear of mass popular opposition ignited by Israel's campaign of mass terror in Gaza that has seen millions demonstrate in Britain and worldwide.

On December 16, Mick Napier, founder of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC) was arrested at a protest in Glasgow after he gave a speech supporting Palestinians' "right to resist by means that they choose". Noting that Hamas had "won the [2006] elections by a landslide in Palestine with observers from Scotland saying the elections were free and fair," Napier thanked Hamas for "breaking out of the Gaza concentration camp".

Police informed Napier he was being arrested for "religiously aggravated" offences. He was later charged under Section 12 (1) of the Terrorism Act for "support for a proscribed organization". He has pleaded not guilty and will appear in court on January 9.

The bail conditions imposed on Napier, who is 76, are those of a police state. He is banned from attending any protest in Scotland and must not enter Glasgow city centre.

The SPSC has denounced Napier's arrest as "the latest in a line of legal attacks by Scottish police and prosecution authorities over the last 14 years. Having successfully defeated in open court a series of fake antisemitism and wholly invented assault charges, extracted a churlish apology from Scottish police for wrongful arrest and assault, we will now vigorously fight and see off this new, but even more sinister and equally baseless terrorism charge."

PEN Scotland announced it was "gravely alarmed by the arrest of Mick Napier at a peaceful pro-Palestinian demo last Saturday in Glasgow... Freedom of speech and our democratic right to protest should not be denied. In the face of Israel's genocide in Gaza, our right to resist is paramount.

Scottish Pen is also deeply concerned that these events appear to follow a pattern of restrictions being placed on the ability to protest more generally.”

Such measures—approved at the highest levels of government in Westminster and Holyrood—confirm Britain’s complicity with Israel’s war of annihilation against the Palestinians. It drives home the indissoluble connection between genocide in Gaza and a rapidly escalating assault on the democratic rights of the working class. Since October 7:

Craig Murray was detained at Glasgow Airport on October 16 and questioned under the Terrorism Act about his attendance at a pro-Palestine rally in Iceland and his meetings there with members of the Julian Assange Defence Campaign. His phone and laptop equipment were seized and retained as part of an ongoing counter-terrorism investigation.

Hanin Barghouti was charged on November 11 under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act for allegedly supporting Hamas. The 22-year-old student union women’s officer from Sussex University was charged for her speech at a Brighton protest on October 8 in which she praised the Palestinian uprising launched one day earlier.

Ranjeet Brar and three other members of the Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain-Marxist Leninist were arrested at a mass protest in central London on November 25 for displaying a book, *Zionism: A Racist, Antisemitic and Reactionary Tool of Imperialism*. The book’s cover art links the swastika and the Star of David. While the four were held overnight in police detention, their homes were raided by counter-terrorism police who seized computer and phone equipment.

Dozens of protesters have been arrested and/or charged under the Terrorism Act since October for displaying banners warning of the parallels between Hitler’s Final Solution against the Jewish people during World War II, and Israel’s war of annihilation against the Palestinians.

The legislation used to target left-wing opponents of genocide was enacted by the Blair Labour government in 2000. It was part of a battery of repressive laws rammed through on the pretext of a “war on terror,” aimed at overturning core democratic rights, suppressing domestic political opposition and to facilitate imperialist domination of the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa.

The Terrorism Act (2000) expanded the definition of terrorism to include any action, used or threatened, for the purpose of advancing any “political, religious or ideological” cause. It introduced arrest and detention of terror suspects without charge for 48 hours (later extended to 14 days with the permission of a judge) and allowed for the internment without trial of foreign nationals suspected of terrorism. It granted sweeping stop-and-search powers

across “cordoned” locations (including entire cities) as designated by senior police; and allowed for the continuation of non-jury trials for terror and other serious offenses in Northern Ireland.

In detailing its provisions 23 years ago, the *World Socialist Web Site* described the Terrorism Act as “a political watershed in Britain. It confirms the absence of any commitment to the defence of democratic rights throughout much of the Labour Party and the ruling establishment.”

In 2019, this repressive legislation was bolstered by the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act. It amended Section 12 of the Terrorism Act, creating a new offence branding as a terrorist anyone who “a) expresses an opinion or belief that is supportive of a proscribed organisation, and b) in doing so is reckless as to whether a person to whom the expression is directed will be encouraged to support a proscribed organisation.”

The legislation was passed unopposed, with the backing of then Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. A gift to the British state, it has established a legal dragnet that is being deployed to intimidate and suppress mass opposition to genocide and imperialist military violence.

The working class must take the lead in demanding the dropping of all charges against Greenstein, Murray, Napier, and securing unconditional freedom for Julian Assange. The fight against war must be fused with the struggle of the working class against austerity. The battery of repressive legislation against political opponents of imperialism and Zionism must be repealed as part of the fight for socialism.



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