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## New Crime and Policing Bill Raises Fresh Concerns Over Protest Rights in the UK

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A new Crime and Policing Bill currently making its way through Parliament has drawn strong criticism from human rights organizations, legal experts, and civil society groups, who warn that it poses a serious threat to the right to peaceful protest in the UK. The proposed legislation, which would expand police powers and introduce further restrictions on

demonstrations, is being described by critics as the latest in a series of moves that risk undermining fundamental civil liberties.

At the center of the debate are several provisions that would allow police greater authority to limit or restrict protests they consider disruptive, including powers to ban face coverings, remove protest materials without investigation, and impose conditions based on the risk of causing “serious annoyance.” Critics argue that such language is vague and subjective and could be used to target peaceful protesters engaging in legitimate forms of expression.

Human rights advocates, including Amnesty International, have warned that the bill represents a concerning shift in how protest is treated under the law. They argue that peaceful protest has long been a cornerstone of democratic life in the UK, and that measures which criminalize or deter such actions could have lasting consequences for civic engagement and public discourse.

Legal observers have also raised red flags. The Joint Committee on Human Rights has questioned the bill’s compatibility with existing protections, particularly around due process and the right to assembly. Concerns have been raised over new “Serious Disruption Prevention Orders,” which could restrict individuals from participating in protests without clear legal thresholds being met.

While the government has defended the bill as a necessary step to ensure public safety and prevent disruptive tactics, many see the approach as disproportionate. With this being the fourth protest-related bill introduced in recent years, campaigners say the cumulative effect

could be to discourage activism and limit the public's ability to hold those in power to account.

As the bill moves forward, calls for revision are growing. Charities and campaigners are urging lawmakers to consider not just the letter of the law, but the broader impact it could have on the health of the UK's democratic culture.