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Palestine Action Founder Wins UK Court Review Bid

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A co-founder of the activist group Palestine Action has been granted permission to challenge the British government's decision to ban the organisation under anti-terrorism legislation. The ruling sets the stage for a judicial review later this year, with significant implications for the balance between counter-terrorism measures and the protection of civil liberties in the United Kingdom.

On Wednesday, High Court Judge Martin Chamberlain ruled that Huda Ammori, co-founder of Palestine Action, could seek a judicial review of the government's decision to proscribe the group. Judge Chamberlain stated it was "reasonably arguable" that the ban disproportionately interfered with rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The decision does not overturn the ban but allows Ammori to challenge it through the courts. The review is expected to be heard in September.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper confirmed that the proscription order remains in place pending the review. In a statement, Cooper emphasised that the ruling "confirmed the continuation" of the ban, while granting permission for the case to proceed.

"Importantly, this proscription decision is not about Palestine, nor does it affect the freedom to protest on Palestinian rights," Cooper said. "It only applies to the specific and narrow organisation, Palestine Action, whose activities do not reflect or represent the thousands of people across the country who continue to exercise their fundamental rights to protest on different issues."

Palestine Action describes itself as a UK-based network aimed at disrupting the operations of weapons manufacturers that supply the Israeli government. Earlier this month, the group was proscribed following incidents including a June break-in at Britain's largest air base in central England. Two activists reportedly damaged military aircraft during that action.

Under UK law, membership of a proscribed organisation or encouraging others to support it is a criminal offence. The ban places Palestine Action alongside groups such as Hamas, al-Qaeda and ISIS in the official list of terrorist organisations.

The move has drawn criticism from international and domestic human rights bodies. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk expressed concern that UK counter-terrorism legislation "is being applied to conduct that is not terrorist in nature and risks hindering the legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms."

Other rights advocates have questioned whether the government adequately consulted the group before making the decision, a point noted by Judge Chamberlain during Wednesday's hearing. This was not the first time Ammori sought legal relief. Earlier in August, the High Court rejected an application to pause the ban, meaning it has remained in force throughout the legal proceedings.

Since the ban came into effect on 5 July, Defend Our Juries, a UK-based non-profit organisation, has reported more than 200 arrests linked to public expressions of support for Palestine Action. In some cases, individuals have been detained on suspicion of terrorism-related offences for displaying posters endorsing the group or the Palestinian cause.

The arrests have prompted debates about the scope of the legislation and whether it could discourage lawful protest. Demonstrations supporting Palestine Action have taken place across the United Kingdom in recent weeks. Protests have been held in cities including London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol and Truro, drawing crowds calling for the reversal of the ban. The judicial review will consider whether the government's decision complied with legal obligations, including those under the ECHR. The case is likely to attract further scrutiny given its implications for political activism, national security policy and the application of anti-terror laws in the UK. The outcome may also set a precedent for how similar activist organisations are treated under British counter-terrorism measures, particularly those involved in direct action campaigns targeting industries linked to foreign conflicts.