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First UA: 77/25 Index: EUR 45/0217/2025 United Kingdom of August 22, 2025

UNITED KINGDOM END PROSECUTION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTERS

On August 9, police in London arrested 522 people. More than 200 others had already been arrested in London and across the UK on previous weekends for peacefully opposing the protest ban introduced on July 5 against "Palestine Action."

Seventy protesters have since been charged under counter-terrorism laws, and more charges are expected.

Amnesty International condemns the misuse of terrorism legislation against peaceful protesters. We call on UK authorities to drop all charges and stop targeting people simply for exercising their rights to free expression and peaceful assembly.

Write to the Directors of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Lord Advocate urging them to:

- Uphold the UK's human rights commitments.
- Drop all charges and halt prosecutions against people who took part in peaceful protests in support of "Palestine Action."

Write to:

Director of Public Prosecutions of England and Wales, Steven Parkinson

Email: enquiries@cps.gov.uk

Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, Stephen Herron

Email: info@ppsni.gov.uk

The Lord Advocate, Rt Hon Dorothy Bain KC

Email: LordAdvocate@gov.scot

Salutation: Dear Directors of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Lord Advocate

And copy:

His Excellency Robert John Tinline

High Commissioner

British High Commission

140 Sussex Drive

Ottawa, ON K1N 5A2

Tel: (613) 237-1530 Fax: (613) 232-0738

Email: ukincanada@fco.gov.uk

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

“Defend our Juries” is a UK-based activist group that does not promote or endorse violence. Its supporters include people of all ages and professions, with many older adults among them. Protesters have been peacefully expressing their outrage at Israel’s ongoing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Under international human rights law, they have the right to hold and express these views.

Amnesty International and other human rights groups have repeatedly documented Israel’s continuing genocide in the Gaza Strip.

Before the August 9 protest in London, Amnesty International urged the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to respect protesters’ rights to free expression and peaceful assembly. We specifically called on police not to arrest people for carrying placards or signs. Similar letters were also sent to police chiefs in Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as to Scotland’s Lord Advocate.

Prosecutions under terrorism legislation, even without conviction, can have long-lasting consequences. These include restrictive bail conditions, surveillance, reputational damage, harm to mental health, and difficulties with employment, education, and travel.

If convicted under laws such as the Terrorism Act 2000, people face a lifelong criminal record, visa and immigration restrictions, loss of job opportunities and professional licences, denial of services, and social stigma. The psychological impact can be severe.

When such laws are used against peaceful protest, they create a chilling effect. People may be too afraid of being labelled “terrorists” to exercise their right to free expression or political activism.

Arresting protesters simply for holding signs that read “*I Oppose Genocide. I Support Palestine Action*” breaches the UK’s international obligations. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are protected rights.

International law requires that any restriction on these rights must be lawful, necessary, and proportionate. Support for a proscribed organisation only meets this test if it is likely to incite imminent violence. In this case, the expression of support for Palestine Action does not amount to incitement.

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that placards are protected speech unless they directly and explicitly call for violence.

The legal basis for using terrorism laws in this context is weak. The High Court has allowed Palestine Action to seek judicial review of its proscription, suggesting the ban itself may be unlawful. Arresting protesters under these conditions is disproportionate, unlawful, and a violation of international human rights obligations. Labelling them “terrorists” is both inappropriate and absurd.

Please take action as soon as possible until November 22, 2026. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.