

Supporters of banned Palestine Action group arrested at London protest



A Palestine Action activist speaks to supporters and members of the media on Friday [Benjamin Cremel/AFP]

More than 25 protesters have been detained by police a day after the activist group was banned

London, July 6 (RHC)-- Police have arrested protesters in London for supporting activist group Palestine Action, which was banned at midnight in the United Kingdom. "Officers have arrested more than 20 people on suspicion of offenses under the Terrorism Act 2000. They have been taken into custody. Palestine Action is a proscribed group, and officers will act where criminal offences are committed," the Metropolitan Police wrote on X on Saturday.

Campaign group Defend Our Juries said in a press release that 27 people, including a priest and a number of health professionals, had been arrested for offences under the Terrorism Act. They were holding cardboard signs, saying: "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action."

Passersby reacted to the arrests as the police intervened in the demonstration at noon. "Met Police, you are puppets of the Zionist state" and "leave them alone", they were quoted as shouting by the Press Association, the British news agency.

Other supporters, not directly involved in the Palestine Action protest, shouted: "Who do you protect? Who do you serve?" and "British police off our streets."

There were further chants of "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" during the incident.

Police warned on Friday that expressing support for Palestine Action would be a criminal offense after the ban kicked in at midnight. "This includes chanting, wearing clothing or displaying articles such as flags, signs or logos," said the force.

A spokesperson for Defend Our Juries said: "We commend the Counter Terrorism police for their decisive action in protecting the people of London from some cardboard signs opposing the genocide in Gaza and expressing support for those taking action to prevent it."

The proscription cleared parliament on Thursday, with a court challenge to try to stop it becoming law failing on Friday. The government announced last week it would ban Palestine Action under the Terrorism Act 2000, days after activists from the group broke into an air force base in southern England.

Two aircraft at the base were sprayed with red paint, causing an estimated 7 million pounds (\$9.55 million) in damage. Four Palestine Action activists were remanded in custody on Thursday after appearing in court over the incident.

Palestine Action has condemned the proscription as an attack on free speech. The ban will make it a criminal offence to belong to or support the group, punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and NEWS AGENCIES]



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