

Palestine Action prisoners on hunger strike in UK at “a very, very high risk of death” warns doctor

Robert Stevens
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The health of pro-Palestine activist prisoners who began an open-ended hunger strike last month is deteriorating rapidly.

The hunger strikers are demanding an end to censorship of their communications, with letters and phone calls blocked; immediate bail, with most held on remand well over the usual six-month limit; the right to a fair trial; an end to their demonisation by the Labour government, including dropping the “terrorist connection” claim made of their case; and the shutting down of Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit Systems’ UK sites.

Six of the seven involved began their protest between 27 and 36 days ago. A seventh joined the hunger strike last week.

The seven are Qesser Zuhrah (His Majesty’s Prison (HMP) Bronzefield); Amu Gib (HMP Bronzefield); Jon Cink (HMP Bronzefield); Heba Muraisi (HMP New Hall); Teuta “T” Hoxha (HMP Peterborough); Kamran Ahmed (HMP Pentonville) and Muhammad Umer Khalid (HMP Wormwood Scrubs).

Five of the seven have only recently returned to prison from hospital, where they said they were handcuffed to officers throughout their stays.

Four hunger strikers—Qesser Zuhrah, Heba Muraisi, Teuta Hoxha, Kamran Ahmed—are facing trial as part of the Filton 24 case for involvement in an August 2024 action against Elbit in Filton, near Bristol. The other three are accused of involvement in a June 2025 protest at the Brize Norton Royal Air Force base in Oxfordshire, in which two military supply planes were daubed with red paint.

The first six of the Filton 24 are currently being tried at Woolwich Crown Court for aggravated burglary, criminal damage, and violent disorder. The trial began on November 17 and is expected to last 10 weeks. The remainder of the Filton 24’s cases will be heard in two further trials beginning in April and then June 2026. Most of the 24 will have been imprisoned for almost two years before going to trial.

On December 4, PA co-founder Huda Ammori—who is challenging the lawfulness of Labour’s order banning Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation—posted on X: “Six prisoners for Palestine are on their 32nd day of hunger strike. Their health is severely deteriorating, with one described as ‘skeletal’. Each face up to two years on remand before trial and face harsher treatment as they are labelled as ‘terrorists’. This is an emergency”.

On Sunday, the *Observer* reported the comments of Dr. James Smith, a National Health Service emergency doctor who has been in regular contact with the families of the prisoners. He warned, “As a healthcare worker, I’m extremely concerned.” He had not seen the prisoners but explained, “For someone who was previously well?, with no other underlying medical issues, [at] around six to eight weeks [on hunger strike], there’s a very, very high risk of death.

“‘I’m most concerned about the substandard treatment in the prison system?... From the information I’m receiving from the families, it? doesn’t? appear to me that there has been, for most of them, a single day in which they have had a full set of their observations taken?: heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar levels, proper weights”.

The Free the Filton 24 group, formed by family and friends of those being tried, has provided harrowing details of their treatment. It noted that four—Lottie, Ellie, Fatema Zainab and Zoe—are being held in “HMP Bronzefield, Surrey. They are woken at 5am and driven in a Serco prison van to court, taking 2.5 hours, often leaving and arriving late—meaning that the defendants are denied time with their lawyers before court.

“The journey back to Bronzefield can take as long as 5 hours, with the van stopping to collect other prisoners. The defendants can only have their evening meal when they get back to Bronzefield, often as late as 9pm, too late to be allowed to shower.”

The two others, “Sam and Jordan are held at the infamous

HMP Belmarsh next door to Woolwich Crown Court and are taken to court each morning via an underground tunnel. Despite being only 200 yards away, both are also woken at 5am. Belmarsh is vile. They have been repeatedly strip-searched, X-rayed more than once a day, and denied vegetarian food, showers and phone calls to loved ones on the outside.”

Following the PA protests against Elbit and at RAF Brize Norton, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper moved to proscribe the organisation. These actions were used as a pretext for long-planned police state measures, implemented in collaboration with the dictatorial agenda of the US Trump administration.

The proscription came into operation July 5, rubber stamped by both houses of parliament in a right-wing stampede. Membership of PA, or support for it, is now a crime under the Terrorism Act (2000).

Since the ban on Palestine Action, thousands of people have been arrested—the vast majority simply for holding a placard reading: “I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action”—at peaceful protests organised by civil liberties group, Defend Our Juries. As of the start of December, more than 2,700 people had been arrested under sections 12 or 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

Those convicted under Section 12, for inviting support or arranging meetings to encourage support for a proscribed organisation, can face up to 14 years’ imprisonment, a fine, or both. A summary conviction—tried by a magistrate without a jury in the Magistrates’ Court—can result in six months’ imprisonment.

Those convicted under Section 13, for wearing clothing or displaying articles in public in support of a proscribed organisation, face up to six months’ imprisonment, a fine of up to £5,000, or both.

So far, more than 300 individuals have been charged under Section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

Following mass arrests of protesters in London’s Parliament Square in the summer, 66 people were arrested in Liverpool on September 28 during a rally outside the Labour Party conference.

Defend our Juries held a further wave of “Lift the Ban” protests from November 18-29, with police forces continuing mass arrests. Among these were around 50 people arrested November 20 outside the Ministry of Justice in London, at least 90 arrested November 22 in London’s Tavistock Square, and around 60 at a vigil on November 25 outside the Home Office in the capital.

More arrests took place nationwide on November 29, including 32 in Manchester; 31 in Bristol; 25 in Birmingham; 17 in Sheffield and 15 in Cambridge. Between November 20 and December 1, across 10 towns and cities, at

least 641 were arrested for supporting Palestine Action.

Repression was stepped up on November 26 at a judicial review in the High Court challenging the lawfulness of branding Palestine Action a terrorist organisation. The Metropolitan Police made 143 arrests outside the Royal Courts of Justice over the course of six hours—the vast majority of the approximately 150 protesters holding signs with the words “I oppose genocide—I support Palestine Action”.

Labour’s police state operations carried on inside the court. Prior to the hearing, Justice Martin Chamberlain, described by Defend Our Juries as “widely respected for his fairness and independence,” was replaced by Dame Victoria Sharp, Justices Karen Steyn and Sir Jonathan Swift.

The *World Socialist Web Site* noted of the three, “Swift is most known for his 2023 rejection of Julian Assange’s appeal against extradition, and his 2022 ruling in favour of the then Tory government’s brutal plan to deport failed asylum seekers to Rwanda.

“Steyn ruled in June in favour of government exports of F-35 fighter jet components to Israel amid the ongoing genocide. Sharp’s twin brother is a former banker, adviser to Boris Johnson and a multi-millionaire Tory donor.”

A section of the proceedings included a secret hearing under the “closed material procedure (CMP)”, justified on “national security” grounds. Palestine Action founder Ammori and her legal team were required to leave the room.

In an affront to every democratic norm, as described by *Guardian* legal correspondent Haroon Siddique: “When Huda Ammori returns to the room, the special advocate—a security-cleared barrister—who represented her interests in her absence will not be allowed to tell her or her legal team what evidence was presented against Palestine Action... even though that means she will have no chance to rebut them.”



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