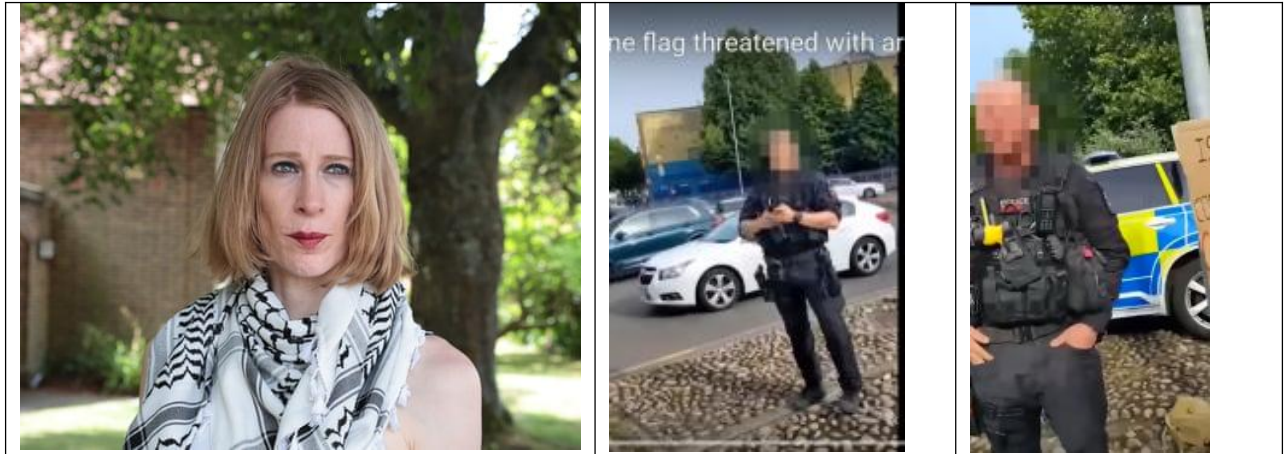


**Haroon Siddique** *Legal affairs correspondent* Thu 17 Jul 2025 07.00 BST The Guardian  
**Armed police threatened to arrest Kent protester for holding Palestinian flag**



Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Officers told Laura Murton she was expressing a belief supportive of Palestine Action despite her telling them she did not support any proscribed organisations.

Officers accused Laura Murton who also had a sign saying 'Free Gaza' of supporting a proscribed organisation. Armed police threatened a peaceful protester with arrest under the Terrorism Act for holding a Palestinian flag and having signs saying "Free Gaza" and "Israel is committing genocide", accusing her of supporting a proscribed organisation. Officers told Laura Murton, 42, that her demonstration in Canterbury, [Kent](#), on Monday evening (14th July 2025) expressed views supportive of Palestine Action, which was banned under terrorism legislation earlier this month.

Murton said neither of her signs mentioned Palestine Action. When asked directly whether she supported any proscribed organisations, she replied: "I do not."



Protester holding Palestine flag threatened with arrest by Kent police – video

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/eWBYdHxPEIQ?feature=oembed>

In the encounter, which she filmed, one officer told her: “Mentioning freedom of Gaza, Israel, genocide, all of that all come under proscribed groups, which are terror groups that have been dictated by the government.”

He went on to say that the phrase “Free Gaza” was “supportive of Palestine Action”, adding it was an offence “to express an opinion or belief that is supportive of a proscribed organisation, namely Palestine Action is an offence under [section 12\(1A\) of the Terrorism Act](#)”. The officer told her she had committed that offence.

The officers said they would arrest Murton unless she provided her name and address, which she reluctantly agreed to do.

Speaking to the Guardian, Murton said: “I don’t see how anything I was wearing, how anything I was displaying, anything I was saying, could be deemed as supportive of the proscribed group.

“It’s terrifying, I was standing there thinking, this is the most authority, authoritarian, dystopian experience I’ve had in this country, being told that I’m committing terrorist offences by two guys with firearms.

“I ended up giving my details, and I really resent the fact I had to do that because I don’t think that was lawful at all.”



### **Why is Palestine Action being banned and what happens next?**

#### **Read more**

*The ban on Palestine Action, the first against a direct action protest group, came into force on 5 July after a high court judge refused to grant the group’s co-founder Huda Ammori an injunction suspending it while legal action was pending.*

*In written submissions, Raza Husain KC and Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh KC, representing Ammori, warned: “Proscription of Palestine Action is highly likely to have a wide chilling effect on speech and assembly of those seeking to speak out against Israel’s serious violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in Gaza.”*

*During an unsuccessful attempt to appeal against the decision, Ní Ghrálaigh told the court of appeal “a vast number of individuals who wished to continue protesting would fall foul of the proscription regime due to its lack of clarity”.*

One of the police officers told Murton they were “trying to be fair”, adding: “We could have jumped out, arrested you, dragged you off in a van.”

Explaining her motivation for the protest, Murton, who lives in Canterbury, said: “Day to day, people are getting killed, and I can’t handle that. I can’t handle sitting and doing nothing. Just showing up during rush hour to remind people that Palestine exists and that genocide is happening and try to keep it in the public consciousness – it wasn’t motivated by anything other than that.”

Tom Southerden, Amnesty International UK’s law and human rights director, described the footage as “very concerning”. He added: “We have long criticised UK terrorism law for being excessively broad **and** vaguely worded and a threat to freedom of expression. This video documents one aspect of exactly the kind of thing we were warning about.”

A Kent police spokesperson said: “Under the Terrorism Act it is a criminal offence to carry or display items that may arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation such as Palestine Action.”

Security Minister Dan Jarvis said: “Freedom to protest lawfully is a cornerstone of our democracy. “Palestine Action’s proscription does not and must not interfere with people’s legitimate right to express support for Palestinians.”

[@Schikane07 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025](#)

Absolutely terrifying, this is behaviour that is attributable to the FSB in Moscow, rather than UK police in Kent.

[@klangding 18<sup>th</sup> July 2025](#)

Since when was "distracting the traffic" an offence. Cops making up the law as they go along.

[@mentality-monster 18th July 2025 \(edited\)](#)

Is it distracting traffic or is it terrorism? So hard to tell which crime you're committing these days.

Completely typical of any adversarial discussions I've had with the police. It basically always comes down to "we'll arrest you for something and if we can't actually find something, we'll arrest you for resisting arrest."

My comment: The video shows the police talking to Laura Murton who sounds like a man and she/he is videoing this. The police mention not only the support of a terrorist group but the law about distracting and causing a traffic offence. It appears that she/he is out to provoke especially as demoing on a roundabout at a very busy time and if had done this first on the high street she/he would have been able to but once told not to was warned she/he could be arrested. The policeman has a black and white union jack with a blue line which identifies a colleague who had died doing his job. I think the police are being given a particularly bad time and it is time we acknowledge how well they do their job. The Guardian put this out and they have at least explained the proscribed organisation - the Palestine Action

So the demonstration on Thursday was based on stirring up antagonism against the police/or the new law. This is so dangerous. Laws are there for society – we might not like them but diplomacy is what we all want so trying to disrespect people who are doing their job is wrong – we might as well just agree with violence.



## **Protests in Canterbury after police accused woman of supporting proscribed terror group Palestine**

**Action Published:** 08:55, 18 July 2025 | **Updated:** 12:40, 18 July 2025

Demonstrations have been held in Canterbury after armed police threatened to arrest a Palestine supporter they accused of supporting a proscribed terrorist organisation.

Laura Murton was confronted by officers near the city's ring-road on Monday as she waved a Palestinian flag and held up two signs condemning Israel's actions during the conflict.



The demonstration followed Laura Murton's recording of police accusing her of breaching the Terrorism Act on Monday. Picture: Charlie Kimber

They argued she was committing an offence under the Terrorism Act as her protest was a show of support for Palestine Action – a group formally proscribed by the government earlier this month.

But the 42-year-old says she has no association with the group and noted neither of the signs she had at the time had any words supporting it, with one saying "Free Gaza" and the other "Israel is committing genocide".

In the encounter, which she filmed and shared on Instagram, she was told by one of the officers:

"Mentioning freedom of Gaza, Israel, genocide, all of that all come under proscribed groups, which are terror groups that have been dictated by the government."

The officers said they would arrest Ms Murton unless she provided her name and address, which she reluctantly agreed to do.

She was also told that if she continued her protest in the city's high street she would likely be arrested. Ms Murton wrote on Instagram: "What fresh dystopia is this? We should all be very worried."



One of the signs Laura Murton displayed in Canterbury said 'Israel is committing genocide'. Picture: Laura Murton/Instagram

Supporters of the 42-year-old took to the city yesterday evening, congregating near the former Wilko building, flying Palestine flags and chanting.

In one video, they were heard singing: "Raise your fists, rise, resist."

Dozens of protestors gathered, sharing footage online and saying police had not been in attendance.

Tom Southerden, Amnesty International UK's law and human rights director, described the treatment of Ms Murton as "very concerning".

He told the Guardian: "We have long criticised UK terrorism law for being excessively broad and vaguely worded and a threat to freedom of expression.

"This video documents one aspect of exactly the kind of thing we were warning about."

Security Minister Dan Jarvis said: "Freedom to protest lawfully is a cornerstone of our democracy.

"Palestine Action's proscription does not and must not interfere with people's legitimate right to express support for Palestinians."

Police told KentOnline: "Following a complaint about the behaviour of an individual on a traffic roundabout in Canterbury on Monday, officers attended to investigate. Having ascertained no offences had been committed, no further action was taken.

"On the afternoon of Thursday, July 17, a peaceful protest took place outside Canterbury Police Station.

"Officers engaged with those present, and no disorder was reported.

"No arrests were made, and the group left the area by 7.30pm."

**victorludorum wrote: 9/07/2025 12:50**

I've little time for these sorts of martyrs, nomatter which side of an argument they are on.

If an organisation is proscribed and you openly support it, then you may be committing offences and you risk being nicked. Doing that in open defiance of a ban is therefore quite daft.

Disagreeing with the decision to proscribe an organisation is different. You can lobby your MP or demonstrate against the decision. However, you must still ensure that what you do can't be interpreted as supporting the proscribed organisation.

**Bob Frost 2 wrote: 19/07/2025 01:01**

Have they freed the hostages yet? Thought not. FAFO.

**Am Yisrael Chaitwink wrote: 18/07/2025 14:21**

Hamas went too far in Oct 2023.

I have a nephew in Israel, his partner is a Druze Palestinian. They have three children. The children's grandfather is a politician in Israel.

People in Britain are misinformed.

**MarkN wrote: 18/07/2025 12:51**

Where's the outrage over all the others wars in the world? Wars are won when one side is beaten and forced to surrender. Fighting in built up areas is horrific with a high casualty rate. The IDF have a kill ration of 1:1 which is the best in the world.

**PeteMK wrote: 18/07/2025 12:47**

"Mentioning freedom of Gaza, Israel, genocide, all of that all come under proscribed groups, which are terror groups that have been dictated by the government."

"If you want to know who rules over you, just look for who you are not allowed to criticize."

Kevin Alfred Strom (Not Voltaire)

At this stage the actions of Netanyahu towards the people of Gaza are because he's a genocidal psychopath, and nothing to do with his faith, religion, where he was born or where he lives. Any time any valid criticism is levelled at him he, and the pandering sycophants who cow-tow to his every whim, immediately scream 'antisemitism' as if it's a Get out of Jail Free card and the person doing the criticism should be punished as if mere words were the more despicable act.

Looking at the actions of Palestine Action that led to them being proscribed as a terrorist group (Violence or the threat of violence to further a political idea), they do actually go further than just spraying a couple of military aircraft. But you still have the right to protest against the actions of a madman without that right being denied because you \*might\* be sort of, sounds like, looks like you're supporting a group the government has classified as terrorists.

Scary times.

**Beer baby wrote: 18/07/2025 12:41**

These protesters are self centred egotists. True humanitarians would call on Hamas to surrender. Then civilians will stop being killed. Their continued support of a terrorist regime only encourages Hamas to continue sacrificing more civilians. They are as much to blame for Gazan deaths as the IDF.

Not a word is said by them about the genocide of the Druze in Syria or the Christians murdered in Africa or the oppression of Uyghurs in China etc etc.

QED bandwagon egotists.

**CanterburyBob wrote: 18/07/2025 11:53**

It's interesting how you have right wingers condemning a woman for holding a peaceful protest with just a Palestine flag, and yet on another article about an incident in Sheerness you have right wingers sympathising with someone shooting a BB gun and threatening security in protest about asylum seekers.

**Citizen of nowhere wrote: 18/07/2025 11:47**

Britain could have tried these Israeli tactics in Northern Ireland in the 1970's  
We could have fenced in the Catholics, destroyed their houses as we searched for terrorists. We could have starved the population and shot at their children as they queued for food. The children that survived would \*never\* have supported the IRA in the future as they knew who had the upper hand... But instead Britain took a different route, it compromised resulting in the GFA. And what was the end result? Peace.

**Brychan wrote: 18/07/2025 10:46**

"Mentioning freedom of Gaza, Israel, genocide, all of that all come under proscribed groups, which are terror groups that have been dictated by the government." - Kent Police.

This is not true and is a Kent police officer overstepping the mark.

To prove it, my own words are.

Freedom for Gaza.

Israel is committing genocide.

This comment does not in any way demonstrate my support for a proscribed group. I suggest that Kent Police officers return to an impartial stance in policing demonstrations.

**Pab\_Low wrote: 18/07/2025 10:12**

Group that openly supports a violent terrorist organisation that vows to destroy the west... Are surprised when they are arrested for terror offences.

**victorludorum wrote: 18/07/2025 10:49**

Whereas the Stern Gang was neither. Oh. Hold on, it admitted as much[1].

Israel's reaction to the undeniably egregious Hamas attacks has been genocidally disproportionate and harks back to earlier murderous excesses[2]. The IDF, or elements of it, seems to be out of control.

The 'west' should make plain the limits of what it will tolerate and apply sanctions against Israel if they breach these. We have already proscribed Hamas, of course.

[1] [en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lehi\\_\(militant\\_group\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lehi_(militant_group))

[2] [imeu.org/article/explainer-the-deir-yassin-massacre](https://imeu.org/article/explainer-the-deir-yassin-massacre)

**CanterburyBob wrote: 18/07/2025 11:04**

So you think it was ok that she was arrested for having a peaceful protest while holding a Palestine flag.

Palestine does not mean Hamas. There is no suggestion she is supporting Palestine Action either.

Do you think it's ok that you can be arrested simply for holding a flag? I bet you'd have a problem if someone was arrested for holding a Union Flag or a Reform flag.

**maninawhitecar wrote: 18/07/2025 11:13**

Why strawman this? It's dishonest. Condemning the Israeli slaughter in Gaza is most certainly not supporting "a violent terrorist organisation".

**demus wrote: 18/07/2025 09:44**

Police should have nicked the lot of them and kept them in the slammer for a couple of days to cool off. Hamas started all this back in October 2023 - they are reaping the whirlwind.

pseudonym001 wrote: 18/07/2025 09:38

If someone accused me of supporting the Judean People's Front I would deny it and claim to be supporting the People's Front of Judea.

**maninawhitecar wrote: 18/07/2025 09:21**

Clearly the officer overstepped the mark here. Protesting against the daily massacre in Gaza by Israel is both legal and moral.

I think, though, that we can probably put it down to unclear instruction being given to officers. I'm sure they will be clarified after this incident.