



Legal Cases on Palestine in the UK & The Chilling Effect of the Law

May 2026



London | Washington

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“Together, we can and must identify the weak points in the machinery of genocide and apply all the pressure that we can, through litigation, through industrial action, media work, consumer boycotts, direct action, and more. I know that by speaking out we may end up out of favour with the media, and indeed, perhaps in trouble with the increasingly repressive architecture of authoritarian law. [...]

What else, in the face of such horror, can give us reason to go on, to fend off despair, to live with ourselves, and to fight for our future, no matter the consequences?

For those of us living in the heart of empire, [...] we should see and say that it is the honour of our lives to stand with Palestine.”

Sally Rooney
Irish novelist.¹



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The Chilling Effect of UK Legal Action Against Palestine Advocacy



01

The Chilling Effect of UK Legal Action Against Palestine Advocacy

The sustained attack by the UK government to employ legal action against pro-Palestine protestors, direct action groups, and Palestinian resistance organisations, forms part of a Zionist campaign of intimidation to produce a chilling effect that silences advocacy and action for Palestine.²

In particular, the proscription of groups such as Palestine Action and democratically-elected Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) significantly erode British peoples’ rights to free speech and freedom of association under Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, infringing upon lawful speech and the ability of civil society organisations to campaign against the UK government’s Zionist weaponisation of terror legislation.³

For example, the proscription of Palestine Action criminalised peaceful protest and advocacy carried out under the “Palestine Action” banner, producing a severe chilling effect of repression on lawful speech and assembly because even those suspected of supporting a proscribed organisation can be charged.⁴

This allows police to adopt a draconian and expansive definition of suspected support for a proscribed organisation, encompassing protestors whose intention is simply to call for action of one kind or another to end Israel’s genocide in Palestine.⁵ For instance, a protestor was warned that she may be arrested after holding a Palestinian flag and signs with the words “Free Gaza” and “Israel is committing genocide”.⁶

Even if police and prosecutorial discretion is exercised to avoid an overly broad application, such an approach will not address the chilling effect of weaponisation of the law, as protestors will not know when such discretion will be exercised in their favour.⁷

“We are concerned at the unjustified labelling of a political protest movement as ‘terrorist’. According to international standards, acts of protest that damage property, but are not intended to kill or injure people, should not be treated as terrorism. [...]

Individuals could be prosecuted for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and opinion, assembly, association and participation in political life. This would have a chilling effect on political protest and advocacy generally in relation to defending human rights in Palestine.”

UN experts opposing the UK’s decision to proscribe direct action group Palestine Action.⁸



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The Importance of Abolishing the UK Terrorism Act



02

The Importance of Abolishing the UK Terrorism Act

British state authorities continue to brutally repress anti-Zionist speech in the UK by using the authoritarian and Islamophobic Terrorism Act 2000 to punish and intimidate citizens speaking out and taking action against Israel's genocide of Palestinians.⁹

This legislation is intentionally written in broad terms and sets a deliberately low threshold for the restriction of freedom of speech.¹⁰ As a result, the laws have the potential to criminalise and restrict those who pose no terrorist threat.¹¹

The legislation places considerable discretion in the hands of racist enforcement agencies when deciding who to target, with the Islamophobic political climate in Britain enabling governments to expand terrorism legislation with limited oversight.¹²

Legal scholar Andrew Cornford has noted that the offence can curtail 'the freedoms to discuss controversial topics openly, and to share moral, political and religious opinions'.¹³

A separate terrorism offence prohibits the possession of information 'of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism'.¹⁴ The range of information potentially covered by such a broad description, and the fact that the legislation does not require any intention to use the information for terrorist purposes, does not constitute a reliable indication for identifying an alleged terrorist.¹⁵

The bar for exercising search powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 has been set at a low level, allowing such powers to be used in relation to journalists and other publishers deemed *persona non grata* by the UK government.¹⁶

For example, the spouse of a journalist who had played a central role in publishing the Edward Snowden disclosures was stopped at a border using powers under the Terrorism Act.¹⁷ The case illustrated the potential for investigative powers supposedly designed to combat terrorism to be used for politically targeted motives by the government.¹⁸

In 2019, the law was amended to criminalise the expression of an opinion or belief that is supportive of a proscribed organisation, which made it an offence to make statements that may even unintentionally encourage people to support the organisation.¹⁹ The law therefore further criminalises acts that do not encourage any actual terrorist acts, including potentially criminalising individuals explaining why an organisation should not be proscribed, creating further chilling effects.²⁰

Beyond the current legal cases for Palestine, racist and Islamophobic British terror legislation must be abolished.

**“It is about time
that the UK’s
draconian
anti-terror legal
framework be
abolished.”**

Anas Mustapha
Head of Public Advocacy
at CAGE International.²¹



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The Legal Challenge for the De-proscription of Hamas



The Legal Challenge for the De-proscription of Hamas

In April 2025, a legal application was filed to the UK Home Secretary under Section 4 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to remove the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) from the government’s list of proscribed organisations.²²

The entirety of Hamas, namely its political wing, was added to the list of proscribed groups on 26 November 2021 by then Home Secretary Priti Patel.²³ Hamas’ armed wing – al Qassam Brigades – had been proscribed since March 2001.²⁴

The legal challenge argues that Patel’s decision to proscribe Hamas was motivated by her personal political opinion that the distinction between Hamas’ military and political wings was ‘artificial’, as well as her political support for Zionism.²⁵

Patel’s decision departed significantly from previous governments’ positions, with government ministers as recently as June 2020 stating there was a ‘clear distinction’.²⁶

The application argues that the proscription of Hamas violates Britain’s obligations under international law.²⁷

Key arguments include that the ban:

- Does not consider that Palestinians are defending themselves against extermination
- Impedes humanitarian relief efforts into the besieged Gaza Strip
- Infringes upon human rights and free expression protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)
- Undermines democracy given no tangible threat is posed to the UK from the group²⁸

Furthermore, Palestinians’ right to armed resistance is both lawful and legally protected under international law, meaning that Britain’s proscription of Hamas infringes upon these rights.²⁹

Proscription (or banning) creates a number of criminal offences in relation to a proscribed group, including:

- Being a member
- Wearing or publishing its symbols or insignia
- Expressing or inviting support for it
- Organising meetings in support of it³⁰

The legal challenge argues that banning Hamas facilitates the mass criminalisation of support for Palestinians’ right to resist genocide and the illegal occupation through armed struggle.³¹

Since the case was launched, the Home Secretary refused the application with no evidence provided.³² Following Hamas’ appeal of the decision, the case was moved to the Proscribed Organisations Appeals Commission.³³

In January 2026, the new Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood filed an application to strike out Hamas’ appeal on account of ‘secret evidence’.³⁴

In March 2026, the judge ordered the Home Secretary to “get on with it”, recognising the ridiculousness of the Home Secretary suggesting that the public must restrict their freedom of speech based on evidence not in the public domain.³⁵

On 20 May, the Home Secretary will be required to file her reasons and evidence for rejecting the application for de-proscription, after which Hamas will be able to respond.³⁶

“The government cannot simply reach for sweeping counter-terrorism powers to silence critics or suppress dissent. [...] The implications are profound. Thousands of peaceful protesters – including those involved in the Defend Our Juries campaign – have been arrested for something that should never have been a crime.”

Tom Southerden

Amnesty International UK’s Law and Human Rights Director.³⁷



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Intimidation and Harassment of Lawyers



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Intimidation and Harassment of Lawyers

Ousman Noor

The Bar Standards Board, upon demands made by UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI) have relied on the Terrorism Act to attempt to prosecute barrister Ousman Noor after he published a legal analysis of Hezbollah’s rights enshrined under international law to armed resistance against the genocidal state of Israel.³⁸

Fahad Ansari

In retaliation for carrying out his lawful professional duties as a lawyer, representing Hamas in the group’s application for de-proscription under Section 4 of the Terrorism Act 2000, the UK state has harassed, intimidated, and abused counter-terrorism powers against lawyer Fahad Ansari.³⁹

The Shadow Secretary of State for Justice also took to social media where he accused Mr. Ansari of supporting terrorism and brought his legal reputation into disrepute, with his comments being widely publicised in various news outlets.⁴¹ The Shadow Attorney General also made similar comments on social media.⁴²

On 6 August 2025, Mr. Ansari was stopped and detained by officers of North Wales Police under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 in a deliberately targeted attack.⁴⁵ During the stop, officers seized Mr. Ansari’s work phone from his car, despite it containing legally privileged and highly sensitive material relating to his national-security and civil-liberties practice.⁴⁶ He was compelled to provide the passcode under threat of arrest.⁴⁷

The device was retained for seven days, during which the entirety of its contents—more than 23,000 files—was downloaded.⁴⁸ 95% of the phone’s contents contained legally privileged or otherwise protected material – of which the police were aware – including communications with clients, witnesses, counsel, experts, journalists and human-rights defenders; case files; images and voice notes.⁴⁹

The following day, while the phone remained in police custody, an attempt was made to access a child family member’s phone via parental-control links associated with the seized device.⁵⁰

Mr. Ansari has issued a legal challenge to the decision to detain him and seize his phone. The High Court has granted the police permission to both rely on secret material and to not disclose the allegations against Mr Ansari to him or his lawyers, thereby completely undermining the principles of due process and the rule of law. However, a risk assessment document disclosed by the police falsely identified Mr Ansari as a member of Hamas, something the police now claim was an error.⁴⁰

The police have recently confirmed they have concluded their examination of the contents of the phone and are prepared to delete it but concerns persist that the process is not capable of protecting the confidentiality of client communications, particularly the risk of disclosure of sensitive contacts’ information that may endanger individuals’ safety.⁵¹

Indeed, the UK state’s mistreatment and intimidation of Mr. Ansari was so severe that five UN Special Rapporteurs raised their concerns over Mr. Ansari’s detention and treatment in a letter to the UK government on 4 February 2026.¹⁰⁰

Intimidation and Harassment of Lawyers continued...

The rapporteurs: Ben Saul, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Gina Romero, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Margaret Satterthwaite, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, and Ana Brian Nougrères, Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy¹⁰¹, noted that the intimidation and abuse included: politicised vilification, regulatory pressure, detention under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000, and the seizure and downloading of a work device containing legally privileged material raise serious concerns as to the independent exercise of the legal profession and the confidentiality of lawyer–client communications.⁵²

Beyond the government’s abuse of terror legislation, relevant authorities failed to adequately protect Mr. Ansari and his firm against threats and doxxing, demonstrating that senior politicians are able to exercise improper influence on regulatory bodies and law enforcement.⁵³

Further concerns exist that data seized from the phone may have been shared with domestic and foreign intelligence agencies.⁵⁴ The police are refusing to confirm whether or not the data was shared.

Combined, this repression is intended to deter lawyers from representing certain clients that the UK government opposes and raises serious concerns for the on-going repression and intimidation tactics employed by the state, threatening the very fabric of democracy and dangerously curtailing basic human rights.⁵⁵

“We would like to bring to [your] attention information we have received concerning the alleged harassment, intimidation, and the misuse of counter-terrorism powers against Mr. Fahad Ansari, in apparent retaliation for carrying out his lawful professional functions as a lawyer. [...]

Such measures threaten to criminalize, stigmatize and have chilling effects against lawyers and legal associations carrying out lawful work in national security and counter-terrorism matters, including with respect to the human rights compliance of proscription regimes, including the right of proscribed entities to seek delisting.”

5 UN Special Rapporteurs

in a letter concerning the UK government’s harassment and intimidation of Fahad Ansari as a result of accepting the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) as a client.⁵⁶



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The Legal Challenge for the De-proscription of Palestine Action



The Legal Challenge for the De-proscription of Palestine Action

Palestine Action positions itself as a national activist network that promotes civil disobedience and takes direct action against companies and institutions deemed by the group as being used by Israel to violently enforce apartheid, occupation, colonisation and genocide in Palestine.⁶⁰

Since its foundation in 2020, Palestine Action has primarily organised direct-action protests against weapons manufacturers: defacing buildings, breaking windows and occupying factories.⁵⁷

In 2025, as the UK continued to offer material and diplomatic support for Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza, activists broke into an RAF airbase and used spray-paint to vandalise two aircraft.⁵⁸ The Government responded by proscribing Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation, placing the group on the same legal footing as al-Qaeda and Islamic State.⁵⁹

This proscription intentionally took place at a time when support for Palestine Action’s goal to stop UK-based corporations and military equipment enabling Israel’s genocide in the besieged Gaza Strip was growing substantially.⁶³

The effects of being labelled a terrorist are devastating; in addition to criminalisation, one’s financial/economic prospects are entirely jeopardised, as well as freedom of movement.⁶¹ For example, teachers will not pass their compulsory disclosure and barring check if they have been found to be a supporter of a terrorist organisation.⁶²

Simultaneously, the proscription of Palestine Action has an oppressive chilling effect on protesters who express similar sentiments to Palestine Action by way of supporting action to end Israel’s genocide in the besieged Gaza Strip, and Israeli occupation of Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian land.⁶⁴

The proscription of Palestine Action means those expressing similar sentiments to Palestine Action are liable to face arrest, police questioning, or restrictions on their activities as being ‘suspected supporters’ of Palestine Action.⁶⁵ Many will therefore be inhibited in expressing perfectly legitimate views for fear of inviting such suspicion from law enforcement agencies – a purposeful tactic of the UK government’s proscription.⁶⁶

Restrictions that have been placed on people purely because they are suspected of being Palestine Action supporters include:

- Protesters near a BAE Systems factory being asked them to remove shirts reading ‘Free Palestine’ because they might breach the proscription order.⁶⁷
- Human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell being told by security at Pride In London that he would have to be vetted by senior staff because he was wearing a ‘Free Palestine’ badge.⁶⁸
- A solo protester in Canterbury, carrying cardboard signs reading ‘Free Gaza’ and ‘Israel is committing genocide’ and a Palestinian flag, being stopped by armed police, informed that the articles she was carrying were sufficient to give rise to a reasonable suspicion of an offence under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act, and required to give her name, address and date of birth and to leave the location.⁶⁹

“I urge the UK Government to rescind its decision to proscribe Palestine Action and to halt investigations and further proceedings against protesters who have been arrested on the basis of this proscription. I also call on the UK Government to review and revise its counter-terrorism legislation, including its definition of terrorist acts.”

Volker Türk

UN Human Rights Chief.⁷⁰



The Filton 24



The Filton 24

In August 2024, a group of six Palestine Action activists broke into the newly built, secret site of Elbit Systems, Israel’s biggest weapons producer.⁷¹ The site in Filton, Bristol, had been marketed as a ‘research and development’ site, yet the activists managed to bypass the high security and uncover the masses of weapons that were being developed and stored in this undercover warehouse.⁷² During their action, the activists dismantled and destroyed a shipment of killer quadcopter drones that Israel uses to commit genocide in the besieged Gaza Strip.⁷³

The six individuals, plus a further 18 people were arrested in connection with this action.⁷⁴

The 24, though legally innocent, were held as ‘terrorists’ without charge under oppressive and sometimes cruel conditions, some for up to 18 months before ever being tried.⁷⁵

In December 2025, activists linked to Filton 24 and Brize Norton 5 joined an open-ended hunger strike demanding:

- An end to Elbit Systems UK
- Unconditional bail for all Prisoners for Palestine
- The right to a fair trial including disclosure of all foreign and political interference documents
- The de-proscription of Palestine Action
- An immediate end to prison censorship.⁷⁶

In February 2026, the first six defendants were found not guilty of the most serious charge, aggravated burglary.⁷⁷ Three were also found not guilty of violent disorder, and the jury could not reach a verdict on the remaining charges.⁷⁸ This led to the release of 23 imprisoned activists, who are now kept on electronic tag, with strict bail conditions and curfew.⁷⁹

The case of the Filton 24 is the first time Britain has attempted to equate property damage with terrorism, setting a dangerous precedent, which was later used to justify proscribing Palestine Action.⁸⁰

The Filton 24 case has illuminated the arbitrary and political function of terrorism powers, being used to stifle dissent, as well as an attempt to smear activists who engage in action to stop genocide.⁸¹

In a court case against six of the Filton 24 on 5 May 2026, the jury convicted four of the activists of criminal damage and acquitted the remaining two.¹⁰²

“While protesters are labelled terrorists in the UK, Palestinian civilians are, of course, labelled terrorists by Israeli forces. But where UK protesters face trumped-up charges and prison sentences, Palestinians face violent death.”

Sally Rooney
Irish novelist.⁸²



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Other Major Cases on Palestine



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Other Major Cases on Palestine

Brize Norton 5

Five activists have been imprisoned without trial for over 10 months due to their alleged connection to a protest action at Royal Air Force Brize Norton where two warplanes were spray painted.⁸³ The UK government is seeking to continue their imprisonment until their trial in January 2027.⁸⁴

Their bail hearing will take place on 1 May at the Old Bailey in London, with demonstrations in support of the activists taking place at the court.⁸⁵

MOOG 4

Four people from Palestinian Martyrs for Justice took action last summer against Moog, a military company with a factory in Wolverhampton, for their role in the genocide on Palestine.⁸⁶ The activists have been held in prison without charge for over 11 months, and are facing trial on 8 June 2026.⁸⁷

Moog makes components for the M-346, a lead-in fighter trainer aircraft, the Israeli Occupation Forces' (IOF) advanced fighter trainer.⁸⁸ Moog shipments of M-346 parts to the IOF have increased significantly since Israel began its genocide in 2023, with over 50 taking place in 2025 alone.⁸⁹

SOAS 2

The SOAS 2 were arrested for speeches delivered at SOAS University students' pro-Palestine protest, in which they defended Palestinians' right to resistance, days after Israel began its genocide in the besieged Gaza Strip.⁹⁰

After Zionist X accounts urged the Metropolitan Police to act and submitted a formal complaint, they were arrested and face up to 14 years imprisonment.⁹¹

“Counter-terrorism powers have been used for over two decades to marginalise Muslim communities in the UK. Now, these very laws are being employed to criminalise solidarity and crush resistance against the live-streamed genocide in Gaza.

The state wants to narrowly define what kind of protest and messaging is acceptable for the public. When forms of protest - such as direct action - highlight the UK government’s complicity in the genocide, it then becomes unacceptable. We’ve now reached a point where mass civil disobedience is necessary to unravel the growing authoritarianism.

To continue its policy in support of genocide, the government has weaponised terror laws to crack down on peaceful protest — but it will not succeed.”

Anas Mustapha

Head of Public Advocacy
at CAGE International.⁹²



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How To Support Legal Cases on Palestine



How To Support Legal Cases on Palestine

Support the Application to De-proscribe Hamas

Hamas is still a proscribed organisation and it is still an offence to express or invite support for it.⁹³ However, you can legally advocate in support of the de-proscription case, including by:

- Publicly advocating and amplifying details and developments about the de-proscription case, using resources available at www.hamascase.com
- Writing to your MP, councillors, and unions asking them to support the application.
- Making public statements in support of the application at protests and other public events.
- Organising public events and debates about the application.
- Writing a public statement in support of the application on behalf of any organisations and groups you are members of.
- Showing up to protest outside court hearings.
- Following [@riverwaylaw](https://twitter.com/riverwaylaw) to stay up to date.⁹⁴

Public advocacy and support for the case is essential. As with the legal challenge to de-proscribe Palestine Action, political cases are never decided in the courts.⁹⁵

Support the Application to De-proscribe Palestine Action

- Join the Defend our Juries campaign.
- Publicly advocate for the legal application to de-proscribe Palestine Action.
- Follow [@defendourjuries](https://twitter.com/defendourjuries) or visit <https://defendourjuries.net/> for more information and updates.⁹⁶

Support other legal cases on Palestine

- Show up to court hearings to show your support.
- Write to prisoners for Palestine.
- Write to your MP regarding other legal cases.⁹⁷

CAGE International have produced a useful guide to assist with the above points: <https://www.cage.ngo/campaigns/support-the-deproscription-application>

Before taking any action, it is advisable to get specialist legal advice.

“By now, almost two years into a live-streamed genocide, we owe the people of Palestine more than mere words.”

Sally Rooney
Irish novelist.⁹⁸



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Western Media Bias

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UK NEWS WEBSITE OF THE YEAR 2024

The Telegraph

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Palestine Action banned as terrorist organisation

Move comes after activists broke into RAF Brize Norton and sprayed red paint into aircraft engines

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Western Media Bias

Demonising pro-Palestine groups as terrorists

Western media has supported the UK government's weaponisation of terrorism legislation by framing Palestinian and direct action groups as terrorist and demonising legal challenges to proscription.

The Telegraph

**No court can erase the
genocidal evil of Hamas**

BBC NEWS

**Some don't know 'full nature'
of Palestine Action, says Cooper**

sky news

Police arrest 29 protesters on suspicion of
terror offences after Palestine Action banned

Western Media Bias continued...

**The
Guardian**

Free speech target or terrorist gang?
The inside story of Palestine Action
– and the plan to ban it

THE OBSERVER

Yvette Cooper: Palestine Action
'is not lawful protest'

“For over two decades, an infrastructure of laws has been built that has eroded our freedoms by marginalising Muslims. Today, that legal architecture is central to silencing our voices and crushing resistance against the live-streamed genocide in Gaza. The mass defiance of proscription powers in [shows] of civil disobedience is urgently necessary to unravel all the draconian counter-terrorism powers, and it must rightly be saluted.”

Anas Mustapha

Head of Public Advocacy at CAGE International.⁹⁹



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