

Jury acquits Palestine Action's Filton 6, dealing blow to Labour's “terrorism” narrative

Laura Tiernan
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Six young people imprisoned for 500 days without conviction by the British state for protesting at Israeli weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems near Bristol have been cleared of all charges.

Zoe Rogers, Charlotte Head, Leona Kamio, Fatima Rajwani, Jordan Devlin and Samuel Corner were acquitted by a jury on Wednesday, cleared of aggravated burglary for destroying military equipment at Elbit's factory, including killer drones used to murder Palestinian civilians. The charge carried a potential life sentence.

All six were arrested in August 2024 and charged with criminal damage, aggravated burglary and violent disorder, while Corner was charged additionally with inflicting grievous bodily harm with intent for allegedly striking a police officer. All were held in pre-trial detention for 17-months—way beyond the legal limit of six months.

After deliberating for 36 hours and 34 minutes, the jury at London's Woolwich Crown Court—attached to Belmarsh “supermax” Prison where Julian Assange was held for five years—announced their unanimous verdict of “not guilty” or “no verdict” on all counts. Five of the defendants were released from prison. Corner remains behind bars, pending a possible appeal by the state.

The Filton 24 Defence Committee hailed Wednesday's acquittal as a “monumental victory”. In the face of a state witch-hunt, vilifying young anti-genocide activists as violent thugs and terrorists, “the jury did not accept the prosecution case that the defendants entered the Elbit weapons factory with the intention of using the items they carried as weapons.”

Instead “the jury agreed with the defence argument,

that the defendants' sole intention was to use the items, including sledgehammers, as tools to disarm Israeli weapons... The jury understood that it is not those who destroy Israeli weapons which are guilty, rather the guilty party is the one that deploys such weapons to commit genocide in Gaza.”

As with previous acquittals of pro-Palestinian protesters, a jury has again delivered a verdict that reflects overwhelming public sentiment. Polling by YouGov in June 2025 found over half of Britons oppose Israel's war on Gaza (55 percent), with 82 percent of these saying that Israel's actions amount to genocide. This means 45 percent of UK adults regard Israel's actions as genocidal. At the same time, nearly two thirds of the British public want the UK to enforce the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu if he visits the UK (65 percent).

Labour's backing of the genocide—including Prime Minister Keir Starmer's vocal support for collective punishment of Palestinian civilians and his deputy, former foreign secretary and now secretary of state for justice David Lammy's defence of missile strikes against Palestinian refugee tents as “not necessarily” a crime under international law—marks it a pariah government, fundamentally hostile to the democratic and social aspirations of the working class and oppressed masses worldwide.

The Filton 24 prosecutions have been central to the Starmer government's re-casting of peaceful anti-genocide protests as “terrorism”. The Filton 6 were arrested on August 6, 2024, less than a month after the Labour government was sworn to office.

They were held for 7 days by counter-terrorism police

under section 5 of the Terrorism Act 2006 (preparing or assisting a terrorist act) and under counter-terrorism police powers in the Terrorism Act 2000. That same week, four more activists were arrested under terror laws over the same protest. In November 2024 and July 2025, further violent pre-dawn raids by police resulted in 14 more people charged over the same action and remanded to prison, forming the Filton 24.

Palestine Action was proscribed by the Labour government one year later, on July 5, making membership of the group an offence under the Terrorism Act punishable by up to 14 years' imprisonment.

Civil liberties group CAGE responded to Wednesday's verdict, stating: "The decision made by the jury critically undermines the rationale used to proscribe Palestine Action and underscores the urgent need for that ban to be lifted. This case was the most significant test of the government's claim that acts of conscience against arms companies constitute a threat to public safety.

"An independent jury, guided by conscience and moral clarity, rejected that narrative despite extraordinary political pressure, ministerial intervention, and an environment shaped to shield Israeli state-aligned interests from scrutiny."

CAGE concluded, "The proscription of Palestine Action must now be lifted, and all those held as a result of this political process in prison should be released immediately."

Lisa Minerva Luxx, a member of the Filton 24 Defence Committee, described the acquittal as a "significant victory" but warned, "There are still 18 more defendants imprisoned across the UK in connection with this case. They are being held under joint enterprise which means they each have the same three charges whether they are accused of being present at the action or not. Now that the first six have been liberated of the most serious charge, Aggravated Burglary, and none were convicted of a single offence, it follows that the rest must immediately have this charge dropped against them and be granted bail."

Luxx denounced Labour's prejudicing of the hearing: "This was a trial by media. Yvette Cooper and Keir Starmer took evidence in this case out of context and broadcast it on televisions and tabloids across the country in order to justify proscribing Palestine Action

as a terrorist organisation, despite forewarning that this will prejudice the trial.

"By acquitting the defendants of aggravated burglary, the Jury aligned with the defence case that the items taken into the warehouse were not weapons, but were tools used to dismantle and neutralise Israeli weapons.

"Now that a court of law have vindicated the first six of the Filton 24 of the exaggerated charges against them [and found that the actions against Elbit Systems that night were reasonable], we should all expect Shabana Mahmood to do the reasonable thing herself and lift the ban on Palestine Action."

The government has no intention of backing down. Little more than a week ago, London's Metropolitan Police violently arrested 86 peaceful protestors outside Wormwood Scrubs prison where they had gathered in solidarity with Umer Khalid, a pro-Palestinian activist on a hunger and thirst strike who came close to death.

Even as rolling hunger strikes by prisoners threatened several young members of Palestine Action with death—including one who was reportedly "skeletal"—Lammy refused to meet their lawyers or family members.

The Starmer government has brazenly defended its proscription of Palestine Action. During a judicial review late last year, government lawyers insisted the home secretary had "acted lawfully" in banning a non-violent civil disobedience group for the first time in modern British history. A decision by the High Court is pending.

Current Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood will respond to Wednesday's resounding acquittal of the Filton 6 by stepping up Labour's plans to abolish jury trials in England and Wales.



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