# UK government proposals expand police powers to target cumulative protest impact



The home secretary, Shabana Mahmood, has announced plans to grant police in England and Wales enhanced powers to impose tougher conditions on protests by factoring in the “cumulative impact” of previous demonstrations. This proposal has ignited controversy among civil liberty groups, who fear it could severely curtail the right to protest.

Currently, organising a protest march in England and Wales requires at least six days’ written notice to the police, outlining the date, time, route, and organiser details. There is no requirement to inform police in advance of stationary protests, except in exceptional circumstances where immediate response is necessary. Police officers can intervene to impose restrictions if they reasonably believe a protest might cause serious public disorder, significant property damage, community disruption, or aims to intimidate others. Recent legislation, such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC) and the Public Order Act 2023, has expanded police authority in this regard. Restrictions may include altering protest locations or routes, limiting protest duration, and capping attendance figures. For instance, pro-Palestinian marches have faced route and timing limitations, with one demonstration being moved to Trafalgar Square after the Metropolitan Police established an exclusion zone near Parliament.

Banning a protest outright is a more stringent measure that requires the consent of the home secretary. Such bans can be applied for specific areas and timeframes if police deem conditions insufficient to prevent serious public disorder or damage. Although formally limited, human rights advocates caution that stringent restrictions imposed under current laws can effectively act as bans in practice.

The proposed extension would allow senior police officers to consider the aggregate effect of multiple related protests when imposing conditions. This approach aims to address concerns about repeated demonstrations in the same location causing significant cumulative disruption to local communities. The idea gained traction following high-profile pro-Palestinian protests and a subsequent deadly attack at a Manchester synagogue, with officials emphasising the need to balance public safety and protest rights. The government’s Interior Ministry has highlighted that these new powers should help protect communities without indiscriminately curbing lawful demonstrations.

These measures build on a recent trend of tightening protest laws in the UK. The PCSC Act introduced a noise threshold for intervention, expanded conditions applicable to stationary protests, and created the offence of public nuisance carrying a maximum sentence of ten years, which has been frequently applied against environmental activists. Meanwhile, the Public Order Act 2023 introduced new offences targeting disruptive protest tactics such as “locking on” or tunnelling, and broadened stop-and-search powers related to protests.

Alongside these, the government has also recently enacted laws targeting dangerous disorder during protests. These include powers to arrest participants who wear face coverings to conceal identities and bans on possessing pyrotechnics at demonstrations. Offenders face fines and potential imprisonment. Nevertheless, critics argue that such measures risk suppressing legitimate protest activities and may disproportionately affect minority groups.

Government data from June 2022 to March 2024 indicates an increasing use of police powers to impose conditions on protests across England and Wales, reflecting a more assertive stance on managing public demonstrations. Guidance documents accompanying the PCSC Act and other legislation provide law enforcement and public authorities with frameworks to implement these enhanced powers effectively.

This evolving legal landscape reflects ongoing tensions between maintaining public order and safeguarding democratic freedoms. Supporters of the new powers argue they are necessary to prevent repeated disruptions and protect communities, while opponents warn they could undermine fundamental rights to peaceful assembly and free expression.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/07/how-tougher-powers-police-affect-protests-england-wales), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-police-get-new-powers-after-latest-pro-palestinian-protest-2025-10-05/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/07/how-tougher-powers-police-affect-protests-england-wales), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/07/how-tougher-powers-police-affect-protests-england-wales), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-protest-powers-june-2022-to-march-2024/police-protest-powers-june-2022-to-march-2024)
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* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-protest-laws-on-face-coverings-and-pyrotechnics), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-new-protest-laws-to-crack-down-on-dangerous-disorder), [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/07/how-tougher-powers-police-affect-protests-england-wales)
* Paragraph 6 – [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-protest-powers-june-2022-to-march-2024/police-protest-powers-june-2022-to-march-2024), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/circular-0052022-police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-act-2022)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/07/how-tougher-powers-police-affect-protests-england-wales), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/07/how-tougher-powers-police-affect-protests-england-wales), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-police-get-new-powers-after-latest-pro-palestinian-protest-2025-10-05/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/07/how-tougher-powers-police-affect-protests-england-wales> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/07/how-tougher-powers-police-affect-protests-england-wales> - The article discusses the UK government's proposal to grant police the authority to impose stricter conditions on protests by considering the cumulative impact of previous demonstrations. It outlines the current requirements for organising protests, the conditions under which police can restrict them, and the circumstances under which protests can be banned. The piece also highlights recent legislative changes, including the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023, which have significantly increased police powers to manage protests.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-protest-laws-on-face-coverings-and-pyrotechnics> - The UK government has introduced new laws targeting dangerous disorder during protests. These laws empower police to arrest protesters who wear face coverings to conceal their identities and to ban the possession of pyrotechnics at public demonstrations. Offenders face fines and potential imprisonment. The measures aim to enhance public safety and prevent criminal activities during protests.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-protest-powers-june-2022-to-march-2024/police-protest-powers-june-2022-to-march-2024> - This government report provides statistics on the use of protest-related powers by police forces in England and Wales between June 2022 and March 2024. It details the number of protests where conditions were applied, the police forces involved, and the frequency of these interventions, highlighting the increased use of such powers over the period.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/circular-0052022-police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-act-2022> - This official circular outlines certain provisions of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 that came into force between May and August 2022. It provides guidance to police and public authorities on implementing the Act, including changes to protest-related laws and procedures.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-new-protest-laws-to-crack-down-on-dangerous-disorder> - The UK government has unveiled new protest laws aimed at cracking down on dangerous disorder. The laws include measures to arrest protesters who wear face coverings to conceal their identities and to ban the possession of pyrotechnics at public demonstrations. Critics argue that these measures threaten the right to protest.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-police-get-new-powers-after-latest-pro-palestinian-protest-2025-10-05/> - Following a recent pro-Palestinian protest in London, the UK government announced new powers for police to restrict repeat demonstrations in the same location. This decision comes in the aftermath of a deadly attack at a synagogue in Manchester, which prompted concerns within the Jewish community. The Interior Ministry stated that senior police officers would be able to assess the cumulative impact of repeated protests on local communities, aiming to protect public safety while balancing the right to protest.