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86 Arrested Across UK for Opposing Palestine Action Ban

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British police arrested at least 57 individuals, including 41 in London and 16 in Manchester, for displaying placards reading “I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action.”

Campaign group Defend Our Juries reported a total of 86 arrests across the UK, including Wales and Northern Ireland. The arrests took place in cities including London, Manchester, Cardiff, Leeds, and Kendal, as well as Derry in Northern Ireland. Among those detained was Eamonn McCann, a prominent figure from the 1960s civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, highlighting the diverse range of people involved in these protests.

The group was proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000 following an RAF incident; the legislation came into effect at midnight on 5 July 2025, making membership or public

support an offence punishable by up to 14 years in prison. Critics argue this is an attempt to suppress dissent and curb solidarity with the Palestinian cause, particularly in light of the group's non-violent direct action tactics, such as targeting companies linked to Israel's military.

In Scotland, a man was arrested at a music festival and charged under the Terrorism Act for wearing a T-shirt bearing support for Palestine Action, which had been proscribed under the same legislation. This arrest underscores the broad application of the new restrictions, which appear to target even symbolic expressions of support.

Katarzyna Kruk, a civil service employee and immigrant with settled status, was among those arrested. In a recent interview, she said, "As an immigrant with settled status and an employee of the civil service, I have a lot to lose personally by holding a simple sign. But I, and the world, have even more to lose if we do not stand up to injustice and imperialism.

When, overwhelmed by what has been going on, I wondered, 'What can I possibly change? I am just one person.' There was only ever one answer: 'Join others to create change.' Our power is in our numbers. We do not comply." These remarks reflect broader criticism from activists and civil liberties groups who argue the proscription is disproportionate given the group's primarily non-violent direct action methods.

Another protester, Dave Ware, echoed this sentiment, stating in an interview, "I'm sitting here today to highlight the government's increasingly draconian attitude towards peaceful protest. Palestine Action did not carry out any acts of terrorism. They carried out acts that embarrassed the government and their allies. If Palestine Action can be proscribed, then any organisation could be next." Ware's comments point to broader concerns about the erosion of democratic freedoms under the current administration.

The government's decision to proscribe Palestine Action stems from incidents such as the group's protest at RAF Brize Norton, where activists damaged two military aircraft with spray paint, causing an estimated £7 million in damage. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper justified the ban, citing the group's "long history" of criminal damage and arguing that such actions threaten national security. However, opponents, including UN experts and civil liberties groups, have condemned the move as a dangerous precedent, arguing that equating property damage with terrorism risks stifling legitimate protest.

The arrests have not gone unchallenged. The campaign group Defend Our Juries, which organised the protests, described the ban as “Orwellian” and vowed to continue resisting. The group’s spokesperson remarked, “Who do the police think they are serving in this?” The sentiment was echoed by passersby in London, with some shouting, “Met Police, you are puppets of the Zionist state” and “leave them alone,” according to reports from the Press Association.

The government’s actions raise serious questions about the state of free speech and the right to protest in the UK. By targeting individuals for expressing solidarity with a group known for non-violent direct action, the authorities risk alienating a broad swathe of the public, including priests, professors, and health professionals who were among those detained. The message from protesters is clear: the greater danger lies in silence. As the state tests the limits of this ban, the response from activists suggests that resistance will only grow stronger.

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