

Amnesty International UK

Terms of Reference for UK Protest Research Consultant(s)

About Amnesty

Amnesty International UK (AIUK) is a national section, or branch, of a global movement of over seven million supporters, members, and activists. Collectively, our vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. Our mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest, or religion.

Amnesty International values diversity and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

The project

There has been a substantial legislative crackdown on peaceful protest rights in the UK in recent years. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Public Order Act 2023 and the Serious Disruption Regulations 2023 all brought in new laws specifically targeted at peaceful but disruptive protest. These laws expanded police powers to interfere with peaceful protest, created new criminal offences and increased criminal penalties. AIUK's Protect the Protest project is aimed at trying to promote respect for the right to peaceful protest, prevent further erosion of the right and, where we can, take steps to roll back the most damaging aspects of the new laws.

As part of this, it has become clear that we need an evidence base of the effects of the new laws in order to get attention and concern from Parliamentarians who are, in general, not particularly sympathetic to protest rights and in any case do not view this as a pressing issue of concern. We are proposing a rolling series of relatively short research-based documents. In future years we intend to address the use and consequences of some of the key new powers that have been introduced.

The first of these, to which this proposal relates, will focus on the development of a 'state of play' for protest which 'makes the case for protest' in England and Wales – building an overview of the crackdown on the right to protest over the past five years, commencing from the Black Lives Matter protests and subsequent introduction of the Police, Crime and Sentencing Act. As part of this piece, we will seek to build a compelling picture of the positive role that protest plays in society and the impact, including evidencing the chilling effect that this crackdown has had through desk-based research and interviews with a range of individuals who have either organised, taken part or have legal expertise in protest in England and Wales. The project would:

- o Provide an overview of the crackdown of the right to protest in England and Wales, using openly available data sources

- o Include the testimony of impacted individuals and experts – both in written and AV forms. This testimony would cover both the impact of the anti-protest laws and the positive reasons for and outcomes of participating in protest

The Interviews

In order to lay the political groundwork for rolling back some of the legislative measures we firstly need to complicate the negative political narratives about protest and protesters and ‘make the case’ for protest as an important and fundamental human right. Rather than relying on historical examples, we want to paint a picture of contemporary protest and why it matters, including the positive policy/practical changes it can secure but also in a broader sense in terms of peoples’ civic engagement and self-expression. We also want to engage in the discussion around ‘disruptive protest’ as this is the terrain in which all of the recent laws have been based. Having painted that picture, we also want to make the case for how the recent laws are interfering with those positive aspects, both through intended and unintended consequences.

Our interviews will aim to provide this by addressing issues including:

- the role protesting plays in people's lives and civic engagement;
- the outcomes people have achieved through participating in protest (both policy change and otherwise)
- the role of disruption and disruptive tactics in peaceful protest and
- The experiences and concerns people have about the new laws and the wider political context that accompanies them, and their effect on protest participation and the chilling effect

The interviews will need to involve a diverse range of interview subjects including diversity of:

- geographic location
- protest cause
- History of activist engagement
- protest style (extent of disruptiveness)
- gender identity
- age
- race and ethnicity
- social class

As mentioned above, one aspect of the interviews will involve engaging with the debate around disruptive protest tactics and in that context may involve to some extent challenging interviewees on their choices and reasoning.

The interviews in which the individuals are willing to be identifiable, will need to be conducted in a way that can be filmed and used in high quality audio-visual outputs. They will therefore need to be done in person rather than online.

The desk-based research

Developing our evidence base to show the impact of the crackdown on the right to protest will be vital to the next stages of our work – there are many open sources of this information readily available, via the media, other organisation's own research, observers on the ground at protests, as well as via the means of FOIs and other preliminary routes of investigation. We are keen to work with someone who has a wide-ranging knowledge of how to gather a range of data and evidence to build this kind of case.

The role

We are seeking to recruit a freelance consultant researcher to work alongside our campaign manager and research and policy lead at Amnesty International UK and A/V specialist colleagues.

The consultant will be responsible for:

- Performing desk-based research to develop an evidence base and form analysis of the crackdown on protest over the past four/five years using multiple different sources
- Identifying interview subjects (10 – 20) with a minimum of 8 individuals who are willing to be identifiable within the research and have their interview filmed for AIUK campaigning comms to support the next stages of this project.
- Securing and arranging interviews.
- Developing appropriate interview questions.
- Conducting and writing up interviews and coordinating with AIUK AV team to film interviews where consent has been obtained from subjects.
- Organising all quantitative and qualitative information and interviews gathered into an easily accessible format to support further analysis and write up of an overarching account of the crackdown on the right to protest by AIUK's Law and Human Rights Policy and Research Director

They will be supported in this by the Law & Human Rights Policy and Research Director and AIUK A/V department.

You will have:

- Significant knowledge of protest and public order legislation, as well as relevant domestic and international human rights principles.
- Understanding and expertise using multiple research methodologies, including use of FOIA and relevant published data-sets, in order to seek and retrieve relevant information and data to support building an evidence-base.
- Significant knowledge of UK-based protest movements and contacts within or adjacent to those movements.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Ability to accept constructive feedback and work in partnership with AIUK to make improvements and amendments to the project as required.
- Understanding of anti-racist principles and practice.

- Understanding of, and commitment to, the aims and objectives of Amnesty International.

The main point of contact (and project manager) for this work will be Amnesty International UK's Protest Campaign Manager, Lydia Parker. The successful candidate would work directly and collaboratively with the Law and Human Rights Policy and Research Lead, Tom Southerden. There will also be liaison with relevant members of the Amnesty International UK's wider staff, including colleagues in the A/V department.

Timeline

Final organised research findings, analysis and interviews ready for write up, by October 31st, 2025 (we have some flexibility on this date, so please be ready to outline your proposal and requirements for completion based on your plan).

- Call for proposals open from Tuesday 29th July
- Deadline for additional requests for information from candidates to AIUK by 7th August
- Deadline for submissions by 19th August
- Shortlisted candidates notified by 20th August
- Interviews with shortlisted candidates w/c 25th August
- Selection of candidate and contracting w/c 1st September
- Inception meetings, agreement of final research findings for write up and interview formats, early September.
- Final organised research findings and interviews due by end of October 2025 (this date has some flexibility and we are happy to negotiate based on Consultant proposal)

Conditions of Contract

Amnesty International UK will pay the successful consultant on a monthly basis.

The consultant will be a self-employed person responsible for taxation and national insurance or similar liabilities or contributions in respect of their fee. The successful consultant will not, therefore, be entitled to Amnesty International's Staff Terms and Conditions and nothing in this agreement constitutes a Contract of Employment.

Deliverables

- Following the inception meeting, the researcher(s) will need to provide **a full project plan** building on their proposal including a detailed methodology plan.
- Using testimony from interviews they have conducted and desk-based research, the Consultant will produce **an organised set of data and analysis about the crackdown** on the right to protest in England and Wales, from which the Law & Human Rights Policy and Research Lead can write up a full narrative overview.
- The Consultant will be responsible for securing and conducting the number of interviews outlined in their project plan and producing **a write-up of this testimony**.

- In addition, the Consultant will work with AIUK's AV team to develop a **series of interview recordings** which will be edited by AIUK into a presentable form and made freely available online. Copyright will belong to Amnesty International UK.

Logistics

The consultant would be required to work from their own home, or place of work, and meetings with Amnesty staff will take place on MS Teams or on occasion in the AI UK London office. The consultant would need to be UK based for this project.

Budget

The budget for this research project is £12,000 inclusive of VAT (if applicable) and all expenses. Applicants are requested to provide a breakdown of budget and to outline in their submissions how their proposal constitutes good value for money

Submissions

Applications should outline your proposed approach to building an evidence base of the crackdown on protest in England and Wales, including:

- which sources of data and information you would rely on
- an outline of your approach to identifying interview subjects and arranging the interviews
- an outline of key research questions you may use
- relevant human rights law knowledge and your experience
- a proposed budget and delivery schedule

If you wish to include a link to relevant projects that you have previously been involved in, please do so. All materials should be compiled and the final tender document should be not more than 6 pages of A4.

The application should be submitted to Becca.Leech@amnesty.org.uk no later than Tuesday 19th August. Please include "Protest project tender" in the subject line. We will notify shortlisted applicants by Wednesday 20th August, and arrange to meet (virtually) the week commencing Monday 25th August, before making a decision.

Please note, the successful tender will be required to enter a contractual arrangement for a supply of services. This will not constitute employment for tax purposes, and the consultant or freelancer will not be entitled to our colleagues' terms and conditions.

If you have any questions prior to submitting your tender, please contact **Lydia.Parker@amnesty.org.uk by Thursday 7th August.** Please do not use this email address for submission of your proposal. Thank you.