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More Than 40 Arrested as Police Clamp Down on Support for Banned Palestine Action Group

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London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) arrested over 40 individuals over the weekend for showing support for the proscribed organisation Palestine Action, following protests held in Parliament Square. The arrests follow the recent decision by the United Kingdom (UK) government to designate the group a terrorist organisation under the

Terrorism Act 2000, making public support or affiliation a criminal offence carrying a potential prison sentence of up to 14 years.

The demonstrations were part of a wider coordinated effort, with similar protests reported in Cardiff, Manchester, and Northern Ireland. According to the MPS, the arrests in London included one for common assault, while the rest were related to public displays of support for the banned group. Protesters were seen holding placards that read “I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action” near notable landmarks, including the statue of Nelson Mandela in Westminster.

Palestine Action was formally proscribed earlier this month following a series of disruptive actions, including an alleged break-in at Royal Air Force (RAF) Brize Norton, where two military aircraft were vandalised. The Home Office stated that the group’s ongoing campaign targeting defence industry facilities, such as those linked to Israel’s Elbit Systems, had escalated to a level requiring counter-terrorism measures. The classification enables police to act pre-emptively against those who express support, not just those involved in direct action.

While civil liberties groups have voiced concern over the move, arguing it risks criminalising peaceful protest and overstepping democratic principles, others argue that the line must be drawn where protest tactics threaten public order, national security, or key defence infrastructure. From a centre-right perspective, the government’s action is justified, protecting the rule of law, maintaining civil stability, and ensuring national interests are not undermined by extremist activism.

Former Conservative minister Sir John Hayes said, “Freedom of speech does not extend to supporting groups engaged in sabotage and

destruction. Law-abiding citizens should not be intimidated by those who think direct action justifies chaos.” His remarks reflect growing public frustration with the tactics of activist groups that appear more interested in disruption than dialogue.

With the law now in effect, law enforcement agencies are under pressure to apply it fairly but firmly. The challenge will be ensuring the public remains confident that legitimate protest is protected while subversive action is dealt with swiftly. As national security concerns grow, maintaining clear boundaries between activism and extremism becomes ever more vital.