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Fifth Arrest Made in RAF Brize Norton Sabotage Linked to Palestine Action

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British counterterrorism officers have arrested a fifth individual in connection with the alleged sabotage of two Royal Air Force (RAF) aircraft at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. The latest arrest, reported by The Telegraph, involved a 22-year-old man with no fixed address, detained in Bedford on Friday under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, on suspicion of preparing or instigating acts of terrorism.

The incident, which occurred on 20 June, reportedly caused up to £7 million in damage to two Voyager aircraft and was claimed by the activist group Palestine Action. Authorities have since charged four individuals in connection with the attack. In response, the UK government designated the group a proscribed terrorist organisation under existing terrorism legislation, marking a notable development in its counter-extremism strategy.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced the proscription on 23 June, labelling the group's actions as "disgraceful." Under the order, membership, support, or public association with Palestine Action now constitutes a criminal offence, carrying penalties of up to 14 years' imprisonment.

Palestine Action, however, is challenging the decision. Co-founder Huda Ammori has been granted permission by the High Court to pursue a judicial review. Mr Justice Chamberlain ruled that two of the arguments presented by Ammori's legal team, relating to freedom of expression and the alleged lack of prior consultation, were "reasonably arguable" and warranted a full three-day hearing scheduled for November.

Although the judge allowed the case to proceed on limited grounds, he rejected several additional claims. These included allegations that the government acted without sufficient evidence and a request to suspend the ban pending the outcome of the judicial review. Justice Chamberlain emphasised the strong public interest in maintaining the ban during legal proceedings, warning that lifting it prematurely could create "a recipe for chaos" across multiple court jurisdictions.

Ammori welcomed the court's decision to hear the case, describing it as a "landmark" moment and reaffirming her commitment to defending civil liberties. However, the Home Office has stood firm in its position. Government lawyers argue that Palestine Action's deliberate targeting of high-value infrastructure places the group within the scope of terrorism legislation, based on the severity and intent of the property damage inflicted.

In addition, the government contended that the matter should be handled by the Proscribed Organisations Appeal Commission (POAC), a tribunal designated for such disputes. But the High Court opted to proceed due to the significant delay expected in the POAC process, which may not be concluded before mid-2026.

Meanwhile, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley reiterated the police's duty to uphold the law. "As long as that's the law, we'll enforce the law rigorously, because

supporting a terrorist organisation is a serious offence,” he said.

While the legal challenge continues, the case has brought renewed attention to the balance between national security and political expression. Justice Chamberlain acknowledged reports that some pro-Palestinian demonstrators with no connection to Palestine Action had been questioned or detained, raising concerns that the proscription could have a chilling effect on lawful protest and advocacy.

The upcoming judicial review is set to test not only the scope of anti-terror legislation but also how the government navigates the line between protecting the public and preserving fundamental democratic freedoms.