

British government declares Palestine Action terrorists

The Labour government at Westminster proscribing Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation is a ridiculous undemocratic move by a government that only exists to perpetuate war and capitalism, argues [Simon Hannah](#)

Two Palestine Action members damaged some war planes at a UK air base in protest against the genocide in Gaza and the escalation of the conflict into Iran. This led immediately to the government taking steps to put the protest group on a par with Al-Qaeda or Islamic State. A frightening overreach.

This coming from ex human rights lawyer Kier Starmer, a man who defended protestors who broke into an RAF base in 2003 and damaged planes in protest against the war in Iraq. Now his government is saying that people who throw paint at military aircraft are in the same category as those that fly commercial airlines into civilian buildings as happened in 9/11.

And Yvette Cooper, the Home Secretary, who stood up in parliament wearing suffragette ribbons to celebrate the fight for women to get the vote – the same movement that carried out direct action protests and caused all kinds of ‘nuisance’ for the governments of the day. What do they say about the liberals? They support every social movement apart from the present one.

A solidarity protest in London was attacked by the police with several arrests made on spurious grounds. The police were clearly spoiling for a fight and saw the government’s proposed ban as an excuse to do what they wanted.

Earlier in the day the chief of the Met Police Sir Mark Rowley had issued an outrageous statement saying the planned solidarity action left him “shocked and frustrated” that

people would come out in support of Palestine Action. Shut up Sir Rowley, it isn't your place to offer opinions on whether people should attend demonstrations or not.

The Labour government has kept the Tories draconian anti protest laws and sought to expand them. They have presided over the prosecution of peaceful protestors on conspiracy charges, landing them five years in prison (before they reduced that on appeal) – the longest prison sentence for non-violent protest ever handed down.

They are also going after the Irish rap group Kneecap for 'supporting terrorism' by allegedly having a Hezbollah flag on display at a gig. This government is one of the most illiberal ones for many years – targeting musicians for waving a flag is another example of the dangerous overreach of these police-politicians.

Reactionary wave

The clamp down on protest rights is happening as part of a global reactionary wave, a move towards authoritarian regimes that clamp down on civil and political rights and are seeking to roll back the gains of the last 50 years around women, LGBT and Black people's rights.

As late capitalism gets worse, with greater wealth inequality, collapsing public services and horrific genocidal violence, more governments are imposing harsher laws and restrictions on our freedoms. They can see that social crises are growing but the politicians in power only want to protect the interests of a small group in society – the billionaires and capitalists.

The far right – normally free speech advocates when it comes to say anything racist or transphobic – back these moves, seeing them for what they are – an attack on working people and progressive voices fighting for a better world. The far right pose as anti establishment fighters but they are in

reality just fighting on behalf of their super rich pay masters like Elon Musk and Arron Banks.

Diversion

Of course the proscription of Palestine Action is also to focus attention away from the genocide in Gaza and the escalation of war in Iran. Israel is effectively a rogue state, completely ignoring any principles of international law and expanding the war from Gaza to Iran on the spurious grounds that Iran might be developing weapons of mass destruction (those of us around in 2003 for the Iraq war movement will remember this same rhetoric!)

We are fighting for a better world for all and we won't let government proscriptions or police violence or far right terror threat intimidate us. There are some many struggles against the crises of late capitalism and they are growing. We can link these struggles up to point to how capitalism and class society based on hierarchies of wealth and power are at the root cause of so many of these issues.

Some people say they want to leave the country. The reality is there are not many countries in the world that are not heading in this authoritarian direction. We have to fight where we are, working together to build powerful social movements and political parties that can contest for power to overthrow the capitalists and their state.

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