



# Quakers in Britain

Additional information for meetings about Palestine Action proscription

## Introduction

The UK government has now proscribed Palestine Action under the Terrorism Act 2000 meaning that the group is designated as a terrorist organisation. It is a criminal offence to belong to or support proscribed groups, with a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment and/or a fine of £5000.

## General protest

We have a wealth of information about protest, direct action and the faith basis of these. Much of this was gathered together in a recent blog by Quakers in Britain staff member Suzanne Ismail: [www.quaker.org.uk/blog/faith-based-witness-is-needed-more-than-ever-and-there-is-plenty-to-get-involved-in](http://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/faith-based-witness-is-needed-more-than-ever-and-there-is-plenty-to-get-involved-in). Read it for details of how to take action on Israel / Palestine, against the arms trade and on protest more generally.

## What is safe to say or do about Palestine or Palestine Action?

We cannot tell meetings what is reliably safe and what is not around campaigning for Palestine or discussing Palestine Action. This is partly because we are not a legal firm; partly because the law is vague about what is prohibited – especially what constitutes 'support' for a proscribed group; and partly because police forces are not being clear and consistent in how they police it.

To date, most post-proscription arrests have been of people intentionally challenging the law, for example by holding signs saying 'I support Palestine Action'. However, there are cases of apparent police overreach, notably [the threatened arrest of a protester in Canterbury](#) for having flags and signs about Palestine and genocide.

Quakers in Britain is planning to ask police forces across Britain about the guidance they give officers around policing this, as well as working with a wide range of civil society organisations and politicians on changing regulation and legislation to defend our rights to protest, speech and assembly.

There is a difference between acting as an individual or as an organisation. An individual can engage in discernment and can make decisions based on the likely penalties (including imprisonment) that they might personally face.

If a meeting does something that is found to be unlawful then the consequences may have an impact on several people, including people who did not directly take part in the decision to act.

Trustees are most likely to be held responsible if a charity breaks the law. In addition, the charity regulators (Charity Commission in England & Wales; Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator in Scotland) could take action that may have significant consequences for the functioning of the charity.

We think that speaking out on this issue should only be done with deep and careful discernment with all members of a local meeting, along with an understanding and appreciation of the risks involved to individuals and charity trustees who may be held responsible. There is further guidance for Speaking Out as meetings, [www.quaker.org.uk/documents/speaking-out-briefing](http://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/speaking-out-briefing).

## **Some relevant parts of the Terrorism Act 2000**

According to a 2024 [Briefing by the House of Commons Library](#):

“Under the 2000 Act, it is a criminal offence to:

- belong, or profess to belong, to a proscribed organisation in the UK or overseas (note that this offence has extra-territorial effect).
- invite support for a proscribed organisation (and the support is not, or is not restricted to the provision of money or other property).
- express an opinion or belief that is supportive of a proscribed organisation, being reckless as to whether doing so will encourage someone to support it.
- arrange, manage or assist in arranging or managing a meeting in the knowledge that the meeting is to support or further the activities of a proscribed organisation, or is to be addressed by a person who belongs or professes to belong to a proscribed organisation.
- address a meeting if the purpose of the address is to encourage support for, or further the activities of, a proscribed organisation.
- wear clothing or carry or display articles in public in such a way or in such circumstances as arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of the proscribed organisation.
- publish an image of clothing or an article in a way that arouses reasonable suspicion that the person doing so is a member of a proscribed organisation.

It is only an offence to arrange or manage a private meeting if this is done with knowledge that the meeting will be addressed by a person who belongs to a proscribed organisation.

A meeting is private if the public are not admitted. Section 12(4) of the 2000 Act provides for a defence if a person can prove they had no reasonable cause to believe that the address would support a proscribed organisation or further its activities.”

### **Guidance from Netpol**

Netpol, the civil society Network for Police Monitoring, has recently released [guidance for anyone who is concerned about the practical implications of the ban on Palestine Action](#). We encourage Friends who are considering taking action to read this in full. Key points in the Netpol guidance include:

- None of the offences listed above can be applied retrospectively – i.e. you cannot be prosecuted for relevant actions taken before Palestine Action was proscribed.
- Fundraising for or transferring funds to Palestine Action are illegal under proscription.
- Wearing Palestine Action stickers or t shirts or posting about them on social media is considered “expressing support” and therefore a crime in view of the police.