



Sir Mark Rowley QPM  
Commissioner  
New Scotland Yard  
Victoria Embankment  
London  
SW1A 2JL

6<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Dear Sir Mark,

**Re: Policing of ‘Defend Our Juries’ Protests**

I am writing regarding the policing of protest related to the proscription of Palestine Action and the violations of international human rights law that this has involved. In particular, I write ahead of a widely publicised protest planned to take place on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> August by the group ‘Defend Our Juries’.

As is well known, since Palestine Action was proscribed on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2025, there have been a series of protests by groups and individuals opposed to that decision. These protests have occurred in various locations around the UK, but have been particularly prominent in London, where protesters with the group ‘Defend Our Juries’ have regularly appeared in Parliament Square displaying placards stating ‘I Oppose Genocide. I Support Palestine Action.’ These protesters have been entirely peaceful. Nevertheless, as you will know, very large numbers of these protesters have been arrested for offences under Sections 12 and 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000. Nationally, over 200 arrests have been made, and we understand the figure for London is around 130. The vast



majority of the people arrested have subsequently been released, either under investigation or on bail.<sup>1</sup>

We understand from public reports that a further protest is planned for 9<sup>th</sup> August, at which it is intended that several hundred people will again peacefully display signs bearing the words 'I Oppose Genocide. I Support Palestine Action.'<sup>2</sup>

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. Further arrests on this basis on the 9<sup>th</sup> August would violate international human rights law. As such, we urge you to instruct your officers to comply with the UK's international obligations and act with restraint in their response to any such protests that occur, by not arresting protesters who are merely carrying placards that state they oppose genocide and support Palestine Action.

Under the international human rights framework to which the UK is a party, state interference with expression and peaceful assembly must be lawful, and a necessary and proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.<sup>3</sup> In this context, protest speech can only be criminalised if it incites violence or advocates hatred or discrimination.<sup>4</sup> Expression of support for a proscribed organisation could only meet this threshold, if that expression were likely to

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<sup>1</sup> There are reports of a small number of charges being laid in Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> Defend Our Juries, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i8\\_mrhdM3EtVnvK0uBxFWyJrt8NcR8JorlOJBJS97nQ/edit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i8_mrhdM3EtVnvK0uBxFWyJrt8NcR8JorlOJBJS97nQ/edit?tab=t.0) (Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025)

<sup>3</sup> Articles 10 & 11, European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; Articles 19 & 21, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

<sup>4</sup> See, *Perinçek v. Switzerland*, European Court of Human Rights [GC], no. 27510/08, ECHR 2015 para 206; UN General Assembly, 'Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence' (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4) para 29



induce its audience to partake in violence, and to do so imminently.<sup>5</sup> As part of this assessment, the particular facts of the expression, the proscription and the nature of the organisation in question must also be taken into account. In this instance, it cannot be justified to treat expression of support for Palestine Action as inherently and uniformly incitement.<sup>6</sup> The relevant ECtHR caselaw has found that placards are protected speech unless they directly and expressly constitute incitement;<sup>7</sup> and Defend our Juries themselves have been clear that they do not celebrate or encourage violence.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to these general principles of, and obligations derived from, international human rights law applicable to the Defend our Juries protests, it must also be noted that the coming protest will be the first large-scale protest of this kind to take place since the High Court granted permission for Palestine Action to pursue judicial review proceedings against their proscription. In doing so the High Court has ruled that it is at least arguable that the proscription of Palestine Action was unlawful. The legal foundation for the section 12 and 13 offences under which arrests have taken place up to now is therefore in doubt, and subject to what the court referred to as a ‘serious issue to be tried’.<sup>9</sup> In these circumstances, continuing to implement arrests in the way we have seen up to now would be a reckless use of police power, and inevitably risk breaching the test of legality.

<sup>5</sup> *Erkizia Almandoz v. Spain*, European Court of Human Rights no. 5869/17, 22 June 2021, para 40

<sup>6</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, *General Comment 37: Article 21: right of peaceful assembly*, (CCPR/C/GC/37) para 51:

*“Generally, the use of flags, uniforms, signs and banners is to be regarded as a legitimate form of expression that should not be restricted, even if such symbols are reminders of a painful past. In exceptional cases, where such symbols are directly and predominantly associated with incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, appropriate restrictions should apply.”*

<sup>7</sup> See eg *Silgir v. Turkey*, no. 60389/10, 3 May 2022; *Agit Demir v. Turkey*, no. 36475/10, 27 February 2018

<sup>8</sup> See eg

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i8\\_mrhdM3EtVnvK0uBxFWyJrt8NcR8JorlOBJTS97nQ/edit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i8_mrhdM3EtVnvK0uBxFWyJrt8NcR8JorlOBJTS97nQ/edit?tab=t.0) (Accessed 2 August 2025)

<sup>9</sup> *Huda Ammori v SSHD* [2025] EWHC 2013 (Admin) paras 3 & 70



People are understandably and justifiably outraged by the ongoing genocide being committed by Israel against Palestinians in Gaza. They are entitled under international human rights law to peacefully express themselves. There is no reasonable basis for protesters at 'Defend our Juries' protests to be regarded as inciting violence. It is therefore disproportionate, and a clear violation of the UK's human rights obligations, to be arresting them and treating them as terrorists.

We urge you to ensure your force's approach to these protests is in compliance with the international human rights standards that the UK has signed up to.

Yours sincerely

Sacha Deshmukh  
Chief Executive Officer - AIUK