

# Protest in London against Palestine Action ban amid police provocation

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23 June 2025

London's Metropolitan Police moved quickly against protesters in the wake of Labour's plans to declare Palestine Action a terrorist organisation.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced the move Friday. A protest was quickly organised for Monday outside Parliament, where she was due to make a statement.

The head of London's Metropolitan Police Sir Mark Rowley responded by issuing a statement worthy of a police state. Declaring himself "shocked and frustrated... to see a protest taking place tomorrow in support of Palestine Action," he denounced the "organised extremist criminal group, whose proscription as terrorists is being actively considered."

Britain's warmongering parliament of genocide deniers will of course rubber-stamp Cooper's order, but what right does Rowley have to make such comments ahead of any vote? This is an extraordinary political intervention and makes clear the hand-in-glove cooperation between the Labour government, the security services and the police to outlaw anti-war, anti-genocide protest.

Lamenting the fact that "Until then we have no power in law to prevent tomorrow's protest taking place," Rowley concluded his rant by declaring an exclusion zone preventing any demonstration near Parliament or Downing Street and setting a strict time limit of 12 noon till 3 in the afternoon.

"Breaches of the law will be dealt with robustly," he warned thuggishly.

The Met were as good as his word. Throughout the demonstration, attended by a few thousand packed into a small corner of Trafalgar Square (largely fenced off for another event) snatch squads plunged into the crowd to make violent arrests aimed at provoking a response. The BBC was quick to report the arrests and "scuffles",

while other media described a "clash with police" and "chaos".

Several people were thrown and pinned to the ground. One young woman appeared to faint as she was manhandled through the crowd, before being bundled into a waiting police van. Our reporters counted 18 vans lined up along the Strand, as part of an operation aimed at staging a confrontation to suit Cooper's narrative.

Protesters were disciplined, however, recognising the police provocation for what it was.

**Tamara** explained, "They issued a block on where we could protest and so we were corralled into Trafalgar Square, they moved us into a small section... The police decided to do a run on protesters and it got very nasty, people were knocked over, people have been arrested.

"The protesters, it's not on them. It's on the police, who clearly are taking their orders to crack down on peaceful protests."

Another protester, carrying a sign which read "56,000 dead; 40,000 orphaned; two planes painted?" explained, "They're obviously arresting people to provoke the crowd and to assert control over us protesting today. Nobody that they arrested was doing anything special. They just dragged people out of the crowd just to show that they're willing to arrest people. So, they've picked a side. The side that they've picked is genocide, protecting the actions of the British state."

She continued, "The crimes being carried out in the name of the UK are well documented by international bodies, very extensively documented. So, there's really no excuse. There's no excuse of ignorance. They are complicit. That was said in the Nuremberg trials: ignorance and compliance with the law is not a defence for taking part in atrocities."

Describing her attitude to the government she said, “The Labour Party have always been a warmongering party. So, Keir Starmer is no different. He's a careerist charlatan. He has a lot of blood on his hands, just like Tony Blair before him.

“The fact is, Tony Blair should be in The Hague. He's not in The Hague and that's why this is happening now. Because we've taught these men that they can do this and then be treated like an elder statesman for decades afterwards. Our so-called representatives have been taught that they can be complicit in the worst atrocities against humanity and nothing will happen to them.

“So therefore, it's incumbent on us, the people, to uphold justice in some kind of way to the extent that we can.”

Asked about the way forward to stop the genocide and wars in the Middle East, she replied, “I don't think there's one answer to that. It needs to be a holistic approach.

“And at the moment, the unions, especially the large unions and union bosses, are severely lacking. They've been infiltrated by careerists. And I'm not seeing that refusal to comply through the unions. And that's very important. That should happen.

“It's also about other unions, tenants' unions, you know. The struggle is on all fronts.”

**Marley** told the *World Socialist Web Site* earlier in the day he was protesting because “the rule of democracy in the UK is under attack... It puts our society at threat of authoritarian rule.”

He added, “The fight for Palestine is a working-class struggle... When the government strips back rights of people on the UK, they're not stripping back the rights of the elite; they're stripping back the rights of the everyday person to stand up.”

**Kat** explained, “They're clamping down on the right to protest in the UK, more and more, to the point that they're trying to proscribe a group that are aiming to dismantle a war machine, as a terrorist group, while they continue to arm a terrorist state...”

“This is the same mentality that led to the Iraq invasion. It's completely unbelievable that they're repeating the same propaganda that enable millions of people to die.”

**Mark** described his experience at the national demonstration on Saturday. “There was a counter-

protest, a pro-Israel protest, and they were actively calling for violence. They were calling for the bombing of Iran and the bombing of Palestine, and police were protecting that protest, and they were clamping down on any pro-Palestinian protester who was even slightly reactive to that...

Referring to the war on Iran, he said, “We're just repeating 2003 again and we're on the path to more violations of international law, more endless wars.”

**April** said, “I can't believe that the government is trying to define what Palestine Action did as terrorism... When you put it in the context of what is happening in Gaza and the danger to human life the Israelis are causing every single day, to crack down on Palestine Action seems ridiculous... We can't allow them to go down this path.”



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