

Crown Office Raises Human Rights Concerns Over Palestine Action Ban

August 6, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



Download IPFS

The Crown Office has issued a formal warning to Police Scotland and the Lord Advocate, citing potential breaches of civil liberties following the UK Government's decision to proscribe the protest group Palestine Action under the Terrorism Act 2000.

In a letter addressed to Chief Constable Jo Farrell and Lord Advocate Dorothy Bain, the Crown Office expressed concern that the ban risks violating Articles 10 and 11 of the

European Convention on Human Rights, which protect freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly.

The proscription, announced last month by the Home Office, follows a series of incidents involving the group, including significant damage to two RAF aircraft at Brize Norton. The estimated cost of repairs is reported to be around £7 million. Under the terms of the Terrorism Act, supporting or being a member of Palestine Action now constitutes a criminal offence, punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

However, the crackdown has sparked criticism from legal experts and rights organisations. More than 200 arrests have been made across the UK since the group was banned, with reports suggesting that some of those detained were not directly involved with Palestine Action. This has raised concerns about overreach and the potential misuse of counterterrorism legislation.

The Scottish Human Rights Commission has cautioned that the application of terrorism laws must be tightly controlled. It warned that conflating disruptive protest with terrorism risks undermining lawful political expression. The Commission urged authorities to distinguish clearly between criminal activity and constitutionally protected speech.

Legal expert Professor Michael O'Hagan of the University of Glasgow echoed this view in a recent interview. "There is a fundamental difference between unlawful support for a banned organisation and the legitimate expression of political views," he stated. "Blurring that line is dangerous and undermines the principles of a free society."

O'Hagan called on Police Scotland to issue detailed guidance to frontline officers to avoid confusion in enforcement. He also emphasised the importance of proportionate policing, especially in politically sensitive contexts.

The Crown Office letter stopped short of criticising the UK Government's decision to ban Palestine Action but urged both Police Scotland and the Crown Office to ensure that any enforcement remains in line with human rights obligations.