

## Cooper Defends Palestine Action Ban as 60 More Face Charges

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Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has defended the government's decision to proscribe Palestine Action as a terrorist organization, following the announcement that an additional 60 individuals face charges in connection with the group's activities. The move comes amid ongoing concerns over safety and security, with over 700 people now having been

arrested or charged under the Terrorism Act since the organization's ban in July.

Cooper insisted that Palestine Action is “more than a regular protest group” and pointed to its record of property damage and disruptive actions as justification for the proscription. She highlighted incidents including the vandalism of two RAF aircraft at Brize Norton, arguing that these acts placed both people and property at risk. “Protest and free speech remain vital to our democracy, but they do not extend to supporting organisations that engage in criminal activity,” she stated.

The decision has generated significant controversy, drawing criticism from civil liberties groups and legal experts who describe the measures as disproportionate and a threat to the right to peaceful protest. Amnesty International highlighted that many of those detained were elderly and involved in non-violent demonstrations, calling the government's approach excessive. “These individuals were not inciting violence. Treating them as terrorists is entirely disproportionate,” said Sacha Deshmukh, chief executive of Amnesty UK.

Palestine Action's co-founder, Huda Ammori, has launched a legal challenge against the ban, arguing that it infringes on human rights and that the government failed to consult the group before imposing the proscription. The High Court has granted permission for a full judicial review, with hearings expected to begin in September. Ammori asserts that the proscription unlawfully criminalises legitimate protest and sets a concerning precedent for other campaign groups in the UK.

The legal proceedings have intensified the national debate over the balance between security and civil liberties. Government officials

maintain that proscribing Palestine Action is essential to protect public safety and prevent further criminal acts. They stress that the designation is targeted specifically at the organisation's conduct rather than the broader right to peaceful protest.

Critics, however, warn that the measures could have wider implications, potentially chilling public demonstrations and stifling dissent on sensitive political issues. Civil liberties advocates argue that careful oversight is required to ensure anti-terrorism legislation is not misapplied in a way that undermines democratic freedoms.

As the case progresses, it is expected to test the limits of anti-terrorism law and raise fundamental questions about how the UK protects both its citizens and the principles of free expression. For the government, maintaining a balance between security and civil liberties remains a delicate task, particularly as further charges are brought and judicial scrutiny continues.

With the spotlight on both the Home Office and Palestine Action, the coming months are likely to be pivotal in shaping the interpretation of anti-terrorism measures and the rights of activists to campaign peacefully within the United Kingdom.