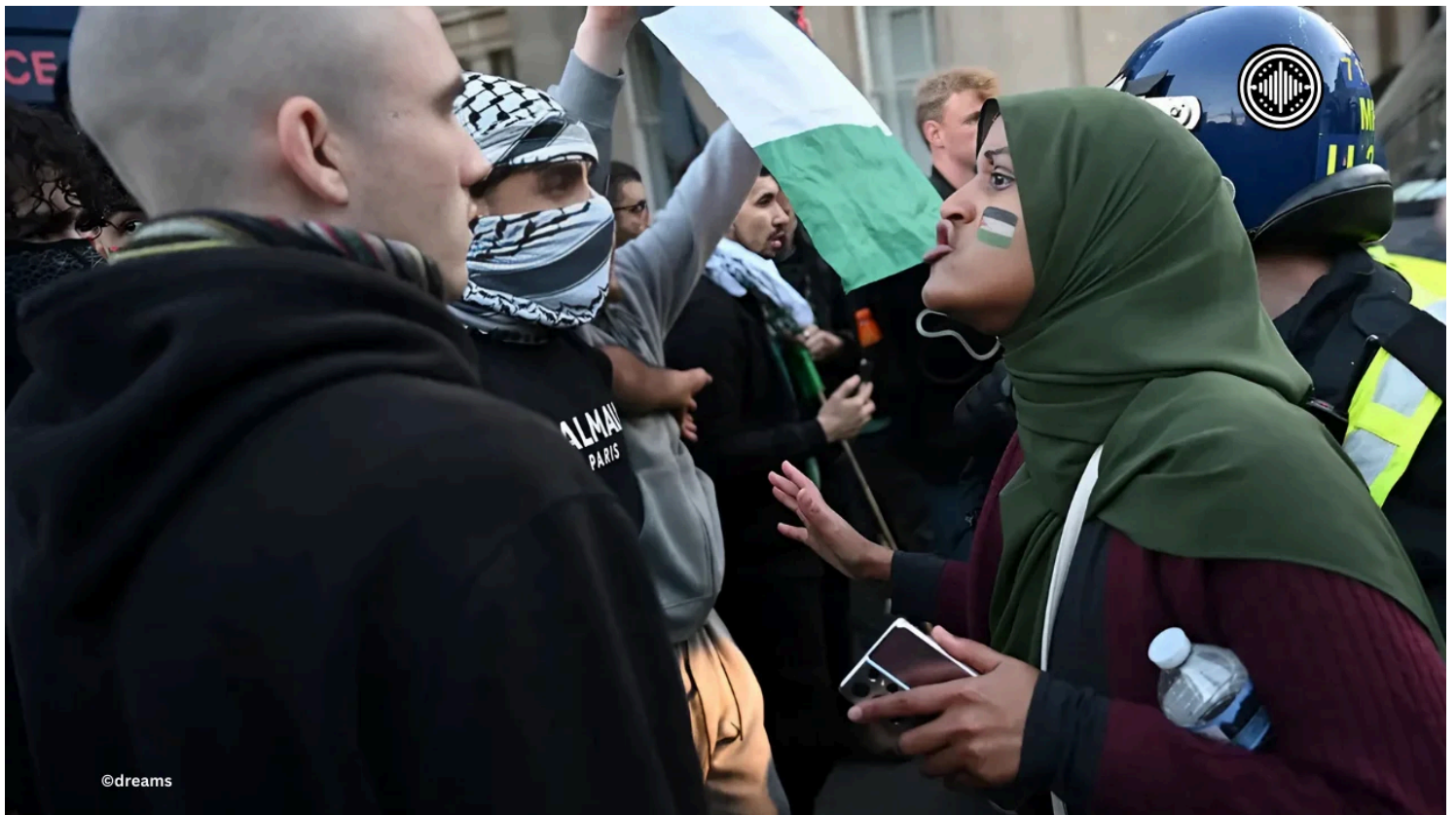


Leaked Report Questions UK Ban on Palestine Action

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— Categories: Human Rights



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A leaked intelligence assessment has raised doubts about the UK government's decision to classify the activist group Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation under the Terrorism Act 2000.

According to documents published by *The National*, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) evaluated the government's justification for proscribing the group. The report was

obtained by campaigner and blogger Craig Murray, who has criticised the ban and claimed it misrepresents the nature of the group's activities.

The JTAC report acknowledged that Palestine Action had engaged in activities resulting in property damage, such as spray-painting military equipment and facilities. These actions, JTAC noted, could fall within the definition of "acts of terrorism" under the legislation if they were deemed to cause serious damage and were carried out for political purposes.

However, the assessment also stated that the group is "not otherwise concerned with terrorism" and that most of its direct actions would not meet the criteria for terrorism as set out in Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2000. This definition requires that an act be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and involve serious violence, damage, or disruption.

In June 2024, the Home Office announced its decision to ban Palestine Action, citing national security concerns. The announcement followed an incident in which activists sprayed paint on aircraft at a Royal Air Force base, prompting an investigation under counter-terrorism laws.

The ban was subsequently debated and approved in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords in July. Under the Terrorism Act 2000, membership of a proscribed organisation is a criminal offence, carrying penalties of up to 14 years in prison.

Founded in 2020, Palestine Action describes itself as a network of activists committed to taking direct action against companies involved in the manufacture or supply of equipment used by Israel's military. The group's actions have included protests, building occupations, and vandalism targeting defence contractors and related sites.

Supporters of the group argue that its activities constitute legitimate political protest, while critics contend that its tactics cause significant disruption and damage to property.

The UK's decision to proscribe Palestine Action has drawn criticism from international

human rights officials. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights publicly expressed concern over the move, suggesting it could restrict legitimate protest and dissent.

In addition, the UN Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights has been granted permission to intervene in the group's legal challenge to the ban.

Huda Ammori, co-founder of Palestine Action, has been granted permission by the High Court to pursue a full judicial review of the Home Secretary's decision. The review will examine whether the proscription complied with the requirements of the Terrorism Act and whether it is compatible with the UK's human rights obligations.

Legal experts note that such challenges can set important precedents for how terrorism legislation is applied to protest movements. The case is expected to consider whether acts of property damage, without accompanying threats to life or public safety, should fall within the scope of counter-terrorism laws.

The leaked JTAC assessment has intensified debate over the balance between national security and the right to protest. Critics of the ban argue that applying terrorism legislation to groups like Palestine Action risks undermining civil liberties and criminalising political dissent.

Supporters of the government's decision maintain that the group's tactics cross the line from protest into unlawful action, warranting strong measures to prevent further incidents.

The judicial review is likely to draw attention to the broader issue of how the UK defines and responds to activism that challenges foreign policy and defence industry practices.

The High Court proceedings are set to take place later this year. If the court rules in favour of Palestine Action, it could require the Home Office to reverse the proscription. Alternatively, the decision could uphold the government's stance, reinforcing the application of terrorism laws to certain forms of direct action.

Until then, the group remains banned under UK law, and involvement with it carries significant legal risks.