



Chief Constable Jo Farrell
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Lord Advocate, Rt Hon Dorothy Bain KC
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
25 Chambers Street
Edinburgh
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11th August 2025

Dear Chief Constable Farrell and Lord Advocate,

I am writing regarding the policing of peaceful protest following the proscription of Palestine Action.

International law upholds the right to peaceful protest, including the right to free expression and to peaceful assembly. However, in the UK, police forces are using overly broad anti-terrorism powers in an unprecedented way to arrest peaceful protesters.

The mass arrests that took place in London over the weekend were deeply concerning. The arrest of otherwise peaceful protesters solely for expressing the statement 'I Oppose Genocide. I Support Palestine Action' is a violation of the UK's international obligations to protect the rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

People are understandably outraged by the ongoing genocide being committed in Gaza and are entitled under international human rights law to express that.

I am aware that a small peaceful demonstration took place in Edinburgh on Saturday August 9th during which protestors carried placards reading "Genocide in Palestine time to take action." My understanding from media reports is that Police Scotland have arrested individuals in recent weeks for displaying the same message, without inciting violence. Any arrests of individuals on these grounds, or for the type of peaceful activity that took place in London over the weekend would violate international human rights law.



Protest speech can only be criminalised if it incites violence or advocates hatred or discrimination. Expression of support for a proscribed organisation could only meet this threshold if that expression were likely to induce its audience to partake in violence, and to do so imminently. The relevant ECtHR caselaw has found that placards are protected speech unless they directly and expressly constitute incitement.

Amnesty has long criticised UK terrorism law for being excessively broad, vaguely worded and a threat to freedom of expression. I am urging you to ensure that decision making regarding the policing of protests, and any related arrests and prosecutions, takes due account of the relevant international human rights standards the UK has signed up to, and that Police Scotland officers are instructed to show restraint.

Yours,

Elizabeth Thomson

Acting Scotland Programme Director

Amnesty International UK

