

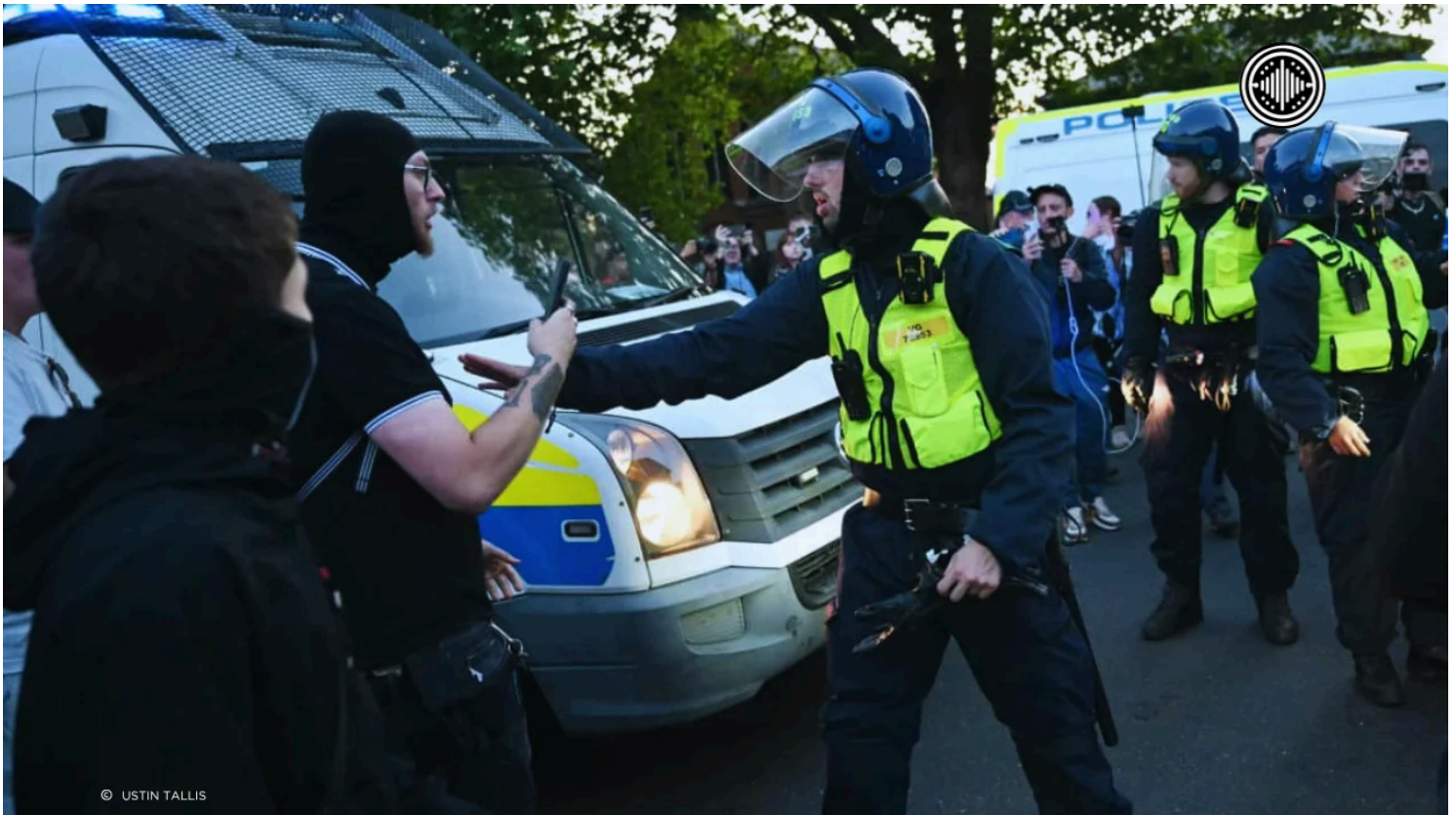
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Fifteen Arrested Following Clashes at Migrant Hotel Protests Across England

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Fifteen individuals were arrested during a series of protests and counter-demonstrations outside hotels housing asylum seekers in England over the weekend. The unrest occurred in major cities including London, Newcastle, and Manchester, as tensions over the government's migrant housing policy continue to escalate.

In London, nine people were arrested, seven for breaching conditions under the Public Order Act 198, during a protest outside the Thistle City Barbican Hotel in Islington. According to the Metropolitan Police Service, the demonstration was organised under the banner “Thistle Barbican needs to go, locals say no,” though it was reportedly endorsed by groups beyond the local area, raising concerns over increased turnout and potential disorder. A counter-demonstration, led by the activist group Stand Up To Racism, also took place nearby. Police had pre-emptively imposed restrictions, designating specific zones for each group to maintain public order.

Similar scenes unfolded in Newcastle, where Northumbria Police confirmed four arrests outside The New Bridge Hotel. A spokesperson stressed the importance of safeguarding the right to peaceful protest while making clear that criminal conduct under the guise of demonstration would not be tolerated.

In Manchester, approximately 1,500 individuals joined a march organised by the nationalist group Britain First. The rally moved from Manchester Piccadilly railway station to the Central Library, with participants seen waving England and Union flags. Around 250 counter-protesters gathered at St Peter’s Square, also under the banner of Stand Up To Racism. Greater Manchester Police reported two arrests at the outset of the march, one for theft and another for obstructing an arrest, but confirmed that most demonstrations proceeded without major incident.

The protests come as the government continues efforts to overhaul the United Kingdom’s asylum process. In an interview with *The Sunday Times*, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said the government aims to “restore order and control” by accelerating the asylum appeals system. She outlined plans to reform how asylum appeals are processed, with changes expected to begin in autumn. “If we speed up the decision-making appeal system and also keep increasing returns, we hope to be able to make quite a big reduction in the overall numbers,” she stated.

The Home Office noted that the number of hotels used to accommodate asylum seekers has already dropped significantly, from over 400 in summer 2023 to fewer than 210. It also reiterated its commitment to ending hotel use for this purpose entirely by 2029, with Chancellor Rachel Reeves estimating the move could save £1 billion annually.

While the right to protest remains a core tenet of a democratic society, the growing frequency of these confrontations signals broader public concern over immigration policy

and local impacts. As the government prepares to implement further changes, these tensions are likely to remain in sharp focus.