

UK Parliament Approves Terrorist Designation for Palestine Action Amid Civil Liberties Concerns

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— Categories: Defense & Security



The UK Parliament has voted to designate the protest group Palestine Action as a terrorist organization, marking a significant shift in the government's approach to civil disobedience and protest linked to international conflict. With 385 Members of Parliament (MPs) voting in favor and only 26 opposing, the decision will outlaw the group's activities

under the Terrorism Act 2000, placing it alongside proscribed extremist groups such as the Islamic State and al-Qaeda. The ban now moves to the House of Lords and is expected to come into effect within days.

Palestine Action is known for its high-profile campaigns against arms manufacturers linked to Israel, including repeated break-ins, property damage, and occupations of sites operated by Elbit Systems. The tipping point for government action came after members of the group were charged with causing £7 million worth of damage to military aircraft at RAF Brize Norton. The Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, defended the decision, stating that the group's repeated use of criminal damage and coordinated sabotage met the threshold for proscription under national security laws.

Supporters of the ban argue that while protest is a democratic right, Palestine Action's methods go far beyond peaceful demonstration and have escalated to actions that threaten public order and infrastructure. They insist the legislation targets the group's extreme actions, not the political views they represent.

However, the move has provoked strong criticism from civil rights groups, legal experts, and some MPs. Amnesty International UK described the proscription as "an unprecedented legal overreach," warning it could suppress legitimate protest and freedom of expression. Labour MP Zarah Sultana, one of the few who voted against the motion, condemned the move as an "attack on political dissent," arguing that equating non-lethal protest with terrorism sets a dangerous precedent.

Palestine Action has vowed to legally challenge the ruling and maintain its operations, insisting that its protests constitute non-violent direct

action. A court hearing is expected to assess whether the government's classification can be suspended pending further legal review.

The same parliamentary vote also approved bans on two far-right groups, the Maniacs Murder Cult and the Russian Imperial Movement. While the government emphasizes its duty to protect national security, critics caution that the use of anti-terror laws in this context may blur the boundaries between violent extremism and civil protest. The controversy underscores a broader debate over the limits of political activism and the state's response to dissent in a polarized global climate.