# Two pro-Palestine campaigners arrested outside Barclays in Belfast amid mounting protest tensions



In a troubling incident highlighting the ongoing tensions surrounding protests related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, two pro-Palestine campaigners were arrested outside a Barclays bank in central Belfast. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) confirmed that the arrests were made on suspicion of criminal damage during a demonstration, which was reportedly aimed at calling attention to the bank's financial ties with companies that supply arms to Israel.

Videos circulating on social media depict one of the women, identified as a notable Palestinian activist, engaged in a lengthy dialogue with PSNI officers near a cash machine. As she expressed her concerns, stating, “Children are dying in Gaza,” she was subsequently taken into custody alongside a second woman. The protest on that Saturday morning, which attracted attention from local media and members of the public, has sparked significant backlash and raised questions about the rights of individuals to protest under the current political climate.

Critics of the arrests, such as Sinn Féin MLA Pat Sheehan, have denounced the actions of the police. In a statement, Sheehan described it as “disgraceful” that an elderly Jewish woman, who has been a steadfast advocate for ending the violence in Gaza, was among those arrested. He asserted, “Highlighting the genocidal, inhumane slaughter of defenceless civilians — and those who enable it — is not a crime.” This sentiment underscores a growing frustration among activists regarding heavy-handed policing in relation to protests surrounding contentious political issues.

The protest in Belfast is part of a broader pattern of demonstrations aimed at Barclays Bank, with pro-Palestinian groups in various UK cities targeting the bank due to its alleged financial involvement in the arms trade. Recent protests in cities like Bristol and Edinburgh saw similar actions, with windows smashed and graffiti displayed as activists sought to amplify their message. Palestine Action, a direct action group, has been at the forefront of these campaigns, voicing demands for Barclays to divest from activities perceived as complicit in violence against Palestinians.

This incident occurs amidst a backdrop of heightened scrutiny on the bank's environmental practices as well, evidenced by previous protests led by Extinction Rebellion activists who also targeted Barclays for its financing of fossil fuel projects. These diverse movements reflect a growing discontent with financial institutions perceived to endorse harmful practices, whether related to environmental degradation or human rights abuses.

As the protests continue to evolve, political figures are increasingly addressing the implications of such actions. People Before Profit MLA Gerry Carroll expressed that the legitimacy of Israel is waning globally, suggesting that in response, authorities are tightening their grip on protest actions to silence dissent. This trend raises significant concerns about freedom of expression and the ability of citizens to voice their opinions in an era of social and political upheaval.

The PSNI's response to these protests also speaks to broader societal tensions in Northern Ireland, which have seen confrontations not only between differing political groups but also between protesters and law enforcement. The policing strategies employed during such demonstrations have come under examination, revealing a complicated landscape where rights to protest, public safety, and the management of local dissenting voices intersect in challenging ways.

As the situation develops, many are calling for a deeper examination of how policing handles such demonstrations, especially as global and local issues of justice and human rights continue to ignite passionate responses from communities across Northern Ireland.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/psni-arrest-two-palestine-campaigners-after-incident-outside-belfast-bank/a1676756723.html), [[7]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pro-palestine-protesters-in-belfast-call-for-barclays-boycott-c576ycf3wvhsraf3hxoppqran/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/psni-arrest-two-palestine-campaigners-after-incident-outside-belfast-bank/a1676756723.html), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1rrzp1qwp1o)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/environment/watch-two-arrested-after-extinction-rebellion-activists-hold-protest-outside-barclays-bank-in-belfast/42142864.html), [[5]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/politics/queens-protesters-criticised-for-chanting-ssruc-and-labelling-psni-officers-thugs-evhkmjakjhxdi66p4wbimamki/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/hilary-clinton-belfast-psni-arrest-pro-palestinian-protestors-at-qub-who-oppose-israels-war-in-gaza-4867882), [[5]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/politics/queens-protesters-criticised-for-chanting-ssruc-and-labelling-psni-officers-thugs-evhkmjakjhxdi66p4wbimamki/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2024/08/03/riot-police-separate-protest-groups-at-belfast-demonstration/), [[5]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/politics/queens-protesters-criticised-for-chanting-ssruc-and-labelling-psni-officers-thugs-evhkmjakjhxdi66p4wbimamki/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/psni-arrest-two-palestine-campaigners-after-incident-outside-belfast-bank/a1676756723.html), [[2]](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/environment/watch-two-arrested-after-extinction-rebellion-activists-hold-protest-outside-barclays-bank-in-belfast/42142864.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/psni-arrest-two-palestine-campaigners-after-incident-outside-belfast-bank/a1676756723.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/environment/watch-two-arrested-after-extinction-rebellion-activists-hold-protest-outside-barclays-bank-in-belfast/42142864.html> - Two Extinction Rebellion activists were arrested in Belfast after a protest outside a Barclays bank. The activists sprayed red paint on the building, displayed fake money, and unfurled banners to draw attention to Barclays' financing of fossil fuels. The protest aimed to highlight the bank's role in funding environmental degradation. The activists were arrested on suspicion of criminal damage and disorderly behaviour. Barclays was contacted for comment but did not provide a response. The protest was part of a national campaign against the bank's environmental practices.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1rrzp1qwp1o> - Pro-Palestinian protesters targeted Barclays bank branches across the UK, including in Bristol and Edinburgh. The group Palestine Action claimed responsibility, stating the protests were to demand Barclays divest from Israel's weapons trade and fossil fuels. In Bristol, windows were smashed and red graffiti sprayed on a Barclays branch. In Edinburgh, rocks inscribed with the names of Palestinians killed in the conflict were thrown at a Barclays building. Barclays acknowledged the right to protest but urged campaigners to respect customers, colleagues, and property.
4. <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2024/08/03/riot-police-separate-protest-groups-at-belfast-demonstration/> - Violence erupted in Belfast during an anti-Islamic protest, leading to confrontations with anti-racist protesters. Police mounted a significant security operation to separate the groups, during which fireworks and other missiles were thrown. The protest moved towards the university area, where clashes occurred with residents. Police treated reports of criminal damage as hate crimes and made two arrests. The incident highlights the challenges in managing protests with opposing views in the city.
5. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/politics/queens-protesters-criticised-for-chanting-ssruc-and-labelling-psni-officers-thugs-evhkmjakjhxdi66p4wbimamki/> - Pro-Palestinian protesters outside Queen's University in Belfast were criticized for chanting 'SS/RUC' and labeling PSNI officers as 'thugs' during confrontations. The protests coincided with a visit by former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The Democratic Unionist Party condemned the protesters' behavior, while People Before Profit MLA Gerry Carroll declined to distance himself from the post. The incident underscores the tensions surrounding international figures visiting Northern Ireland amid ongoing political protests.
6. <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/hilary-clinton-belfast-psni-arrest-pro-palestinian-protestors-at-qub-who-oppose-israels-war-in-gaza-4867882> - Four pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested outside Queen's University Belfast during Hillary Clinton's visit. The protesters, numbering around 400, objected to Clinton's stance on Israel's actions in Gaza. Eyewitnesses reported physical confrontations between protesters and police as the arrested individuals were taken away. Queen's University expressed disappointment over the protesters' behavior, emphasizing its commitment to freedom of expression and peaceful protest. The incident highlights the challenges of balancing security with the right to protest during high-profile visits.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pro-palestine-protesters-in-belfast-call-for-barclays-boycott-c576ycf3wvhsraf3hxoppqran/> - Pro-Palestine protesters gathered outside Barclays' Belfast branch, calling for a public boycott of the bank. The Belfast Palestine Solidarity Campaign accused Barclays of 'bankrolling the genocide of Palestinians' in Gaza. Campaigners displayed flags and banners, urging the public to sign their petition. The protest reflects ongoing tensions over financial institutions' involvement in conflicts and the role of banks in funding activities deemed controversial by activist groups.