

UK High Court Grants Palestine Action Right to Challenge Terrorism Ban

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A UK High Court judge has allowed the activist group Palestine Action to proceed with a legal challenge against its designation as a terrorist organisation. The court ruled that two of the group's claims were "reasonably arguable," opening the door for a judicial review of the UK government's decision.

The case stems from the British government's decision to formally designate Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation under the *Terrorism Act 2000*. The ban took effect on July 5 following a House of Commons vote of 385 to 26, which was later supported by the House of Lords. The government's decision was largely based on what officials described as a pattern of violent actions targeting defence-related facilities and symbols associated with Israel.

The legal challenge was brought forward by Palestine Action co-founder Huda Ammori. The judge permitted the group to argue that the Home Secretary may have failed to consult them before the ban and that the designation could potentially violate rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights, including freedom of expression and assembly. However, six of the group's other claims were dismissed by the court.

The Home Office has not yet responded publicly to the court's decision.

Palestine Action has gained attention for its direct action tactics targeting sites linked to Israel's defence industry and British institutions with historical ties to the Balfour Declaration. Among the incidents cited by government officials was the July breach of Royal Air Force (RAF) Brize Norton, where members of the group defaced two military aircraft with red paint, causing an estimated £7 million in damage. In another case, activists vandalised a portrait of Lord Arthur Balfour at Trinity College, Cambridge, and stole busts of Israeli statesman Chaim Weizmann from the University of Manchester.

Security Minister Dan Jarvis previously stated in Parliament that the group's conduct had moved beyond criminal protest, describing it as "a nationwide campaign of attacks" that met the threshold of terrorism. Conservative Member of Parliament Jack Rankin also criticised the court's recent decision, pointing to the RAF incident as clear evidence of extremist behaviour.

Palestine Action has consistently rejected the terrorism label, framing its activities as part of a campaign against what it views as complicity in Israel's treatment of Palestinians. The outcome of the legal challenge could have broader implications for how activist groups are treated under UK law when their methods cross into illegal territory.

The case will now proceed through the judicial review process, where a court will examine the legality of the government's actions rather than revisit the factual basis of the designation.

