

Mass arrest threat, terrorist prosecutions and censorship prior to London protest of Palestine Action proscription

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London's Metropolitan Police threatened mass arrests on Monday of participants in Saturday's planned protest outside Parliament in Westminster, central London.

This was followed by an announcement of three prosecutions under anti-terrorism laws of people arrested for opposing the proscription of the peaceful direct action anti-genocide group Palestine Action. The three and at least 200 others face up to 14 years in prison.

The website of the main group organising Saturday's protest and most others nationally, Defend Our Juries, was taken down Wednesday.

The witch-hunting of Palestine Action and its defenders has escalated ever since the High Court ruled July 30 that Palestine Action co-founder Huda Ammori can challenge the lawfulness of Home Secretary Yvette Cooper's July 5 order banning the group. A judicial review is scheduled for November based on the grounds of disproportionate harm to freedom of expression/assembly and a failure to consult.

The witch-hunt has involved the media, the Starmer government, the police and Zionist groups.

On Sunday, the *Daily Telegraph* ran the headline, "Exposed: Palestine Action supporters' plot to overwhelm police". It spoke of "a plot for Left-wing activists and members of the Muslim community" to "overwhelm" the capacity of the police to arrest and detain an expected 500 protesters at a demonstration on Saturday carrying placards saying "I Oppose Genocide, I Support Palestine Action".

The source of this *exposé* was a reporter who attended a meeting two weeks ago at which a briefing document, drafted by Defend Our Juries and published on its website, was circulated, stating, "It would be practically and politically difficult for the state to respond to an action on this scale," and suggesting, "could be enough

for the ban to be lifted."

On Tuesday, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Police issued a bellicose warning: "We are aware that the organisers of Saturday's planned protest are encouraging hundreds of people to turn out with the intention of placing a strain on the police and the wider criminal justice system... The Met is very experienced in dealing with large-scale protests, including where the protest activity crosses into criminality requiring arrests... Anyone showing support for the group can expect to be arrested."

Press reports indicate plans to bring in officers from other police forces and to clear police cells to hold those arrested. A Met Police spokesperson said, "While we will not go into the specific details of our plan, the public can be assured that we will have the resources and processes in place to respond to any eventuality."

Prison bosses have initiated emergency measures for a possible influx of arrested demonstrators this weekend amid concerns that some jails are close to full.

Labour joined the pile-on, with Prime Minister Keir Starmer's official spokesperson urging non-attendance and claiming that "people should be under no illusion this is not a peaceful or non-violent protest group."

Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy urged the public not to defend a "proscribed terror organisation that wishes harm on the British people". A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said, "The criminal justice system will always be ready to deal with sudden surges coming through the courts."

On Wednesday, the *Times* reported Starmer telling Labour's National Executive Committee that the government had evidence that Palestine Action targeted Jewish-owned businesses and of a history of break-ins, sabotage and other significant criminality. A source told the *Times*, "He said there were some incidents that were

well known, and others that were not.”

The source of this “charge sheet” was reported as the Community Security Trust, a Zionist organisation, which listed as victims of supposed antisemitic criminality the Jewish National Fund, which collects funds for Zionist settlements in the Occupied Territories, and the Zionist propaganda outfit the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre in London.

That evening, Defend Our Juries reported on its X/Twitter account that its website had been disabled due to an implied legal threat to the hosting company, either from the government or an Israel lobby group. The site provides information on the population’s legal rights to protest.

On Thursday, the Metropolitan Police responded to suggestions from Defend Our Juries that officers might shy away from mass arrests by announcing that three people had been charged under the Terrorism Act 2000: Jeremy Shippam, 71, from West Sussex, Judit Murray, 71, from Surrey and Fiona Maclean, 53, from Hackney.

Arrested at a demonstration in Parliament Square July 5, they bring the number of people to be prosecuted for declaring support for Palestine Action to 10. They are due to appear at Westminster Magistrates’ Court on September 16.

Dominic Murphy, the head of the Met’s Counter Terrorism Command, threatened, “Anyone who displays public support for Palestine Action, a proscribed organisation, is committing an offence under the Terrorism Act and can expect to be arrested and, as these charges show, will be investigated to the full extent of the law... We are also planning to send case files to the Crown Prosecution Service for the other 26 people arrested on the same day.

“I would strongly advise anyone planning to come to London this weekend to show support for Palestine Action to think about the potential criminal consequences of their actions.”

The escalating assault on democratic rights will not stop with Palestine Action. Rather the proscription of PA spearheads an offensive against all opposition to the Gaza genocide and, ultimately, against any political and social opposition in the working class.

On August 7, the *Telegraph* published an op-ed by Gideon Falter of the Campaign Against Antisemitism, another Zionist organisation which played a leading role in the witch-hunt in the Labour Party, titled, “Just banning Palestine Action isn’t good enough, Keir”.

Falter praised Starmer for recognising that “Palestine

Action has been terrorising Britain’s Jewish community for a long while now,” before complaining that “The bigoted, unpatriotic thugs have not acted in a vacuum: the authorities have appeased them.”

The “appeasers” included firstly Starmer for suggesting possible recognition of a Palestinian state, the police, “our regulators and public bodies, and our politicians”, Conservative and Labour, for not clamping down on anti-genocide protests, “on our streets and campuses, and even within our broadcasters and hospitals...”

“It is no good proscribing Palestine Action unless the Government is willing to tackle the rest too, from the bloodcurdling Islamist sermons, to the terrorist-supporting marchers, to the radicalisation of our young people.”

Three days earlier, former prison governor and senior advisor to the British office of the US Counter Extremism Project, Ian Acheson, thundered, “We must not allow Palestine Action activists to destroy our criminal justice system”.

He too denounced Starmer’s “cave-in” over Palestinian statehood for leaving “blood in the water” and giving succour to Palestine Action that could not be countered simply by proscription. This was true not only for the “zealots... who see their actions as ‘martyrdom’” but, more dangerous still, for “the naive and credulous” who will also be mobilised in the PA’s defence, on Gaza, and far broader issues.

Acheson warns Britain’s rulers that targeted savage repression is needed as a deterrent now, or they will face much worse in future:

“The public mood is febrile across the country. This additional stress could be alleviated if the Government acts decisively against mass protests by people who simply believe the law does not apply to them. This means identifying the ringleaders of the PA strategy and dealing with them first. Whether the state is ultimately right or wrong about proscription is secondary to the public order risk.”

The authority of the “criminal justice system” must be preserved at all costs, because “Our enduring problem here is the collapse of trust in our law enforcement agencies to enforce existing laws, not the lack of new ones.”



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